

Presumptive coverage for traumatic psychological injuries (first responders, emergency dispatchers and correctional officers)

First responders, correctional officers and emergency dispatchers are routinely exposed to traumatic events at work as part of their normal job expectations. The traumatic events may be life-threatening, very disturbing or stressful and can result in symptoms that are debilitating and require treatment to resolve.

To recognize the challenges in dealing with trauma at work, we provide presumptive coverage for psychological injuries sustained by first responders, emergency dispatchers and correctional officers in specific situations.

How does WCB apply presumptive coverage?

Presumptive coverage means we will presume that a confirmed psychological or psychiatric injury arose out of and occurred in the course of employment in the following circumstances, unless there is evidence to the contrary:

- **A first responder has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**
For injuries that occurred on or after December 10, 2012, first responders include firefighters, police officers/sheriffs, emergency medical responders, primary care paramedics and advanced care paramedics.
For injuries that occurred on or after April 1, 2018, this coverage was extended to correctional officers and emergency dispatchers.
- **Correctional officers, emergency dispatchers, firefighters, paramedics, peace officers, police officers, or any other class of worker prescribed by the regulations, diagnosed with a traumatic psychological injury following exposure to a traumatic event(s)**
For injuries that occur on or after April 1, 2018, presumptive coverage applies for any psychological diagnosis following exposure to a traumatic incident at work, not just for PTSD.

An event is traumatic when it involves direct personal experience of an event or directly witnessing an event that is:

- sudden/unexpected
- frightening or shocking
- having a specific time and space, and
- involves actual or threatened death or serious injury to oneself or threat to one's physical integrity.

Interpersonal relations between a worker and co-workers, management, or customers may be traumatic when they result in behaviours that are aggressive, threatening or abusive.

A confirmed psychological or psychiatric injury is one that has been diagnosed by a physician, psychiatrist or psychologist as defined in the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders (DSM).

What you can expect when your claim submitted

When we receive information indicating you have been diagnosed with PTSD or may have developed a psychological injury after experiencing a traumatic event(s), we may help you start treatment immediately (as needed).

In the meantime, we will confirm the psychological diagnosis, confirmed by your treatment provider using the criteria established in the most current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). If you have been diagnosed with a psychological condition other than PTSD, we will also confirm the nature and source of the traumatic incident at work.

In cases where the link between the psychological injury and the work events is unclear, we may need to gather additional information like medical assessments, interviews with other stakeholders, witness statements, and/or any additional relevant information to support work relatedness and clarify diagnosis.

We care about your wellbeing and will work with you to obtain this information as quickly as possible so we may begin supporting your recovery.

What happens if my claim does not qualify for presumptive coverage?

We may be able to offer help in other ways.

We will help you understand how you may qualify for help and what support is available to help you access treatment and achieve recovery.

Helping you recover

Your recovery and success are important. WCB-Alberta works with a number of community psychologists throughout the province to help workers access the best care for their individual needs.

We can help you select the provider for the treatment you receive and WCB will cover the costs of treatment and progress reporting on your claim. Together, we will help you overcome the challenges that may be preventing you from participating in your day-to-day work.

For workers with complex care needs who may need a little more support, WCB clinicians have developed a care model to help them manage their reactions to traumatic incidents. This support is designed to provide the skills and tools to help you move forward in a positive direction.

The **traumatic psychological injury (TPI) care model** provides an interdisciplinary approach to your care with specialized clinical professionals whose primary goal is your successful recovery. There are a handful of providers contracted to provide this specialized treatment in the province.

Treatment and assessment

Your care and recovery is our priority. If you, your health care provider, or your case manager have concerns about your recovery, you may be referred for an initial TPI assessment at one of the contracted provider clinics.

This session will last up to two hours and involve an interview with a psychologist and the completion of some checklists. The outcome of the session may include confirmation your care is achieving positive results for you or recommendations for further assessment, treatment, and/or your safe return to work.

For example, a gradual return to modified work may be recommended, along with some counselling to assist you in the process. Further assessments may be required, depending on the progress of your recovery.

The TPI care model provides:

Education

Participants receive important information about common responses to trauma and different ways to cope with them. With participant approval, family members may also be provided with education to understand and support the recovery process.

Personal attention

Based upon the results of an individual assessment, services are tailored to each participant's needs.

Improved recovery

With early intervention and access to an interdisciplinary team of specialists to help (including psychologists, occupational therapists, exercise therapists), a healthier return to regular activities and work is more likely to be achieved.

People who may be involved in the success of the TPI process

There are many people who want to help you succeed. These include your family members, physicians, case manager and other health care providers. They may all play a role in your recovery.

Have questions?

Please contact us toll-free at 1-866-922-9221.

More information for you

You can find information about psychological injuries [here](#).

Information about modified work is found [here](#).

