

Mental Disorder Claims

(Reported to WorkSafeBC 2016 to 2018)

Background

Section 5.1 of the *Workers Compensation Act (Act)* was amended July 1, 2012, and now includes mental disorders caused by significant work-related stressors, including bullying and harassment, and mental disorders that are a reaction to one or more work-related traumatic events.

In 2018, the *Act* was further amended to introduce a presumption for mental disorder claims for eligible occupations. Policy and practice amendments in 2018 clarified how evidence of a traumatic event and a significant stressor should be assessed.

Mental Disorder Claims Reported to WorkSafeBC:

In 2018, 4,404 new mental disorder claims were reported to WorkSafeBC. This includes claims where the psychological injury is the primary injury on the claim, and claims where the psychological injury develops as a consequence of a physical injury.

Under section 5.1 of the *Act*, WorkSafeBC may accept a mental disorder that is work-related and is a reaction to:

- one or more traumatic work-related events; or
- a significant work-related stressor, or a cumulative series of significant work-related stressors.

Some of these claims will be adjudicated under the presumptive clause in section 5.1 (1.1) of the *Act*. For workers in eligible occupations who have been exposed to traumatic event(s) in their work and have been diagnosed with a mental disorder as a reaction to that trauma, the mental disorder is presumed to be caused by employment. Eligible occupations are defined under the *Act* as correctional officers, emergency medical assistants (e.g. paramedics), firefighters (assigned primarily to fire suppression duties), police officers and sheriffs.

WorkSafeBC may accept a psychological condition on claims where the psychological injury develops as a consequence of a physical injury.

Mental disorders require a diagnosis by a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Mental Disorder Claims, by eligibility status:

	Allowed	Disallowed	No Adjudication Required	Pending	Rejected	Suspended	Total
2016	1,253	1,061	250	2	18	1,041	3,625
2017	1,351	1,093	280	4	15	1,191	3,934
2018	1,516	937	282	381	20	1,268	4,404

Not all claims registered receive an allow or disallow decision. A significant number of claims are suspended by workers and therefore do not proceed through the decision-making process. This happens after the claims are registered and is often a choice workers make to not proceed with the requirements of the claims investigation, including obtaining a diagnosis from a psychologist or psychiatrist. Suspended claims may proceed at a future point and receive an allow or disallow decision. A smaller number of claims are classified as no adjudication required, or rejected. These claims may have been filed in error or when the worker was employed by an employer not covered under the *Act* in BC.

Allow rates for Mental Disorder Claims:

In 2018, on mental disorder claims where an allow/disallow decision was made, 62% were allowed.

The increase in the allow rate in 2018 is largely a result of the new presumption for eligible occupations, and policy and practice changes that clarified how evidence of a traumatic event and a significant stressor should be assessed.

	Allowed	
	Number	Percent
2016	1,253	54%
2017	1,351	55%
2018	1,516	62%

- These percentages are for claims where an allow/disallow decision was made.
- The allow rate is the number of claims with an allow decision, as a percentage of the claims where an allow/disallow decision was made.
- This allow rate will fluctuate over time as eligibility decisions continue to be updated.

Mental Disorder Claims Allowed for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

To be allowed for compensation, a mental disorder claim requires a DSM V diagnosis by a psychologist or psychiatrist. Of the mental disorder claims reported in 2018, 1,516 were allowed for a mental disorder and of these 344 have an accepted PTSD injury.

	Mental disorder claims reported	Mental disorder claims allowed	Mental disorder claims with an accepted PTSD injury
2016	3,625	1,253	252
2017	3,934	1,351	266
2018	4,404	1,516	344

Mental Disorder Claims – Presumption:

In May 2018, the *Workers Compensation Act* was amended to introduce a presumption for mental disorders. For workers in eligible occupations, who have been exposed to traumatic event(s) in their work and have been diagnosed with a mental disorder as a reaction to that trauma, the mental disorder is presumed to be caused by employment. Eligible occupations are defined under the *Act* as correctional officers, emergency medical assistants (e.g. paramedics), firefighters (assigned primarily to fire suppression duties), police officers and sheriffs.

In 2018, of the 4,404 new mental disorder claims reported to WorkSafeBC, 264 were adjudicated under the presumptive clause in section 5.1 (1.1) of the *Act*. On these claims, where an allow/disallow decision was made, 95% of claims were allowed.

Report Methodology & Data Notes

In 2018, WorkSafeBC refined the reporting methodology for mental disorder claims. Mental disorder claim volumes in 2016 and 2017 have been restated from previous documents.

A mental disorder claim is identified as a claim that has a new and first psychological injury added on the claim in the reporting year. This can be a newly registered claim where the psychological injury is the first and only injury on the claim, or this can be an allowed physical injury claim where a new psychological injury is accepted on the claim.

A psychological injury is defined by having an ICD-9 code in the psychological injury range from 290 to 319, with the exception of ICD-9 3079 which is used for occupational disease.

The 2018 claims data reflects the eligibility decision on the claim file at January 31, 2019. The 2016 and 2017 claims data reflects the eligibility decision on the claim file at November 30, 2018. These numbers will fluctuate over time, as eligibility decisions continue to be updated. For example, a number of claims that were initially suspended will move to a decision if the worker decides to proceed with a psychological assessment. Another example is when a review or appeal decision is reached that results in a different eligibility decision.

Beginning January 1, 2016, claims reported for mental disorders have been coded with an occupation. For data prior to 2016, only accepted time-loss claims were coded with an occupation.

Additional Data Tables:

Mental Disorder Claims Reported to WorkSafeBC, by industry subsector:

Industry subsectors with more than 100 mental disorder claims reported in 2018 are listed.

Industry subsector	2016	2017	2018
Total - all sectors	3,625	3,934	4,404
Health Care and Social Services	1,002	1,111	1,387
Transportation and Related Services	365	387	385
Public Administration	243	320	339
Education	213	234	293
Accommodation, Food, and Leisure Services	259	220	256
Retail	266	248	247
Other Services (not elsewhere specified)	182	182	227
General Construction	154	182	192
Federal Government	113	123	168
Deposit Sector 11 (Provincial Government and Crown Corporations)	96	102	151
Business Services	133	140	120

Mental Disorder Claims Reported to WorkSafeBC, by occupation:

The five eligible occupations (defined in the presumptive clause in section 5.1 (1.1) of the Act) plus other occupations with more than 100 mental disorder claims reported in 2018 are listed.

Occupation	2016	2017	2018
Total - All Occupations	3,625	3,934	4,404
Correctional officer	73	58	124
Paramedical occupations	116	114	193
Firefighter	52	66	91
Police	27	97	61
Sheriffs and bailiffs	<3	5	0
Nurse	267	340	394
Social and community service workers	204	228	281
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	140	157	187
Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	139	129	172
Teacher and assistant	113	116	171
Retail salespersons	110	80	112
Transport truck drivers	121	115	111

Mental Disorder Claims reported in 2018, by occupation:

The five eligible occupations (defined in the presumptive clause in section 5.1 (1.1) of the Act) plus other occupations with more than 100 mental disorder claims reported in 2018 are listed. The allow rate is the number of claims with an allow decision, as a percentage of the claims where an allow/disallow decision was made.

Occupation	2018				
	Claims Reported	Allowed	Disallowed	Allow Rate	Accepted PTSD injury
Total - All Occupations	4,404	1,516	937	62%	344
Correctional officer	124	80	10	89%	39
Paramedical occupations	193	104	12	90%	62
Firefighter	91	45	9	83%	30
Police	61	30	7	81%	17
Sheriffs and bailiffs	0	0	0	0%	0
Nurse	394	117	77	60%	16
Social and community service workers	281	96	45	68%	23
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	187	58	31	65%	11
Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	172	58	43	57%	5
Teacher and assistant	171	41	40	51%	6
Retail salespersons	112	36	29	55%	8
Transport truck drivers	111	62	16	79%	8

Mental Disorder Claims reported in 2017, by occupation:

The five eligible occupations (defined in the presumptive clause in section 5.1 (1.1) of the Act) plus other occupations with more than 100 mental disorder claims reported in 2018 are listed. The allow rate is the number of claims with an allow decision, as a percentage of the claims where an allow / disallow decision was made.

Occupation	2017				
	Claims Reported	Allowed	Disallowed	Percent Allowed	Accepted PTSD injury
Total - All Occupations	3,934	1,351	1,093	55%	266
Correctional officer	58	40	6	87%	13
Paramedical occupations	114	51	19	73%	19
Firefighter	66	28	16	64%	19
Police	97	23	9	72%	11
Sheriffs and bailiffs	5	<3	<3	50%	0
Nurse	340	112	71	61%	13
Social and community service workers	228	91	54	63%	20
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	157	49	49	50%	7
Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	129	66	36	65%	8
Teacher and assistant	116	33	36	48%	<3
Retail salespersons	80	13	32	29%	5
Transport truck drivers	115	73	21	78%	15

Mental Disorder Claims reported in 2016, by occupation:

The five eligible occupations plus other occupations (defined in the presumptive clause in section 5.1 (1.1) of the Act) with more than 100 mental disorder claims reported in 2018 are listed. The allow rate is the number of claims with an allow decision, as a percentage of the claims where an allow/disallow decision was made.

Occupation	2016				
	Claims Reported	Allowed	Disallowed	Percent Allowed	Accepted PTSD injury
Total - All Occupations	3,625	1,253	1,061	54%	252
Correctional officer	73	39	19	67%	14
Paramedical occupations	116	57	24	70%	27
Firefighter	52	27	11	71%	13
Police	27	14	<3	88%	7
Sheriffs and bailiffs	<3	0	<3	0%	0
Nurse	267	94	67	58%	20
Social and community service workers	204	76	48	61%	17
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	140	40	37	52%	7
Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	139	57	48	54%	<3
Teacher and assistant	113	36	30	55%	6
Retail salespersons	110	33	33	50%	4
Transport truck drivers	121	76	20	79%	18