



PSYCHOLOGICAL CLAIMS & MANAGEMENT

Is your company equipped to deal with increasing psychological (stress) claims?

Statistics for financial year 2012- 2013 from the major WorkCover agents show the costs of psychological claims can be double a non-psychological claim.

There is certainly a preoccupation amongst employers with the physical welfare of employees to ensure they fulfil their obligations under the state-based WorkCover bodies' acts and WHS&E.

But what of psychological claims? It may be related to the persons work or it may be non-work related factors that lead these employees to lodge psychological (commonly known as 'stress') claims?

Some of the most common work related factors are:

- High workload.
- Poor management skills of supervisors.
- Performance management.
- Interpersonal conflict with co-workers.
- Performance investigations or complaints.
- Exposure to aggressive clients.

Non-work related psycho-social factors include:

- Health, family or financial issues.
- Pre-existing psychological disorders.

Not all work related factors are compensable and it is the insurer's role to investigate the claims being made and determine liability.

On Track can assist you with psychological claims by:

- Coaching the employer to maintain the relationship by communication and support for the worker. We understand the relationship needs to continue on past the resolution of the psych claim.
- Ensuring the insurer has correct factual information when determining liability or to reasonably excuse the claim.
- All parties being kept informed and understand the process for psych claims.

Employers who have been involved in these matters should consider it a learning opportunity. To avoid or minimise similar situations in the future it may require a revision of recruitment criteria; management skills; role expectation and performance appraisal.

By supporting your workers immediately and professionally you ensure the financial and social impact to your business is minimised.

At On Track our goal is to 'bridge the gap' by working with employers to manage their responsibilities in relation to reducing these issues within their organisations by developing and implementing appropriate intervention programs and management systems.

**Call Ontrack today
1300 854 550**





PSYCHOLOGICAL CLAIMS & MANAGEMENT

IMPORTANT FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURY

- On average 5% of claims made are for psychological injury and this figure is rapidly rising.
- Psychological (stress) claims are the most expensive form of workers' compensation claims because of the often lengthy periods of absence from work, typical of these claims.
- More professionals made claims for mental stress than other any other occupation with over a third of their claims made for work demands.
- Statistics for financial year 2012- 2013 from the major WorkCover agents show the costs of psychological claims can be double a non-psychological claim.
- An employer needs to show evidence of a clear documented process that has been undertaken when addressing a psychological claim. WorkCover NSW states "No compensation is payable for a psychological injury if the injury was wholly or predominantly caused by reasonable action taken or proposed to be taken by or on behalf of the employer with respect to transfer, demotion, promotion, performance appraisal, discipline, retrenchment, dismissal or provision of employment benefits." All other states have similar guidelines.
- If you cannot show clear evidence you have undertaken a reasonable process it is likely the claim may be accepted.
- Work demands are one of the most common sources of work-related stress. 'While workers need challenging tasks to maintain their interest and motivation, and to develop new skills, it is important that demands do not exceed their ability to cope. Workers can usually cope with demanding work if it is not excessive, if they are supported by supervisors and colleagues, and if they are given the right amount of autonomy' www.worksafe.qld.gov.au
- Early intervention and action is essential whenever an organisation becomes aware of a staff member who is displaying symptoms of mental stress. Intervention can prevent the situation escalating to a claim