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From: Lori Stewart <Lori.Stewart@ubcp.com>
Sent: July 16, 2019 3:41 PM
To: Info@wcbreview.ca
Subject: WCB feedback

Hello Janet,

I recently filled out the online questionnaire but didn't get to finish my thoughts. I was expecting more boxes to fill out when I clicked NEXT, but the survey ended.

I am an advocate for our members at the Union of BC Performers/ACTRA. We have a significant amount of workers with brain injuries do to stunt performance and various accidents on sets. I have several members who have 'fallen between the cracks' of the WCB system due to the nature of their head injuries. Their situations are quite dire and tragic. They should be on compensation but for a multitude of failures, their claims fizzled out and now they have nothing.

What I know about people with concussions, post concussion syndrome or TBIs in the Worker's Compensation system:

- They are like a boat lost at sea. For even reporting their injury to WCB, they don't know what to do, how to do it or if they have already done it.
- They make mistakes on the online forms (F6) or are not fully coherent when they speak to someone on Teleclaim – these 'errors' they make can haunt them later in their claim.
- They get easily flustered and often forget what they have just been told by case managers. These 'memory lapses' are often mistaken by a case manager as being 'lazy' or 'that their injury can't be that bad if they are not following through'.
- They don't understand the consequences if they forget appointments, or forget that they have to check in with their doctor, etc. Again, these 'lapses' affect their claim.
- They don't understand the appeal process and rarely even know if they are getting properly compensated – they just trust WCB has it right – they are totally vulnerable.
- They often can't comprehend money or finances. They spend money they don't really have, and have no idea that perhaps their compensation might end if they are not careful.
- They don't have the capacity to think of the future – retraining to a different occupation or figuring out how to retire, etc. They are just stuck in this present, confused, vulnerable state.
- They forget or don't comprehend that they need to pay taxes. This opens up a whole other bad situation where CRA comes knocking and the workers don't understand what's happening to them and CRA starts to garnish their compensation. Ultimately, this drives workers into poverty with declining mental and physical health. Bankruptcy, may be their only relieve but that opens more challenges and confusion as they try to live out their lives.
- The most vulnerable workers are single with no one to help them navigate the WCB system with all it's do's and don'ts.
- People with concussions often introvert. They don't often ask for help from anyone. They suffer in silence and let things happen to them that could have been in their control if they had their wits about them.

What is really needed for any worker diagnosed with a concussion or TBI:

- As soon as WCB receives a report of a worker with a head injury, they should be assigned a single dedicated occupational therapist/case manager. They need to deal with only one person who can spend more time with them, help them and/or their family or support person navigate the system.

- Some workers get bounced around to several case managers to the point that they don't even know who is handling their file. They simply don't have the capacity to deal with the changing landscape.
- Having one person who actually understands head injuries help them with their paperwork, appointments, assessments, etc. would be incredibly helpful and would help ensure workers don't simply 'fall out' of the system because they can't figure it out.
- A calendar/reminder system needs to be established between the worker and WCB. Calendar reminders with prompts seem to help a lot of people with head injuries. So if they need a monthly reminder to check in with their doctor, the WCB OT could add that to the calendar. Or if they have an appeal decision coming up, a reminder should be in place to talk to their family, advocate or OT/Case manager.
- For any injury (and especially head injury), that passes the 11 week mark and heads in to more of a long term disability, there should be a presumption of depression.
 - There should be a mandatory check in with a WCB counsellor to assess their mental health at the 11 week mark.
 - Being injured affects all aspects of one's life – social, financial, personal, physical, emotional, spiritual. Injured workers need to be monitored for mental health issues to prevent further declines in their health and well being. This could potentially save WCB money if they put themselves in a position where they could prevent further declines in injured workers.
- **TREATMENTS** –
 - There are many different programs that WCB puts people through. In my experience, some have been good and some have been bad. I have had good success with “Back In Motion” in Surrey. Not sure if it is because of skilled individual occupational therapists there or if their program simply has figured out proper rehab for those with brain injuries.
 - Concussions are tricky as we are still learning so much about how the brain works and heals. And each injury and individual is different. Many of my members have sought non-traditional medical approaches in an effort to heal their brains. Many have had very good success and have made progress. Treatments are often costly and not reimbursable by WCB. This needs to change. Chiro, massage, physio, acupuncture, functional neurology, physical therapy, LENS, hyperbaric and other forms of treatments should be considered for workers with concussions.
 - Patience is key with concussions. There should not be pressure on the worker to do anything above symptom thresholds – work, activity, etc. Sending workers back to work too early sets them up for failure and prolongs their injury.
We've had this happen a few times. And the worker doesn't question it (as they don't really question anything) and assume that if their case manager says they are healed, I guess they are healed. They go back to work and often get injured again.

Bottom line, more needs to be done for all workers who suffer concussions or TBIs in the workplace. They need much more 'hands on' assistance than other injured workers who are not brain injured. Advocates like myself don't even hear about some concussed workers until it is too late – things have been so badly mis-managed right from the start. Things have to be better managed on the WCB side when it comes to head injuries.

Thanks for all you are doing... it is such important work!

Respectfully,

LORI STEWART

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