INJURED WORKER STIGMA FRAMEWORK

WHAT IS STIGMA? Stigma is a mark of disgrace that negatively sets a person apart from others. It is based on myths, misunderstandings and stereotypes that lead to stigmatization and discrimination. It affects our actions because it involves creating a negative image, looking for it and then discounting people that fall short of our expectations.

WHY IS STIGMA HARMFUL? Stigma causes us to devalue workers. It creates feelings of shame, blame, hopelessness, depression, distress, secrecy, loneliness, isolation and social exclusion and can delay recovery and return to work. It can affect the service workers get from WSIB and the health care community as well as affect their employment prospects.

WHAT DO WE WANT? Understanding of the consequences of injury and the impact of stigma on the injured worker (IW). IW treated promptly, fairly, with dignity.

- WHERE DO WE FIND IT? -**WORKERS' WORKPLACE HEALTHCARE SOCIETY AS A WHOLE COMPENSATION SYSTEM** Employer organizations, **COMMUNITY** Community leaders, mass **THROUGH** WSIB, service providers, Worker organizations, **Health Professional** media, schools, opinion **AWCBC** employees, co-workers, unions leaders, government Associations and schools AREA **STIGMA** WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? CHANGES REVERBER-ATES PERCEPTION perception of fraud: "I see attitude: "If you can go to the resistance to workers' suspicion (coworkers think my injured worker neighbour doctor, you can go to work" they're lazy; employers think compensation bureaucracy THROUGH gardening - must be fraud." stereotyping language they're scammers) FLOWS reluctance to treat injured worker lack of understanding of injury CHANGE health care providers think they poorly worded forms • resentment and recovery IW excluded in messaging lack of awareness take up too much time IN ANY • neighbours think they they're on the gravy train WHAT CHANGES ARE WHAT CHANGES ARE WHAT CHANGES ARE WHAT CHANGES ARE **NEEDED? NEEDED?** NEEDED? **NEEDED?** awareness culture shift appreciate the position of the social marketing customer service: "We are healthcare professional make room in WSIB's safety support here to help you." education in the workplace don't blame patient talks for positive messages mission statement that education in the healthcare understanding and support: includes injured workers "I see my injured worker community recognize time to heal – neighbour gardening – that's understanding of disability wonderful, maybe I can lend management a hand."

WHAT'S NEXT? ACTION

- Organize a voice for change; recognize the voice of the injured workers
- Continue to look for opportunities to challenge the groups above to treat workers with dignity and respect

GETTING INJURED ON THE JOB IS NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF; STIGMATIZING INJURED WORKERS IS.

acknowledge IW contributions

WSIB ACTIONS

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) has partnered with the Research Action Alliance on the Consequences of Work Injury (RAACWI) to help eliminate prejudice and discrimination against injured workers. Initiatives to address this problem include:

- Raising awareness about stigma and its effects with all WSIB employees – especially those who deal directly with injured workers.
- Working collaboratively with human resources to develop tools to use when recruiting new employees
- Developing customized learning solutions for WSIB staff and management to enhance understanding and skills

- Examining our systems and procedures to address those that reinforce stigma. For example, we've created a worker sensitivity check tool to be used during the development or updating of new or existing written communication to help identify if the communication might promote or reinforce social stigma.
- Identifying and removing stigmatizing language from WSIB publications and websites
- Examining the values and behaviours we expect from WSIB employees
- Bringing the issue of injured worker stigma to the forefront of our outreach initiatives
- Making sure that our contracted service providers understand and share our responsibility to treat injured and ill workers with dignity and respect.

More information about Injured Worker Stigma can be found in the WSIB/RAACWI brochure titled "SHAME ON YOU: THE FACTS ABOUT INJURED WORKER STIGMA"