

Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear potential participant,

Lakehead University researchers Drs. Deborah Scharf and Anna Koné in partnership with the Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic (IWC) and the Thunder Bay District Injured Workers Support Group (TBDIWSG) are inviting you to participate in our study called *Mental Health Needs of Thunder Bay and District Injured and Ill Workers in the WSIB Process*. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have had a workplace related injury or illness and have submitted a claim to Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). Please take time to make your decision. Ask questions about anything you don't understand.

Purpose

The Lakehead University Psychology and Health Sciences researchers Drs. Deborah Scharf and Anna Koné are hoping to answer the question: What are the mental health and social service needs of injured and ill workers in the Thunder Bay District? Your experiences could help us improve services for Thunder Bay and District injured and ill workers involved in the WSIB claims process.

What is requested of me as a participant?

If you consent to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey (approximately 30 minutes) OR take part in a one-on-one interview (approximately 60 minutes). Please note that you may have a support person present if needed. In the survey/interview, we will ask you questions about:

- Your personal characteristics (ie. age, gender, ethnicity, health status)
- How the WSIB claims process has affected you psychologically and socially
- What support services you have utilized since making your WSIB claim
- The usefulness and accessibility of the support services you have utilized
- Suggestions for improvement to the WSIB claims process
- Suggestions for additional support services needed in the Thunder Bay District

What are my rights as a participant?

You are under no obligation to participate. Refusal to participate will have no negative repercussions and will in no way effect your current or future ability to access WSIB services. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, it is your right to refuse to be in the study, refuse to answer any question, and withdraw from the study at any time. However, please note that data cannot be withdrawn after it is submitted due to its anonymous nature. After submission, the data will no longer be identifiable and as such it will be impossible to remove from the database.

What are the risks and benefits?

The only foreseeable risk associated with your participation in this research includes distress resulting from sharing your experiences during what may have been a difficult time in your life.

If you feel that you have experienced any form of psychological distress resulting from your participation in this study, Dr. Scharf, a registered clinical and health psychologist with a supervised practice, will be on site at all times and be able to provide informed and appropriate referrals to psychological resources. Additionally, we will have business/referral cards on hand for any participant that wishes to have one. Please see the list provided at the bottom of this section for crisis lines and help services available to you.

- Canadian Mental Health Association Crisis Response Service:
Thunder Bay: 807-346-8282; Toll-Free: 1-888-269-3100
- ConnexOntario: 1-866-531-2600
- Thunder Bay Counselling: 807-684-1880
- Dilico Anishinabek Family Care: 807-624-5818
- Our Kids Count: 807-623-0292 ext. 228
- Catholic Family Development Centre: 807-345-7323

Being in this research study won't help you directly. The information gained from this study may help improve the WSIB claims process for future applicants. If you complete all parts of the study (either the interview OR the survey, not both), you will be eligible to receive \$20.00 (if you choose to complete the survey) or \$40.00 (if you choose to complete the interview) in gift cards to select locations as compensation for your time.

How will my confidentiality be maintained?

Keeping your information private is a top priority of our research team. We take several steps to keep all your information private and secure, including:

- Any written information you give us about yourself will be kept private and will not be linked to your name.
- We will audio-record the interviews and then have what was said transcribed (written-down). We will not record names or any other identifying information in our notes. Once transcribed, the recordings will be destroyed.
- When we share the results of our research, we will only describe the results of this study in a group format (e.g., 36 adults took part in our study and 15 of them found it hard to navigate the WSIB compensation system). Any direct quotations used will not be linked to you in any way.
- All data provided will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a minimum of 5 years following the completion of the project. Data will be accessible by researchers Dr. Deborah Scharf, Dr. Anna Koné, Dr. Amanda Maranzan, Jewel Kozik, Joshua Hawkins, and Ryley Russell.

What will my data be used for?

Themes emerging from the data will be used to inform the development of reports describing the mental health and social service needs of injured and ill workers in Thunder Bay and District who are engaged in the WSIB process, and especially those who are dissatisfied with their WSIB experience and/or engaged in the WSIB appeals process. The results of this work may be useful to policymakers and related agencies interested in building capacity and making reforms to

improve outcomes for injured and ill workers in need of mental health, social service, and legal aid. Themes will not include any identifiable personal data from any individual participant. Specific findings will be presented in group format (e.g., 36 adults took part in our study and 15 of them found it difficult to navigate the WSIB compensation system), and some key comments from the interviews may be quoted. These comments will in no way be linked to you, and will not compromise your anonymity in any way. Additionally, we will present the findings from this research at academic conferences and in academic journals. We will not identify any individual participant in the study. The data that we collect will be kept anonymous and confidential.

How can I receive a copy of the research results?

When we have finished the project, you can learn about the study results, by email, if you like. To inquire about the status or results of the study, please email Dr. Deborah Scharf at dscharf1@lakeheadu.ca.

What if I want to withdraw from the study?

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. However, please note that data cannot be withdrawn after it is submitted due to its anonymous nature. After submission, the data will no longer be identifiable and as such it will be impossible to remove from the database.

Researcher Contact Information

If you would like to enroll in this study please contact us at wcstudy.psych@lakeheadu.ca or 807-343-8563.

If you are a participant and have any questions about the study or wish to receive a copy of the results please email Dr. Deborah Scharf at dscharf1@lakeheadu.ca or Dr. Anna Koné at akone@lakeheadu.ca.

Funding

This study is funded by the Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic (IWC).

Research Ethics Board review and approval

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Thank you!