Disabled \ Injured Workers and Housing Instability in Newfoundland & Labrador
What is Housing Instability?

- Frequent moves
- Inaccessible home environment
- Housing far from supports and services
- Rent disproportionate to income
- Mortgage foreclosure
- Couch surfing, hidden homelessness
Many workers do not report injuries
"Told you so."
Data Sources & Analysis

- WHSCRD decisions (1996-2011)
- Literature review
- Online resources i.e. videos, media coverage
- Conferences, community meetings
- Interviews
Injured Workers Who Moved

- Moved post injury: 56 (60%)
- Did not move: 34 (36%)
- Uncertain: 3 (3%)
Reasons for Moving

- Looking for work: 16 (27%)
- No information: 14 (23%)
- Proximity to assistance or medical care: 10 (16%)
- Accessibility: 6 (10%)
- Retraining: 5 (8%)
- Financial issues: 4 (6%)
- Primary residence elsewhere: 2 (3%)
- Family: 2 (3%)
Housing as a social determinant of mental health
Where you live influences how you live
Some Housing Factors that Influence Health

- Limited Heating
- Overcrowding
- Local Crime
- Presence of “green space”
- Housing Stability
- Housing Affordability
- Housing Tenure
Housing Factors that Influence Mental Health

- Frequent Moves
- Lack of Mortgage Affordability
- Housing Affordability Stress
17 of 93 (18%) injured workers mentioned serious psychological difficulties i.e. depression, ptsd, substance abuse, agoraphobia & suicide.

Workers mentioned legal processes, chronic pain and loss of their homes as causes of emotional difficulties.
We don't want you! You are: sick! dangerous! threatening! acting like a criminal!

We are not hurting the mentally ill. They are crazy!
## Comparative Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Dataset</th>
<th>Mental Health Dataset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 60% moved post-injury</td>
<td>• 58% moved post-injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 27% moved to seek work</td>
<td>• 17% moved to seek work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 16% moved to seek care</td>
<td>• 17% moved to seek care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 6% moved due to finances</td>
<td>• 35% moved due to finances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 3% moved due to family</td>
<td>• 11% moved due to family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“No Evidence”

The worker, applied for his medications (for depression) to be covered, according to Ms. Vokey, but the Case Manager saw no evidence in the file of depression. This was a clear mistake (according to Vokey.) The worker had to mortgage his house twice, take his daughter out of school, had been treated for depression on a serious level. How, Ms. Vokey wondered, could they actually say that there was no evidence of depression?
Marital Separation

- The worker remained significantly symptomatic throughout this period, and at times was so agoraphobic that our meetings were accomplished through house calls or telephone contact.

WHSCRD Decision 04012
Impact of Video Surveillance

• The worker contends he has been treated unfairly & much like a criminal. He submits that if he could have gone to work, he would have done so. He indicates that his circumstance has resulted in bankruptcy & he had to move away from home because of shame.
workcover

victim
SUICIDE

Words of the Worker

- I was in so much pain, financial & emotional stress, that I started to take more and more medication, mixed with alcohol and it came to a point 11 years ago I completely lost two weeks of my life when I don’t remember a thing. Apparently, my wife tells me I talked about suicide.

WHSCRD Decision 20146
Conclusions

- Injured workers suffered housing instability and psychological distress
- The distress was a response to the injury, loss of income and/or legal processes
- The distress may have impacted upon or been impacted by housing instability
- Compounding factors such as marital separation and video surveillance can exacerbate housing instability and psychological distress
Recommendations

- Shorten adjudicative processes by eliminating internal review & restricting reconsiderations
- Offer benefits pending results of a tribunal decision
- Benefits to be repaid if injury declared non-compensable
- Review Plesner (B.C. Court of Appeal) decision
- Review Battleford vs Gibbs SCC decision
- Provide unlimited psychological support to injured workers
- Collect suicide related data
Bibliography compiled by Chava Finkler


Resources for Injured Workers

Office of Worker Advisor
Judy Vanta (St. John’s)
Phone: 754-3927
Toll Free: 1-800-563-1998
Fax: (709) 754-3928
jvanta@nlfl.nf.ca

John Reardon
Grand Falls-Windsor
Phone: 489-9193
Toll Free: 1-877-489-9193
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Independent Living Resource Centre
4 Escasoni Place, St. John’s NL A1A 3R6
Tel: 722-4031 Fax: 722-0147
TTY 722-7998 Toll Free: 1-866-722-4031 info@ilrc-nl.ca

Legal Aid Commission
Suite 300
251 Empire Avenue
St. John’s, NL
A1C 3H9
Tel: 753-7860 Toll Free: 1-800-563-9911
Fax: 753-6226 Email: nlac@legalaid.nl.ca

House of Assembly
Mel Strong, Appeals Officer
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Newfoundland Labrador Injured Workers Association
Patricia Dodd, President/Spokesperson
General Delivery  Brigus Junction, Newfoundland    A0B 1G0
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Human Rights Commission
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