

A resource guide for Seriously Injured Workers and Their Families



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Introduction

This guide provides information and practical advice to seriously injured workers and their families.

This guide was produced by Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), in partnership with the Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta (WCB), with additional input from Threads of Life, a national, not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting families affected by a workplace tragedy.

The two resource guides in this series are entitled:

- A Resource Guide for Survivors
- A Resource Guide for Seriously Injured Workers and their Families

The image on the cover of both guides is entitled 'Melancolie', created by Albert Gyorgy. The heartbreaking yet inspiring sculpture resides in a small park on the promenade (Quai du Mont Blanc) along the shore of Lake Geneva, Switzerland. The artist has graciously permitted us to use the image. In his words, *"Thank you for your appreciation of my art, it means a lot to me as an artist. I think that what you are doing for these people is a very nice thing. I hope this brochure will be able to help a little bit at least."*

Families like yours – who have also been through a workplace tragedy – have provided valuable insight in the development of these guides. We acknowledge and thank them for their assistance.

About this guide

A serious workplace injury can leave you – the injured worker – in shock, overwhelmed, and in need of immediate support and practical assistance. You may not know what to expect and many questions will arise.

This guide is meant to help you – and your family – understand some of the practical matters that you now have to deal with, as well as some of the services and resources that may be helpful as you recover from the initial injury and adjust to your new realities.

Although this guide is generally addressed to the injured worker, the worker's spouse or partner, the next of kin and other family members, we also hope it assists any other readers who may be playing a supportive role following the injury incident.

Who will contact you?

In the early days and weeks following a serious, life-altering workplace injury, you or your family may be contacted by your employer, the WCB, an OHS investigator, the local police or RCMP, a police victim services representative, friends, relatives, the media and many others. In some cases, you may need to initiate the contact.

Important facts about workplace injuries in Alberta

An injured worker must have been employed by an employer covered under the *Workers' Compensation Act* in order to be eligible for WCB benefits or services. There are some instances in which others may be eligible, such as contractors that are deemed to be workers, or volunteers that may hold worker status under the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

OHS investigates workplace injury incidents that fall within its jurisdiction under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* or other Alberta legislation.

The federal government is responsible for investigating workplace injuries in federally-regulated organizations that operate in Alberta, such as railways, the telecommunications industry, interprovincial transport companies and federal government departments. In some cases, there may be a joint federal-provincial investigation.

Important legislation

Legislation that may be of interest to readers of this guide includes:

- *Occupational Health & Safety Act*, Regulation and Code and other regulations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*
- *Workers' Compensation Act* and associated regulations
- *Powers of Attorney Act*
- *Adult Interdependent Relationships Act* and Alberta Interdependent Partner Agreement Regulation

Please seek legal advice regarding your rights under legislation or common law.

In Alberta, a person is an adult interdependent partner if:

- the person has lived with the other person in a relationship of interdependence for a continuous period of not less than three years, or of some permanence, if there is a child of the relationship by birth or adoption, or
- the person has entered into an adult interdependent partner agreement with the other person.

In this guide, for simplicity, we have shortened all usages of the term *adult interdependent partner* to *partner*. We also use the terms *spouse*, *partner* and *common-law partner* equally, as some federal legislation refers to the *common-law* term. The use of these terms in this guide generally relates to an injured worker's spouse, partner or common-law partner.

Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta (WCB)

There is support available for you and your family after a work-related injury

A severe workplace injury can be life changing. It can be a stressful time for you and your family, and it is expected you will have many questions.

Severe or life-altering injuries can take many forms. Examples of these types of injuries can include:

- Serious burns (i.e., 3rd degree)
- Amputations
- Brain injuries
- Spinal cord injuries
- Traumatic psychological injuries

In the case of a serious injury, an injured worker is typically hospitalized right after the incident, and may remain in a serious or critical condition for some time. In most cases, a WCB case manager will contact the worker and family at this time and visit the hospital.

Have you submitted a claim to WCB?

If you haven't already done so, it is important you submit a Workers' Report of Injury to WCB to begin the claim process.

A family member can also report an injury if you are unable to sign your report.

It is possible the employer or a healthcare professional has already notified WCB of the injury as they are required by law to submit a report to WCB if they have knowledge a workplace accident has occurred.

Visit the WCB website at wcb.ab.ca and select *Report an injury* on the quick links section of the home page.

Not sure how to report? Call WCB at 1-866-922-9221 and they will help.

- Assist in guardianship/trusteeship procedures.
- Arrange referrals for occupational or psychological counseling services.

Types of WCB benefits

There are many benefits and services available to aid in your recovery, improve quality of life and, when appropriate, return to work.

Wage replacement benefits: While you are off work for medical reasons, WCB will replace your wage based on 90 per cent of your net earnings.

Health care benefits: Your case manager will coordinate and authorize for the health care services you need. Examples include hospitalization, surgery and emergency care, treatment by health care professionals, prescription medication, aids to daily living such as wheelchairs or other mobility aids, and contracted services to help you live independently.

- Please remember to keep all your receipts related to health care costs so you can be reimbursed by WCB.
- Make copies to keep in your personal files.
- Be sure to consult with your case manager as some costs may have to be preapproved.

Permanent impairment payment: Permanent impairment can occur in many forms following a serious injury such as the loss of a body part or use of a body part or function, or a permanent change such as disfigurement in any body part. If any of these types of impairment occurs, you may be entitled to a lump sum payment.

Counselling: Many workers who have experienced a life-altering workplace injury say counselling has been very helpful to them and their families in coping with their injury, changes to their life and work, and in moving forward in life.

Return-to-work planning with you and your employer: When an injury happens, your employer is required by law to offer you modified work when it is safe for you to return. WCB's goal is to work with you and your employer to get you back to work safely.

How your WCB case manager will support you

Your injury will be unique to you and may or may not fit into a single category. Many workers experience injuries where one or more body parts or functions are affected. There may be physical or mental impairments, or both, arising from the injury. The effects of a serious or severe injury may be temporary or permanent.

Specialized case managers at WCB will support you during your recovery and help you understand the benefits, supports and services you will receive following your injury. Be sure to ask questions if you don't understand or are wondering about a specific support.

Your case manager will work collaboratively with you, your employer and your health care providers to help you every step of the way. Some of the support they can provide includes:

- Meet with you and your family and/or attend hospital visits.
- Participate in hospital case conferences to coordinate a seamless discharge from hospital.
- Arrange home/vehicle modifications.
- Arrange personal and/or home care.

Re-employment services: If you cannot return to your pre-accident job because of your injury, WCB will help you identify a new job option. A reemployment specialist will work with you to identify your current skills, interests, education and experience to help determine what you need to be successful in a new job. WCB may also pay for training or education related to a new career.

What to do if you disagree with a claim decision – How to request a review of a WCB decision

Your case manager will provide you with a written explanation of claim benefit decisions. Letters will include the rationale for all decisions and invite you to ask questions, so you can fully understand and participate.

If you disagree with a claim benefit decision and are unable to resolve your concerns with your case manager, you can request a formal decision review in writing within one year of the decision date.

Information about the review process and the Request for Review form is available on the WCB website at www.wcb.ab.ca under the Claims tab labeled **Review and appeals**. If you have someone representing you (who is not from the Fair Practices Office), it is important you submit a signed, current Worker's Authorization of a Representative form so WCB can speak directly with your representative and share information with them.

Help is available from the Fair Practices Office – Workers Appeals Advisor Branch

If you'd like assistance submitting a decision review request, you can contact the Fair Practices Office (FPO). The FPO was established to advance the interests of injured workers and their dependants. The FPO acts independently of WCB when representing workers and, whenever possible, they try to work directly with WCB's Customer Service areas to resolve issues so that a formal appeals hearing is not necessary. There is no charge to you for this service.

You can contact their office toll free at 1-866-427-0115.

Can I sue?

The workers' compensation system is no-fault insurance. This means when an accident is accepted as work related and involved a worker covered under the *Workers' Compensation Act*, the worker (and in the case of a fatality, the family), does not have the right to sue any other worker or employer.

If the work injury was caused by a company or person not covered by the Act (a third party), WCB may take legal action against the third party on your behalf. A representative of WCB's Legal Services department will contact you if it appears legal action is warranted.

Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits

If your workplace injury results in a long-lasting or permanent disability that prevents you from working at any job on a regular basis, you may be eligible for the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefit. You must apply in writing for the CPP disability benefit.

There are also benefits available to the children of a person who receives a CPP disability benefit. You must apply in writing on behalf of your children in order for them to receive any benefits.

Can I receive CPP and WCB benefits at the same time?

Yes. WCB does not reduce your WCB benefits even if you also receive CPP benefits. Your case manager may give you additional information or guidance in regards to your CPP application. Note that if you qualify for other disability benefits from other sources, such as private disability insurance, you may not be eligible for the CPP disability benefit.

Other disability benefits

Be sure to check your other potential sources of revenue, whether from disability insurance, employer benefit programs or other forms of insurance. Review all sources of income, and note that some sources may cancel each other out, to some degree. Consult with your WCB case manager, your lawyer and your family to consider all these matters.

Steps in the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Investigation

What to expect when Alberta Occupational Health and Safety OHS officers conduct an investigation.

Arriving at the incident site

- When Alberta OHS learns of a reportable work site incident, an OHS officer is assigned to conduct an investigation.
- The OHS officer is tasked with investigating the incident to understand what has happened and ensure that other workers are not at risk.
- Before arriving at the work site, the OHS officer attempts to contact the work site parties to gather more information about the incident.
- This helps the OHS officer prepare for hazards that may still be present at the work site, or any other variables that may impact the investigation, and address any biosecurity concerns.

Securing the incident site

- Everyone must comply with orders made by OHS officers.
- The OHS officer will direct the companies involved that the incident scene must remain secure, and may ask witnesses of the incident to remain at the scene.

- The OHS officer may also provide further direction depending on the incident. For example, if you were injured by power mobile equipment, the officer may ask for the equipment to be turned off and secured.

Initial steps in the investigation – who will be there, what will they do?

- OHS officers usually work in partners or small teams. They will introduce themselves to the various people at the incident scene to understand who is present.
- If police or fire services are present at the incident, and their investigation is complete, they will release the incident scene to OHS.
- Sometimes the OHS officers will cordon off an area to make a visual boundary of the incident scene, or revise a boundary already established by police.
- While OHS officers may differ in their approach, common activities include attendance at the incident site, taking pictures and measurements, and interviewing people who may have information for the investigation.
- The order of these phases of the investigation could vary based on the particular incident.
- Depending on the size of the incident scene and complexity of the investigation, the OHS officer may call more people to attend the work site to assist them, such as engineers, surveyors and other subject matter experts. This may take time to complete, and – when appropriate – the officer will ensure other work activities are impacted as little as possible.
- Items may be seized by the OHS officer to be examined off site. The officer will issue a receipt for the items. All items seized will be returned to their rightful owner.

Completing the initial investigation and corrective actions (orders and demands)

- Once the OHS officer(s) has completed work at the incident site, they will meet with the involved parties and release the incident scene to the appropriate regulated party (e.g. the employer).

- Compliance orders, stop work orders, stop use orders (e.g. on the involved machinery or equipment), administrative penalties, and prosecutions are enforcement tools used to address non-compliance identified through the investigation.
- There may be orders issued to parties involved to resolve any outstanding health and safety concerns. This helps prevent the same incident from happening again.
 - An order is a directive issued from an OHS officer to a regulated party (e.g. employer, supplier, supervisor etc.) to make sure the employer complies and meets the minimum requirements outlined in OHS legislation.
- The order will have a due date for corrective action to take place.
- After the OHS officer leaves the work site, additional information from the work site may be sought in the form of a demand. *Please note: this process could change depending on the circumstances of the incident.*
 - A demand is a document that compels production and lists incident information the OHS officer requires. For example, the officer may want to see a contract between the prime contractor and a contractor they hired.
- The OHS officer may also re-interview witnesses and other staff as more questions can arise during the investigation process.
- Lastly, there is a statutory requirement for an investigation, and corresponding report, to be completed by a regulated party (either a prime contractor or employer) regarding all workplace incidents that are reportable to Alberta OHS.
 - The officer will send a demand requesting a copy of the regulated party's investigation report (this could be several months after the incident). The regulated party may need to contact the work site employer or other regulated parties to get the information required to complete the investigation. This investigation will often include corrective actions to help prevent repeat incidents.

Completing the investigation

- When the incident results in a life-altering injury or a fatality, the officer completes an OHS investigation report and conducts a review for enforcement action. A review for enforcement action is a process in which the OHS officer presents the file to a panel and a decision is made on whether to send the case to Special Prosecutions and Alberta Justice for regulatory prosecution review.
- If the panel determines the file does not need to be reviewed by Alberta Justice, the process for closing the file begins.
- If the file is sent to Alberta Justice, the OHS prosecutor will review all the materials and information gathered from the OHS investigation. This includes items such as witness statements, documentation on workplace procedures, investigator's notes, health and safety manuals, photographs, manufacturer's specifications and expert reports.
- After this review, the OHS prosecutor may recommend to OHS that charges be laid, in accordance with Alberta Justice guidelines. Charges will only be recommended if there is enough evidence to prove wrongdoing on the part of the regulated parties, and that there is a reasonable likelihood of conviction.
- OHS must lay charges within two years of the incident date. Charges may be laid against employers, prime contractors, suppliers, service providers, owners, contractors, supervisors or workers. They may be charged jointly or individually.
- Prosecutions are conducted in the public interest, with a general aim to have a deterrent effect on regulated parties by handing down fines, penalties, creative sentences or a combination of sentences available under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.
- After all court proceedings are concluded, the investigation report will initially be shared with you as the injured worker, then with the employer, and lastly, posted on the Alberta OHS website after the file is closed.

Status of the investigation and court proceedings

You can contact the OHS investigation specialist to ask questions about Alberta OHS, safety standards or the investigation process at any time. Specific details regarding the incident or the evidence collected cannot be provided until all legal proceedings, if any, are complete. The OHS investigation specialist will also notify you when charges are laid, if any, and upcoming court dates, when required.

OHS assigns a lead investigator to each serious injury incident. The lead investigator keeps in touch with you throughout the investigation.

After the initial site investigation, the lead investigator provides a general update on the status of the investigation at this early stage. Typically, the initial serious injury investigation takes three to five days. The lead investigator usually speaks with you, if possible, to obtain a statement, as you may have information relevant to the investigation.

It can take up to six months or more to complete the Injury Incident Report. Injury Incident Reports are completed in sequence, based on the date of the injury incident. In many cases, the lead investigator meets with you. This allows you to see how the report is coming along, and clarify facts, rumours or issues about the case.

What if the media calls?

When someone is seriously injured in a workplace fatality incident, the media may report on the matter. Members of the media may contact you, your family or friends for a comment about what has happened.

The following may be helpful to you.

- You do not have to speak with the media if you do not want to.
- If you choose to speak to the media, you may want to appoint a spokesperson. This could be a family member or a friend of the family.

- Always ask the name of the journalist and what media outlet they represent. Take their contact numbers.
- Don't bow to pressure. Feel free to tell the reporter that you will call them back if you're feeling rushed or you are not ready to talk, or if you've changed your mind and no longer want to speak to them.
- Be firm about what you do and do not want to discuss with the media. Talk with your family members and be very clear as a family about what is okay to say publicly.
- Avoid speculation or guessing.
- If you are not comfortable with any question, say so, and don't answer it.
- You can set boundaries with the media – stick to what you're comfortable with.
- It is recommended to seek legal counsel prior to speaking to the media. Legal concerns include defamation law, prejudicing claims that might be available to the individual, or self-incrimination.

Other practical matters

During this very difficult time, you and your family will be busy and may feel overwhelmed. There are many details and practical matters to attend to, so we have included a checklist to help keep you on track.

Depending on the extent of your injury, your family members may help you carry out some of these tasks. The list is not comprehensive and some items may not apply to your situation.

Use the space at the bottom of the list to add your own items.

Checklist:

- Organize and update your financial affairs and official documents.
- Determine all of your assets and liabilities.
- You and/or a family member may want to meet with your personal banking officer to discuss your situation. Review all automatic withdrawals with the bank.

- Check to see if disability insurance has been purchased for mortgage or other loans or credit card payments.
- You may need a copy of your tax return from the previous year. This may be used by various organizations to determine pension eligibility.
- Find or obtain title documents for property, mortgages, bonds, debentures and any other investment certificates. Contact insurance companies, brokers, employers, financial institutions.
- Contact your employer in regards to outstanding salary, employer or union insurance plans/benefits or other matters.
- You and your family members should keep all receipts for expenses incurred after the injury incident, such as hotel bills, meals, parking, transportation and mileage. WCB may reimburse the family for reasonable costs, if receipts are provided.
- In the weeks ahead, keep a copy of all receipts and correspondence for your records. This includes medical matters, as well as contacts with WCB, OHS and other agencies.

- Your family doctor and/or other medical treatment providers can refer you to a wide range of locally available services.
- Remember to take care of yourself. Take part in activities that provide you comfort, such as talking to friends or reading a book. If your injury presents you with new physical or mental limitations, it will take time to adjust. You may not be able to do all of the things you could do in the past. Ask for help from medical staff, loved ones and friends to help you make adjustments and learn new approaches to living.
- Write down your thoughts or regularly keep a journal.
- Reach out to others as much as you can. Contact support groups in your area (see Support Organizations below). Know that others have travelled a similar path and will talk freely with you and your family when you feel the need.

Make a list of things to do and update it frequently.

- Consider keeping a log of everything that happens including services provided, your medical options and treatments, and any other issues or matters that arise.
- You and/or your family members may feel overwhelmed with information. Try to enlist the support of family members and friends to help you keep in balance during this difficult time.
- Ask for help. When your friends say, “please let me know what I can do” they really mean it. Let them help you.
- In the hospital, you may be contacted by a staff social worker. Make use of any assistance or support this person provides. Ask for help in accessing community resources, including resources for persons with disabilities.

Additional practical matters

Legal matters

You are advised to seek legal counsel in dealing with any legal matters.

Power of Attorney

In some cases, a worker who has been severely injured may be less able than before to deal with financial matters or transactions. This may be because you are hospitalized, in a long-term care facility or living with serious physical limitations affecting your ability to manage your own affairs.

In such cases, you may authorize someone to act as your agent in financial matters. Authorizing someone to act as your agent is called Power of Attorney. On your authority, your agent can then deal with banking transactions, your properties or investments, and other matters, in accordance with your directives.

Enduring Power of Attorney

In other cases, an injured worker or the worker's family may wish to appoint someone in the role of Enduring Power of Attorney. This may occur when:

- you have a mental impairment or disability, caused by the serious workplace injury.
- you expect your medical condition to change over time, resulting in mental impairment or disability.

In both of these scenarios, you are not able to make decisions about your affairs. For example, a worker who sustained a brain injury may experience difficulty making important financial decisions. The person authorized to act as your agent or attorney can deal with properties, investments, and all aspects of your assets and finances.

You or family members should get legal guidance before granting anyone the Power of Attorney or Enduring Power of Attorney. These are legal documents and must be signed in front of witnesses.

About guardians and trustees

In some cases, after you have been severely injured, the Courts may play a role in appointing a trustee or guardian.

- *Trusteeship Order* – Court appoints a trustee to manage your finances and property.
- *Guardianship Order* – Court appoints a guardian to make personal decisions for you.

For more information about guardians, trustees and related matters, contact Alberta Justice.

Distress, grief and bereavement

Whether you have experienced a severe injury or are part of the injured worker's family, try your best to share your feelings with others. It takes courage and time to deal with all the feelings and issues you may be going through, and we hope this resource guide helps you cope.

Grief is defined as a “universal human response to loss.” There are four stages of working through loss:

- Accepting the reality of the loss.** This stage must be worked through on all levels of your being — emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual. This is about coming to terms with the meaning of your “new normal” as it unfolds on a daily basis.
- The feelings associated with the loss.** These feelings are painful and confusing, and expressing them is important to healing. Find a supportive environment where you can express these complex feelings safely.
- Adjusting to the new reality.** This stage includes coming to terms with new limitations and taking on new roles that often require adjustments to your daily life.
- Reinvesting in life after the loss.** This stage is about commitment to self-care — eating properly, eliminating negative or destructive behaviours, seeking support, and investing in new

relationships and activities. It's a time to begin to find a measure of strength and purpose in surviving your serious injury. Working through this stage ultimately leads to creating a "new world" with beliefs and ideas that incorporate the injury and adjust to your new reality.

We encourage you – as an injured worker or a family member – to get counselling assistance through any or all stages of your loss. Your counsellor will help you through the initial phases of grief and the long recovery process.

If you have children, seek out similar counselling and support services for them. Children will be going through their own phases of distress, grief and bereavement.

Support organizations

If you are simply feeling alone, at any time, do not be afraid to call a distress line or support network organization in your area. At any stage of grief or loss, it helps to talk with someone.

Threads of Life – association for workplace tragedy family support

Threads of Life is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting families who have been affected by a workplace tragedy. Threads of Life provides families with one-on-one peer support through trained Volunteer Family Guides who have also experienced a workplace tragedy. This peer support service is the only one of its kind worldwide. Threads of Life also provides assistance and referral to professional support services, and promotes public awareness and accountability for workplace health and safety.

- threadsoflife.ca
- stepsforlife.ca
- 1-888-567-9490
- contact@threadsoflife.ca

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

As a nation-wide, voluntary organization, the CMHA promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness. The CMHA accomplishes this mission through advocacy, education, research and service.

CMHA branches across Canada provide a wide range of innovative services and supports to people who are experiencing mental illness and their families.

Edmonton branch – open 24/7

- edmonton.cmha.ca
- The Distress Line – 482-HELP (4357)

Calgary Distress Centre – open 24/7

The centre offers a main crisis and addictions line, as well as four specialty phone lines providing crisis intervention and referral services.

- 403-266-HELP (4357)
Main Crisis & Addictions Line
- 403-264-TEEN (8336) Teen Line or
Text: 587-333-2724

211 Service in Alberta

Some areas in Alberta have a 24-hour 2-1-1 service, which will provide you with contacts to a wide range of social services, including distress lines, counselling, bereavement groups or other types of support organizations. Visit ab.211.ca to see if a 211 service is available in your region.

Kids Help Phone

This service offers phone and web counselling in French and English to children and teenagers, aged 4-19. It also assists adults aged 20 and over find the counselling service they need. Parents, teachers and any other concerned adults are welcome to call for information and referral services.

- KidsHelpPhone.ca
- 1-800-668-6868

Psychologists' Association of Alberta (PAA)

The PAA provides a free service to help you locate qualified psychologists in your community to meet your particular needs or situation, or those of your family members. Search online at the association website, or use the telephone referral service.

- psychologistsassociation.ab.ca
- Edmonton: 780-424-0294
- 1-888-424-0297 (Alberta-wide)

Online resources

Here are two examples of online services. Conduct your own search online for useful websites, online resources, books, support groups or other kinds of organizations. If you are not familiar with online searches, enlist the help of friends or family members.

GriefNet.org

This is an Internet community of people dealing with grief, death and major loss with the help of e-mail support groups. Includes an extensive library and bookstore.

- griefnet.org

Suggested reading

We have carefully chosen a selection of books that may help. You may find some of them at your local library. We suggest you also ask your faith contact, friends and family for their recommended reading. You may also wish to do an online search for topics or book titles of interest.

Now What

Dr. Bill Webster.

Dr. Webster writes from personal and professional experience about the emotions and reactions that are part of grieving.

When Bad Things Happen to Good People

Harold Kushner

Facing his son's illness and subsequent death, Rabbi Kushner shares his thoughts and feelings about why we humans suffer. Explores the questions of life and faith that can occur after a tragedy.

All is Not Lost

C. Leslie Charles

An excellent book on grief and loss. It provides an understanding and compassionate viewpoint through parables.

A Time to Grieve

Carol Staudacher

A compilation of personal reflections on the grief experience.

Grief in Children: A Handbook for Adults

A. Dyregrov

A handbook for those faced with the task of understanding children dealing with grief and trying to help them.

When Men Grieve: Why Men Grieve Differently and How You Can Help

Elizabeth Levang

Psychologist Elizabeth Levang explains the special ways that men grieve so those who love them can better understand what they're going through.

Coping with being a caregiver

For family members of an injured worker, providing care to your loved one can be a challenge. Sometimes, it can be exhausting. There are so many emotions and factors that come into play. For example, you may be involved in physical care, providing emotional support and other assistance, while having to cope with life in general.

You will likely go through many emotions with your loved one as you support them along their journey, and at the same time you will experience your own range of emotions and turmoil. Both you and your loved one are learning and adjusting to many changes arising from the injury incident.

From the time of the serious injury, and with each phase or change you go through in the months and years after the injury, you may experience different feelings of loss, stress, grief or pain. There may be times when you feel uplifted, encouraged, hopeful or happy. Each person will react differently. Each family will cope or manage differently. Each seriously injured worker will react or cope differently, depending on the nature or severity of the injury.

As a caregiver, friend, spouse or family member, you want the best for the injured worker, or your loved one, and you also need to take care of yourself.

Here are some suggested actions:

Talk about your feelings

Good friends, spiritual care providers or family members can be good sources of support. Reach out to others – this will help reduce feelings of isolation.

Join a support group

Support groups provide caregivers with the opportunity to share and learn from one another. If you feel isolated by your responsibilities, consider joining a group in-person or online. Local organizations often provide support groups.

Write your feelings down

Writing is not for everyone but for those who do enjoy it, writing can be a rewarding way to express your feelings of loss and grief. Regardless of what you write or how you spell – the process of putting your feelings down on paper is what's most important. The writing is for you. Don't think about how it reads or what it looks like to others.

Read a book on coping with grief

There are many publications available on the issues of care giving, self-help, grieving and loss.

Make time for yourself

Do what you need to do to look after yourself. For some people, that may mean spending time with friends, family members or participating in a group. For others, making time for yourself means spending time alone. You may find that gardening, going for walks, drawing, or exercising is just the thing to nurture yourself.

Get help when needed

Coping with changes or loss and trying to meet the demands of care giving is challenging and often painful. Family or friends or a local community organization can provide some of the help you may need. Please refer to the Helpful Contacts in this guide.

Helpful contacts

Alberta Government contacts

Alberta.ca

Life Events

Alberta.ca/life-events helps you cope with major life events by offering clear information about certain topics, as well as resources and contacts within government or in the community.

Registry Services

For a listing of registry offices in your area, visit the registry pages on the Alberta government website.

- alberta.ca/registry-agents.aspx

For more information about registry services, go to the frequently asked questions section on this site, or call Alberta Registries.

- 780-427-7013

Occupational Health and Safety

The main Alberta Occupational Health and Safety website is:

- alberta.ca/occupational-health-safety.aspx

Occupational Health and Safety Contact Centre

- 1-866-415-8690 (toll-free within Alberta)
- 415-8690 (Edmonton and surrounding area)

Alberta Justice

Alberta Justice is the provincial department you may deal with in regards to court proceedings.

- alberta.ca/ministry-justice-solicitor-general.aspx

Criminal Justice Division

If there are court proceedings, you will have some contact with the Crown Prosecutor's office.

- Tel: 780-427-5042

For information about the Crown Prosecutor's roles and responsibilities, visit the following pages at the Alberta Justice website:

- alberta.ca/alberta-crown-prosecution-service.aspx

Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta (WCB)

Visit wcb.ab.ca for more information on compensation benefits and services and policies.

Toll-free in Alberta: 1-866-922-9221

Edmonton office

9912-107 Street
Tel: 780-498-3999

Calgary office

150 - 4311 12 Street NE
Tel: 403-517-6000

Dispute Resolution and Decision Review Body

Tel: 780-498-4480

Toll-free in Alberta: 1-800-661-5419

Fair Practice Office

Workers Appeals Advisor Branch

The Fair Practices Office (FPO) is an independent agency, separate from the Workers' Compensation Board, the Appeals Commission, and the Medical Panels Office. They help Albertans who have questions or concerns about Alberta's workers' compensation system.

Toll-free in Alberta: 1-866-427-0115

Website: FPOAlberta.ca

Appeals Commission

The Appeals Commission is an administrative tribunal established under the *Workers' Compensation Act*. It is the final level of appeal for workers' compensation matters in Alberta.

Website: appealscommission.ab.ca

Edmonton

Standard Life Centre
1100-10405 Jasper Avenue
Tel: 780-412-8700

Calgary

Amec Place
2300-801 6 Avenue SW
Tel: 403-508-8800

Federal Government Contacts

Canada.ca

Occupational Health and Safety

For information about workplace fatality investigations involving federally-regulated employers

- canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/workplace-safety.html
- canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/health-safety.html

Service Canada

A single point of access to the full range of government services and benefits that Canadians want and need.

- canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/portfolio/service-canada.html
- 1-800-622-6232

Canada Pension Plan (CPP)

It is important to apply for CPP benefits to receive any benefits that you may be entitled to. Speak with a CPP representative if you have any questions.

- 1-800-277-9914

For complete information about the CPP, visit the federal government website.

- canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp/cpp-survivor-pension.html

Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)

You may require copies of your tax returns from previous years to claim different benefits.

- canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra.html
- 1-800-959-8281

Accessing Legal Assistance

Law Society of Alberta Referral Service

This service will provides contact information for three lawyers practicing in the applicable field of law, such as workplace health and safety, injury law or workers' compensation matters.

You can talk on the phone or in person with one, two, or all three of those lawyers. Your first 30 minutes with each lawyer is free-of-charge. To get this free service you must first advise each lawyer that you were referred to them by the Referral Service. This service can help you decide whether to engage a lawyer, which lawyer to engage and discuss legal costs beyond the initial consultation.

The Referral Service is not connected with Legal Aid, nor does it provide any form of financially subsidized legal service.

- lawsociety.ab.ca
- 1-800-661-1095
- 403-228-1722 in Calgary

Legal Aid Alberta

Legal Aid Alberta assists Albertans facing legal issues by helping you navigate your journey through the justice system and find lasting resolution to your legal challenges.

When determining your eligibility for legal assistance, Legal Aid Alberta looks at both the service required and financial eligibility. Financial eligibility is determined by the net family income for the last 30 days and last 12 months, family size and assets.

- LegalAid.ab.ca
- 1-866-845-3425

Alberta Law Line

The Alberta Law Line is a program of Legal Aid Alberta that provides free legal information, referrals, and advice to Albertans over the phone. All calls are confidential. Call the Alberta Law Line if you are unsure whether your matter requires a lawyer. The Law Line does not replace the advice of a lawyer, but it can help you inform yourself as much as possible before you hire a lawyer.

- eMentalHealth.ca
- 1-866-845-3425
- 780-644-7777 in Edmonton

Closing thoughts

For the injured worker

Your healing necessarily focuses on the physical and, in time, on the vocational. Too often, however, we forget the need for psychological healing. It is vital that you take control of your physical, vocational, social and psychological healing process.

Your injury may have left you feeling powerless about your ability to affect or control your own fate. We encourage you to draw upon your own strengths and those of others around you. Try to access every available resource that will help you through every aspect of your recovery.

Do not hesitate to make decisions for yourself; plan for yourself each day to the extent that you are able. In this way, you will regain the sense of having control of your life. Your own attitude, choices and decisions will continue to be important as you determine new directions and adjust to life after your injury.

You may experience a wide range of feelings, depending on your injury, the type of supports you have, and many other factors. In our experience, seriously injured workers and their loved ones often go through moments or phases of intense sadness, anger or frustration. Try to be gentle with yourself and others around you. Recognize that your body and soul may be hurting, and healing.

Focus on the steps or decisions you choose to take each day – small or large, few or many – and take encouragement from each small victory. Know that others have shared similar journeys, and that many people are concerned and caring about your well-being, now and in the future. We hope this guide helps you along your journey.

For family members and care givers

It may take a long time for your loved one to recover from serious injury, and adjust to life and new realities.

You may become intensely focused on the care and nurturing of your loved one – physically, spiritually and emotionally. As much as your loved one may appreciate your efforts, don't forget to take good care of yourself. Try to plan for self-care moments. Develop a list of activities that refresh and energize you. You will find that by taking care of yourself, you are better able to support your loved one.

Alberta