

**Title: Workplace Safety & Insurance Board data for research purposes (for general usage of the WSIB data for research purposes by IWH scientists)**

**Purpose:** Research studies using WSIB data have the general goal to investigate the causes and consequences of work-related injury and disease. The potential benefits to conducting research using WSIB data include developing a better understanding of:

- the causes of work injury, and therefore potentially identifying ways to reduce work injury
- what are optimal health and safety practices
- the factors related to good and poor outcomes of work injury
- injury management strategies and RTW practices.

WSIB data are population based and therefore include the entire covered population of Ontario. WSIB data are readily available, and therefore research can be conducted without additional contact with injured workers, workplaces or health care providers.

**Description:** The Ontario Workplace Safety & Insurance Board collects a variety of information from workers, workplaces, health care providers and WSIB staff (claims adjudicators, nurse case managers, statistical coders). This information is used in the day-to-day business of the WSIB which includes promoting safe workplace practices, compensating and caring for injured workers and collecting insurance premium revenues from Ontario workplaces. These data are maintained in highly secured computerized files. As outlined above, the data can also be used for research purposes. A master agreement and a research agreement between the Ontario WSIB and the Institute for Work & Health permit disclosure of these data to IWH researchers for research purposes. Claimants are informed via a Notice of Collection and Disclosure, that personal information is collected from workers for a number of purposes, including “to conduct research into the nature and causes of workplace injuries and diseases”

The research projects will be conducted at the Institute for Work & Health in Toronto, Ontario. All research employing WSIB data will deal with the Ontario jurisdiction. No personal information will be collected beyond that already maintained by the WSIB.

***The data sources used include*** files developed by Information & Survey Management at the WSIB as part of the Corporate Data Catalogue as well as copies of various other files containing information on claims, firms, benefits, participation in WSIB programs.

***Describe how the initial contact will be made***

Under the terms of the agreement between the WSIB and IWH, no contact will be initiated by the researchers to injured workers or Ontario firms based on information held at the WSIB.

***Describe the intended use and/or disclosure and explain why it is necessary***

A set of procedures is in place for data use. A research question of interest is identified and a study protocol is developed to address the research questions. This protocol will undergo ethical review by a Research Ethics Board (REB) at a recognized institution (e.g., an Ontario university/hospital). The protocol will stipulate what data are required and how they will be used. A project specific research agreement between the Ontario

WSIB, via the Privacy Office, and the Institute is prepared. This agreement outlines what the purpose of the research is, what data are required, and a date of destruction for personal identifiers. A designated Institute researcher will prepare computer programs to extract the necessary data for the research project and a data file will be provided to the research team for analysis. This data file will be stripped of direct identifiers. A limited number of researchers (currently three) have the ability to prepare these computer programs accessing the original data.

***Describe any intended record linkage and how it will be done***

Record linkage between various WSIB data sources may take place, as required, to create the study data set; for instance, information about claims and about firms are maintained in different electronic files, and these may be linked together for a particular research project (e.g., claim information such as part of body injured and nature of injury may be linked to attributes of the firm where the worker was employed, for instance the sector of the firm and the size of the firm). These linkages are accomplished by one of the three researchers with computer access, using indices maintained by the WSIB such as claim numbers and firm numbers. The indices used for linkage are not included in the final study database.

***Set out alternative options for long-term retention of data (eg. stripping of identifiers, storage by a trusted third party, etc.) and include a rationale justifying the retention***

The study data bases used at IWH will typically be stripped of identifiers such as names, addresses, telephone numbers, claim numbers etc. The data are stored on a secure computing environment with state of the art protection against hacking and outside access. Only those researchers requiring access to the data are provided that access. For a typical study, the research agreement will stipulate a date of destruction for any personal identifiers which is reasonable in light of the study goals and timelines.

**Output:** Only aggregate data which do not identify any individuals are released from analysis files through research papers or journal articles. For each data set assembled for a study, a date of destruction is specified in the research agreement with the WSIB. Upon destruction, a certificate of destruction is completed and provided to the Privacy Office of the WSIB.

**Ethical Review:** Each study using the WSIB data as the main data source will undergo ethical review at a recognized institution (e.g., university or hospital).