

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder- a WCB Perspective

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Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



- “Trauma destroys the fabric of time. In normal time you move from one moment to the next, sunrise to sunset, birth to death. After trauma, you may move in circles, find yourself being sucked backwards into an eddy or bouncing like a rubber ball from now to then to back again. ... In the traumatic universe the basic laws of matter are suspended: ceiling fans can be helicopters, car exhaust can be mustard gas.”

David J. Morris, The Evil Hours: A Biography of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder



Agenda

- Understanding PTSD
- PTSD – A Growing Business
- The Impact of PTSD on Alberta's Workers' Compensation System
- Recovery and Return to Work
- A Community Approach
- Claim Trends Here and Across the Country
- The Impact of PTSD on Myles
- Questions



Understanding PTSD

- Common symptoms include:
 - Recurring nightmares
 - Acting or feeling as though the traumatic event were happening again, a "flashback"
 - Being physically responsive, such as experiencing a surge in heart rate or sweating
 - Having a difficult time falling or staying asleep
 - Feeling more irritable or having outbursts of anger
 - Feeling constantly "on guard" or like danger is lurking around every corner
 - Losing interest in important, once positive, activities
 - Difficulty experiencing positive feelings
- Symptoms are present for at least one month



Treatment

- Combination of psychological counseling (CBT) and medication (SSRI)- *most effective*
- Evidence-Based Psychological Treatment:
 - Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE)
 - Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Other Treatment:
 - Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
 - Group Therapy



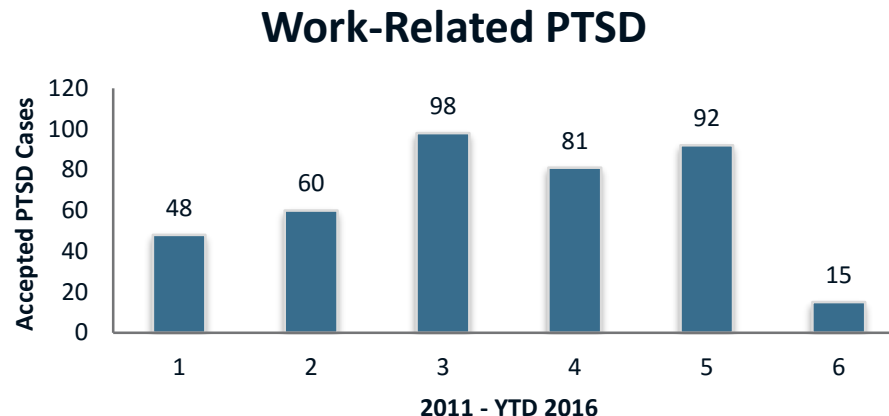
Understanding PTSD – Think Big

- Nationally it is estimated 873,000 Canadians have or will develop PTSD (Van Ameringen et al., 2008).
 - Occupationally, it is most prevalent among paramedics
- Provincially, it is estimated that 8% of the population will develop PTSD in their lifetime.
- At WCB-Alberta, we have accepted 394 PTSD cases since 2011.
 - 31 cases of PTSD in 2015 were paramedics



PTSD – A Growing Business

- In the 1990's, 1 person managed psychological injury claims.
- PTSD is a subset of all psychological injury claims. In 2016, there were 8 adjudicators and 16 case managers actively working on psychological injury claims on 3 teams.
- In 2011, PTSD made up 13% of psychological injury cases.
- In 2015, PTSD constituted 15.4% of psychological injury cases.
- In 2015, paramedics made up approx. 1/3 of PTSD cases.





The Impact of PTSD

- The rise in PTSD cases prompted us to develop:
 - **A treatment model** reflective of the uniqueness of each case - there must be flexibility in the types of benefits offered, as well as flexibility in the expectations regarding individual recovery times.
 - **Treatment provider relationships** to accommodate the sharing of best practices and ensuring clients receive the best care from the best resource available.
 - **Knowledgeable and creative case management teams** willing to learn and share that knowledge with the community.
 - **Engaged community partners** willing to give us access to work places, work tools and work simulations we can use to help our clients resume successful employment.



The Impact of PTSD

- Claims last longer.
 - Often, it takes time before a sufferer recognizes he or she needs help.
- Treating PTSD claims requires an understanding of unique work environments and triggers.
 - Specialized psychological resources are hard to find in the community.
 - We have compiled a list of contracted psychological service providers who have expertise with different populations.

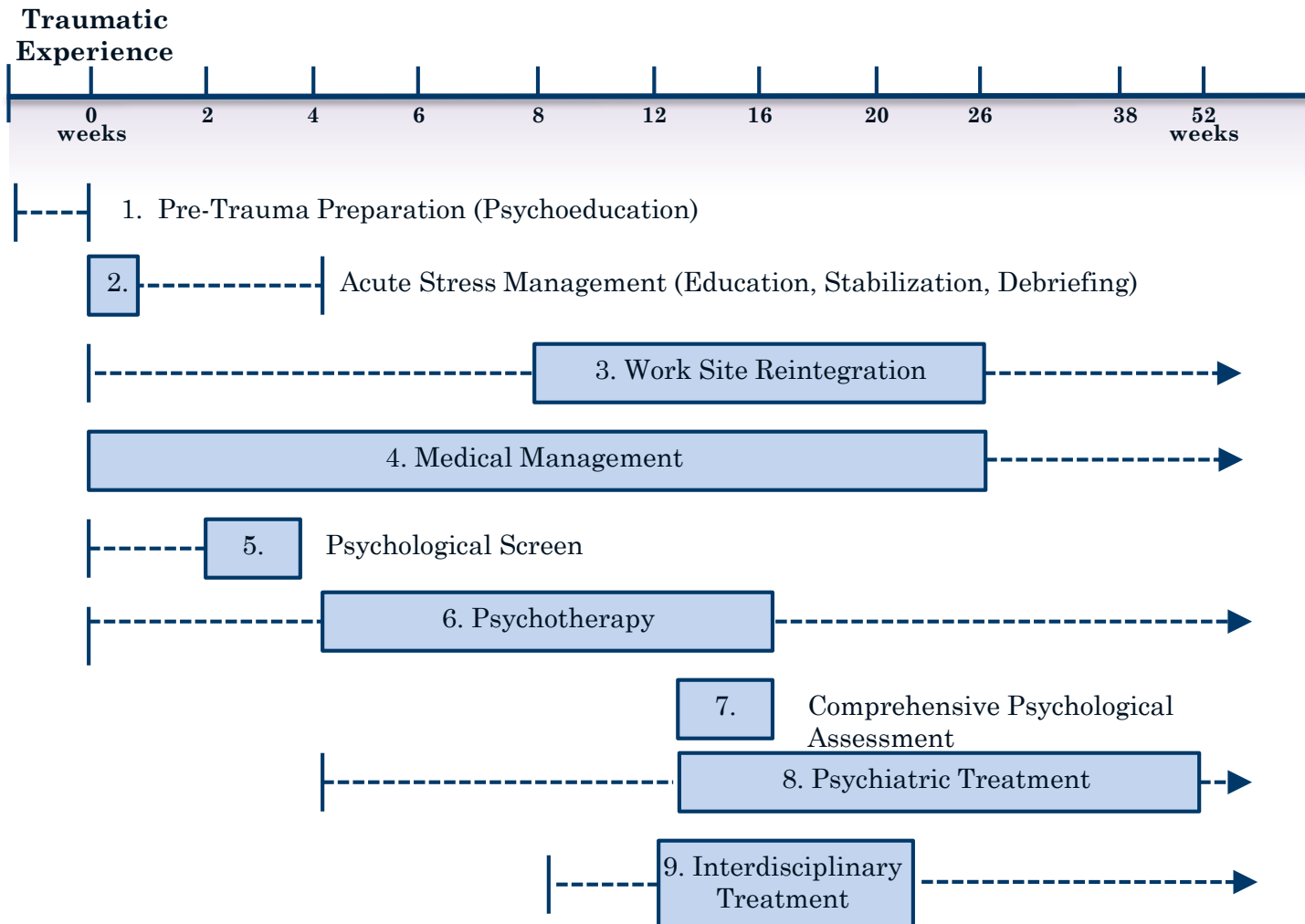
Is return to work a realistic expectation for this client group?

- Absolutely.
 - With the right support, many PTSD clients are able to resume date of accident employment.

Recovery and Return to work



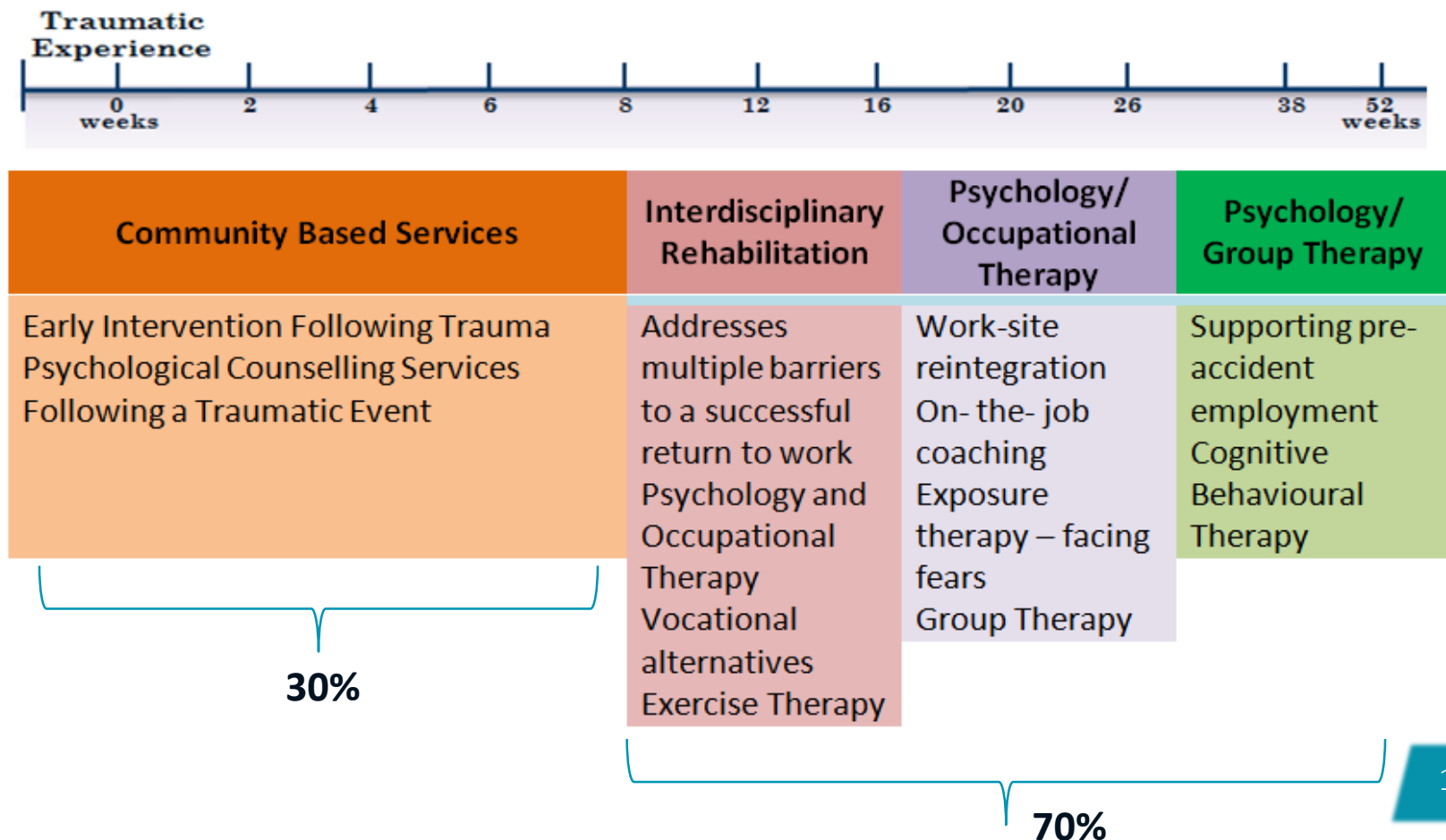
Our Model of Care: Evidence Based and Flexible



Recovery and Return to Work



- Clients have varying support needs at different times in their recovery.



Traumatic Psychological Injury Program Success (TPI)



- Our Programs Work.
- Over the last 5 years:
 - **94 % of clients** either returned to work or were fit for work (competitively employable).
 - **90.3 % of clients** were no longer totally disabled and receiving total disability benefits (TD01) 90 days after the program ended.
 - The average length of stay in a treatment program (LOS) was **49.3** working days.



A Work in Progress

As we gain more experience in the field of PTSD, we regroup and collaborate with service providers to refine our treatment approach.

- **2009:** TPI Program was introduced at Millard Health.
- **Summer 2015** – Met with return-to-work program providers to discuss TPI best practices.
- **Winter 2015** – WCB steering committee created:
 - 3 working groups to review the screening/intake process for programs, review the program and services, and determine if there are industry guidelines for optimal length of treatment.
 - Research initiatives to include review of current excellence in programming and the individual factors that predict return-to-work success.



We Cannot Work Alone

- Our TPI Program has achieved success through evidence-based treatment delivery.
- However, evidence also supports the need for managed, sensitive and supportive community re-integration. This is where employers come in.
- Without employer support, we could not anticipate how a ceiling fan in the office might become a helicopter...



A Community Approach

- We need employers' help to really understand the work environment and to understand the job factors we need to help our workers address.
- We are seeing more and more support programs being offered by employers and we are learning with them...
 - Strathcona County; Edmonton Police; AHS Emergency Medical Services Edmonton Metro; Red Deer Fire & Rescue; Calgary Police; City of Edmonton Fire & Rescue; Alberta Health; City of Leduc; City of St. Albert; City of Lethbridge, etc. are all developing supports for their workers.



A Community Approach

- And we are changing...learning to use resources typically not involved in rehabilitation settings to get the best possible outcome for our workers.
 - For example: Peers at work to help with exposure training
- Partnerships have helped us ensure we understand the whole work picture and can address potential triggers through the treatment we provide and/or through changes in the work environment.
- We have reached out to the community and the community has reached back, giving us many opportunities to educate and collaborate.

What does PTSD look like across the country?

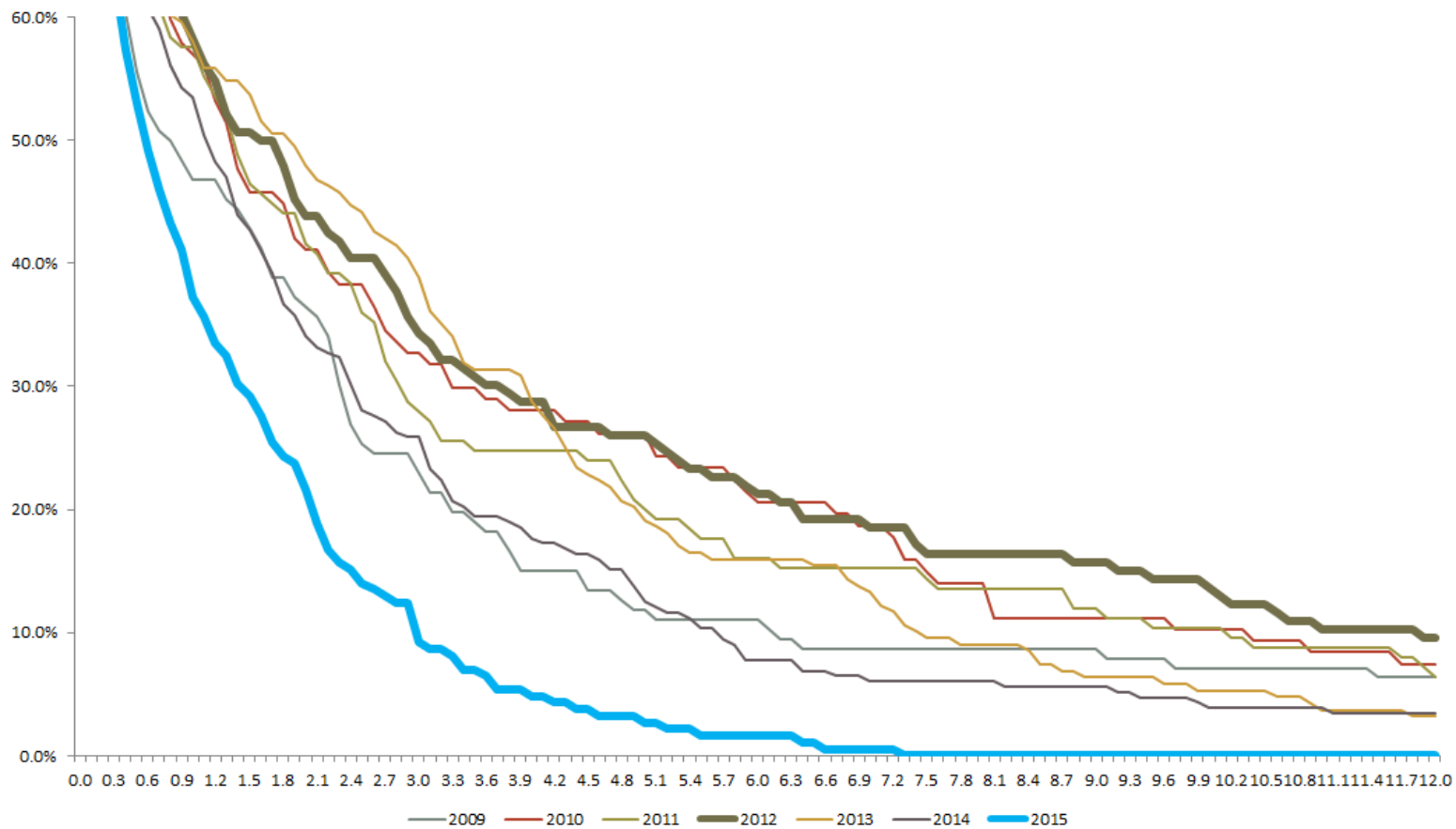


- Three provinces have presumptive PTSD legislation:
 - **Alberta, 2012**
 - First Responders
 - **Ontario, 2016**
 - First Responders
 - **Manitoba, 2016**
 - All workers
 - **New Brunswick**, legislation has been introduced , not yet passed
 - First responders



Getting better

**Distribution of Closed Psychological Injury Claims Time on TD01 by Accident Year:
2009 to 2015**





Myles

- Myles is a veteran Captain with the Strathcona County Fire Department.
- Until his employer, treatment provider and WCB came together to offer him help, he thought his career was over.
- Myles' Story



PTSD



“If we’re going to help our community,
we have to look after each other”

Myles Swann

