



Stakeholder Relations Strategy:

Development of Seriously Injured Young Workers' and Caregivers' Tools/Materials/Interventions



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Executive Summary

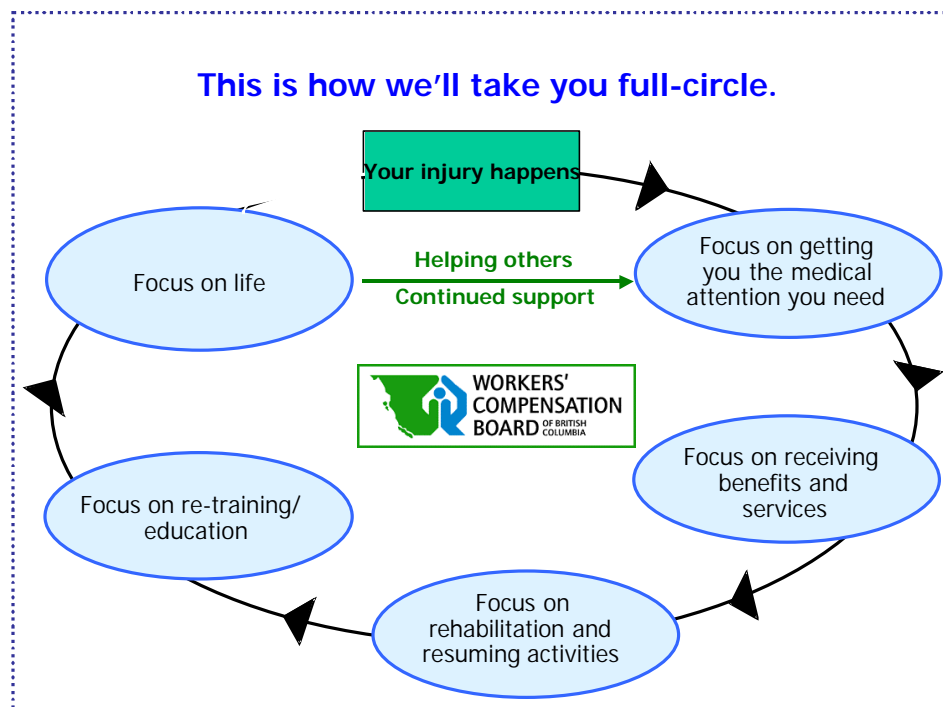
Injured young workers and their caregivers are lost

They never thought it could happen, but it did. Now injured young workers and their caregivers are faced with the implications of a serious injury, waves of emotion, unforeseen costs, medical treatments and questions about the future. And most have never dealt with or know much about the WCB. They need direction and focus and the WCB can be there to provide them with tools and materials to help them through their trying times.

In order to find their way, they need a path

Lost in an unknown world of health care, medical terminology, paperwork, claims procedures, and deep emotions, injured young workers and their parent caregivers need a path to follow. Tools and materials most useful to these WCB stakeholders involve an overview of how the WCB can help take them full-circle from the injury to recovery.

It is difficult to navigate through a path that isn't well marked or lit. To this end, seriously injured young workers and their caregivers have provided feedback on how the WCB can better provide information and assistance to help injured young workers and their caregivers retain focus and successfully reach the pinnacle of the path.



How can the WCB help light the path?

Explain how the WCB can help

When the injury happens, the WCB needs to immediately make contact with the seriously injured young worker and their caregiver to explain the purpose and role of the WCB – what it is and what it can do.

Provide the required medical attention

The WCB also needs to immediately respond to short-term needs that provide seriously injured young workers and their caregivers with relevant contacts and access to medical professionals to treat their condition and chart a path to rehabilitation and recovery.

Develop a booklet-style overview of information

Next, the WCB needs to provide an all-inclusive source of information related to the benefits and services available to the seriously injured young worker and their caregiver. A single source of information required does not currently exist and should be developed. At this stage, seriously injured young workers and their caregivers are looking for basic information about the process, their type of injury and contact information that can be supported by other detailed documentation as they require it.

Develop a variety of information formats

Although the creation of an information booklet will be very useful to seriously injured young workers and their caregivers, youth prefer and relate to a variety of information formats. Budgets are limited, but in an ideal scenario, information could be prepared in written format (i.e. the booklet), presented in person by a WCB representative, on-line, or even via CD-Rom.

Be prepared to provide explanations

WCB representatives should be prepared to spend the necessary time with seriously injured young workers and their caregivers to respond to questions or concerns related to the initial information provided. The WCB needs to remember that most individuals do not have much knowledge of the WCB and its operations and, therefore, the WCB should assume that seriously injured young workers and their caregivers know nothing when providing explanations regarding the WCB, medical provisions, benefits or services.

Continue with interventions to help prevent workplace injuries

Seriously injured young workers acknowledge the value of interventions to help prevent workplace injuries. These interventions involve young workers, employers and schools.

Continue to promote messages among young workers and encourage them to take action

The WCB should continue its role in promoting messages related to workplace health and safety with young workers. The more the message is heard, the more likely young workers will be to take actions to prevent workplace injuries from occurring.

Provide employers with incentives to take action

The WCB should continue to develop strategies to encourage employers to take action with respect to workplace health and safety. Incentives could take the form of public or industry recognition through awards or press releases garnering media coverage, or potential reductions in premiums if claims costs decrease as a result of actions taken.

Use the classroom to raise awareness of the WCB and promote key messages

The WCB can work towards incorporating workplace safety into school curriculums and developing relationships with schools/teachers to allow injured young workers to speak to youth about the importance of workplace health and safety.

Develop a video to use in school settings

Teenagers would relate to the medium of a video more than to a lecture from their teacher. In this light, the WCB should consider developing a video to show in classrooms that depicts "real-life" scenarios resulting from workplace accidents with young workers. In order to best catch teenagers' attention, the video should be fairly graphic, or realistic, no longer than 20-minutes in duration, and could be coupled with a speech from an actual injured young worker.

At the end of the path, they want to give back. Just ask

Seriously injured young workers and their caregivers hold favourable views of the WCB. The WCB provided help – help they did not necessarily even know existed. Achieving a focus on re-training or education, these grateful stakeholders are willing to give back. When asked to participate in future WCB young worker and injured young worker initiatives, ALL focus group participants responded positively and would like to be contacted by the WCB to help at some level. Just ask.

Each initiative discussed held merit and enticed participation when stakeholders became aware of what they could do. Those who have already been asked have enthusiastically participated in programs, finding solace in helping other young workers and therapy in the act of participation. The most enthusiastic target audience is the younger segment of injured young workers (15 to 19 years when the injury occurred) and their caregivers. The resource pool is out there. The bigger the pool, the more the message gets out.

Profile sheets are useful and should be used more extensively

The profile sheets serve two purposes: 1) showing youth that accidents really do happen to young workers; and, 2) showing other injured young workers that they are not alone and can work through this trying time. These profile sheets should be used more extensively following speeches, as an addition to the information booklet handed out to seriously injured young workers, to schools and to employers alike.

Network the speakers resource regionally and sectorally

Having seriously injured young workers speak to other young workers is powerful and effective. So effective, in fact, that the WCB should develop a list of potential speakers across various regions of the province and by industry sector in order to respond to the potential that exists with this initiative. The WCB can also positively use speaking events to raise awareness of the organization and promote a positive image of itself to younger generations. Further, the WCB should consider tapping into parent caregivers as speakers as well. Their stories can expand the realm of interventions implemented by targeting employers, industry associations, or other parent associations.

Address issues related to the Certificate Program prior to implementation

The WCB will be faced with some challenges in relation to the development and implementation of the Certificate Program. These challenges are primarily motivational in nature: how can we sell the Program to young workers to encourage them to participate? While seen as a useful initiative, young workers will need to see the benefits and rewards of participating to truly make the Program as effective as it can be.

Define the mandate of the Injured Young Worker Advisory Group and they will come

The WCB needs to build the foundation of the Injured Young Worker Advisory Group (IYWAG) in order to garner genuine interest in participation. Specifically, the WCB needs to clarify the positioning of the Group, explain its activities and define its objectives. Additional injured young worker input into these clarifications may be merited. Overall, the most significant role of this Group will likely be to provide support to other injured young workers, although the brainstorming about prospective accomplishments of an IYWAG show that the potential of such a Group is phenomenal.

Don't be offended. Participation is personal

When asked, some injured young workers and their caregivers may say "no" to participating in some or even all of the young worker initiatives presented for various reasons. Some are not comfortable in public speaking roles, others have little free time, a few do not realize they have a story to tell, several are prohibited by where they live, and certain stakeholders simply do not wish to relive what happened. They want to move on.

Promote involvement in injured young worker initiatives

Develop a communications plan that makes injured young workers aware of the opportunities in which they could become involved in WCB initiatives. This contact should be made only at later stages of recovery, when injured young workers are at the recovery stage and are able to once again focus on life. Offering honorariums, even job positions, promoting the valuable career skills that can be learned, and focusing on the fact that they will be helping other injured young workers and working towards preventing other injuries from happening, will motivate those who have had an injury to share their experiences with others.

“(Why get involved?) Knowing you can prevent it from happening to someone else, because you know first-hand what it feels like.”

Background and Methodology

Stakeholder Relations Strategy is an overall strategy to collect and disseminate information on WCB resources that would be helpful to key stakeholders. During Phase I of this Strategy, the WCB's focus has been on gathering helpful information and suggestions, based on stakeholders' experiences with the Board from families who have lost a family member in a workplace fatality.

In response to Phase I, the Prevention Division of the WCB has identified the need to develop resource materials for seriously injured young workers and their caregivers, along with the possible formation of a Seriously Injured Young Worker Group who could provide advice and ideas on young worker interventions. The group will form a support network and be encouraged to act as champions for young worker health and safety, act as liaisons between the WCB and Young Worker Group and seriously injured youth/stakeholders in their community.

Prior to forming this group, it was important to gather seriously injured young workers' and caregivers' suggestions and ideas for resource materials and young worker interventions, as well as to gauge their interest in being young worker champions by participating in the larger Young Worker Advisory Group.

The results collected during this feedback gathering process will become the basis on which resource materials and a Seriously Injured Young Worker Advisory Group will be considered.

In order to collect feedback, the WCB worked with Ipsos-Reid Corporation to conduct a series of focus group workshops. In total, five sessions were conducted among:

- Injured young workers who were 15-19 years at the time of their injury (2 groups);
- Injured young workers who were 20-24 years at the time of their injury (2 groups); and,
- Parent caregivers of injured young workers (1 group).

The WCB contacted all participants to first explain the purpose of the workshops, gauge their level of interest in participating, and if willing, passed their names on to Ipsos-Reid to confirm the date, time and location of the groups. The sessions were held in Vancouver on December 11 and 12, 2002. A total of 21 injured young workers from various regions in the province attended, and three caregivers participated in the sessions. Each participant was offered an honorarium for his or her time and travel expenses were covered by the WCB.

This report presents the feedback collected in these sessions.

Profile of Focus Group Participants

Understanding the mindsets, lifestyles, struggles and accomplishments of the focus group participants will assist in providing a richer context in which to place the results presented in this report.

It happened.

These were teenagers who were already trying to sort through many adolescent issues such as grades, girlfriends/boyfriends or reaching their goals with their extra-curricular activities of choice. Then it happened. They had an accident at work and were faced with a serious – or even severe – injury for life. Feelings of embarrassment wondering what others' may think of them washed over them while they dealt with daily physical actions most teenagers, and adults, take for granted. For many, depression set in while they contemplated their future potential with members of the opposite sex, the activities in which they could no longer take part, and the level of dependency on others they necessarily had to accept during rehabilitation.

These individuals were also young adults at the time of their injury enjoying new-found independence with the money they were earning from the first steps in their career path, living in their own residence, and planning their future. Then it happened. The plans they had just made vanished; the independence they had just gained disappeared. As with the teenagers, states of depression crossed their paths while they wondered how they would pay the rent, continue with enjoyable activities or even how they would find their identity outside of their former chosen career.

No one truly understood what they were going through unless they had also been through a similar situation themselves.

Following initial reactions and recuperation, these individuals found focus. Focus on an education, focus on a new hobby or activity, focus on choosing a new career path, and focus on healing – in every way. For most, the glass they originally viewed as half-empty became half-full, they stopped caring about what others were thinking, believed more in themselves, felt the injury had made them stronger, and gained a new perspective on life.

“I’m better now than I ever was. I’ve got more guts.”

The injured young workers did not go through this alone. Parents acting as caregivers were faced with not being able to see their children achieve the goals and dreams they were striving towards before the accident. This emotional impact, in tandem with added caregiver responsibilities, spurred worry, fatigue, frustration and stress. Through it all, caregivers played an important role in helping these young adults find focus. They are willing to do anything for them because they want their children's dreams to be fulfilled.

“I see different dreams for him now.”

Knowledge and Perceptions of the WCB

As a foray into the focus group workshop discussions, participants were asked to describe what the WCB is and does for injured young workers, as well as their general impressions of the WCB.

Consistently comprehensive information about the WCB is needed and desired.

Even now, having experienced the injury and process, articulating what the WCB does for injured young workers is not easy. When put to task, injured young workers and their caregivers cite that the WCB pays for lost wages and helps with injury-related expenses, such as crutches, wheelchairs, prescription drugs, physiotherapy, counseling, or travel costs. However, certain individuals may know about specific benefits and services, while others do not and some learned about unknown areas only by means of participating in the focus groups.

Very few individuals could actually define the purpose or mission of the WCB. It is not until something gets broken that we learn about who and how to fix it. A desire for providing a statement of purpose was raised consistently when speaking about information needs.

“The WCB is a mystery.”

Seriously injured young workers have positive perceptions of the WCB and offer gratitude for the help they received.

Words used to describe the WCB were mainly positive including perceptions that the WCB is fair, prompt, efficient, helpful, quick, supportive, thorough, decent, encouraging, and offers good rehabilitation. Particular mentions of caring case managers such as Don Roy were given as examples of the support received immediately following their injuries.

“You’re represented. You have a say. You feel protected.”

“I felt lucky they were there.”

“It was a win-win situation. We got their help and that helped my son’s motivation to recuperate.”

Other views of the WCB focused on the following **opportunities for improvement**:

- Not rushing severely injured young workers or their parents into making decisions about long-term strategies;
- Reducing the number of case managers assigned to claims to have a dedicated individual to speak with at the WCB; and,
- Ensuring that all relevant information is provided in a timely fashion throughout the duration of the claim.

Information Needs

Injured young workers and their caregivers were lost. They clearly state that consistently comprehensive information about the WCB is needed and desired. But to what extent, in what format and at what time?

Timeliness of Information

Initial WCB communication is made in a timely manner.

At first, WCB contact with injured young workers and their parent caregivers was made fairly immediately. It appears that depending upon the severity of the injury, contact was made within one or two days to within one week, as well as by various means of communication: face-to-face versus telephone versus written letters or a combination of these mediums.

For those who were younger at the time of their injury, a large portion of communication was made via their parents. Even so, these younger injured workers appreciated the direct involvement they had with the WCB in order to directly present their point of view on decisions impacting their rehabilitation and future.

It's about providing focus: short-term and long-term focus.

The horizon for most young people is within arm's grasp: short-term. What will I do this weekend (not what will I do next year)? How will I do with my end of semester exams (not thinking of post-secondary education)? Where can I get a part-time job to help me save money for the snowboard I want (not how will I achieve my career goals)? Will Jane Doe say "yes" when I ask her to the school dance (not thinking of marriage)?

To this end, injured young workers need to be provided with the relevant short-term information immediately following their injury, but can wait to receive information related to medium or long-term decisions until the appropriate time in their recovery. Many feel overwhelmed with the amount of information and decisions that need to be made, only to feel later on that they should appeal decisions made by the WCB. Caregivers share this view and acknowledge that an information overload is likely more detrimental than beneficial during the first stages of recovery.

Nevertheless, injured young workers and their caregivers also believe that they should be given at least an overview of what to expect throughout the short, medium and long-term stages of the claim. Therefore, it would be useful to provide injured young workers and their caregivers with an overview of the process initially, followed by more detailed information as time progresses.

"Show me the light at the end of the tunnel."

"The day of my injury, I didn't need to know about my physio appointment three months from now."

Type of Information: Needs For Injured Young Workers

In order to best respond to the information needs of injured young workers and their caregivers in future, focus group participants were asked to identify the type of information that would be most useful to receive immediately following an injury.

A variety of resource materials will be required to respond to injured young workers' information needs.

First, injured young workers recall that they did not know much, if anything, about the WCB at the time of their injury. Second, injured young workers should be provided with information related to both short and long-term focus areas. Third, injured young workers prefer basic information, yet at the same time want to know about what to expect throughout the full-circle of their claims and rehabilitation process.

Start with the basics and be ready to provide back-up for the details.

The contradiction in stakeholder feedback surfaces in the fact that the basics required are in fact quite extensive. The communications developed, therefore, will need to be carefully crafted to include reference to the topic areas listed below, provide contact information/referrals, and remain minimalist. In making any judgement calls, more would be better than less. Importantly, the contact or referral information provided will need to be in place and readily accessible when this type of information is provided to injured young workers and their caregivers.

- Statement of purpose of the WCB
- Overview of the process
 - Paperwork involved
 - Stages of a claim and timeframes involved
 - How decisions are made
 - Financial compensation, reimbursement of expenses
 - Benefit policies and procedures
 - Light duty or modified work options
 - Appeals process
- Contact information (phone numbers and website addresses)
 - Support groups (counseling, post-traumatic stress, etc.)
 - WCB internal contacts: policies and procedures; questions
 - Health professionals
 - Rehabilitation options, education options
- Injury-specific information: i.e. what to expect with a spinal cord injury
- Rights and responsibilities of the injured young worker and employer
- Anonymous reporting of unsafe worksites
- Write-ups of other injured young workers and their progress

No single source of information exists: it would be helpful if it did.

Injured young workers have positively received a great deal of information from the WCB following their injury. However, additional information and resources have also been received from health care and medical professionals (physiotherapists, doctors, psychologists), family, friends, religious institutions or their school.

Although the WCB may not be equipped to provide every injured young worker with the extent of information required, offering them a tool that includes the various sources they can access would be extremely useful. The types of information to include are listed on the previous page, but may not necessarily be limited to these topic areas.

Type of Information: Needs for Caregivers

A separate informational resource should be available for caregivers.

Parents acting as caregivers to injured young workers have specific needs of their own. In many cases, the injured young worker may still be a dependent and many WCB and other interactions become the responsibility of the parent. In addition to the topic areas required for injured young workers, caregivers would find it useful to receive information related to the following areas:

- What should I expect in a caregiver role? How do I deal with the injured young worker and my own emotions?
 - Are there support groups or individuals I could contact?
- What assistance is provided for my travel or child care?
- Will I be able to make renovations to my household?
- What tax benefits might I qualify for?
- Should I be aware of automobile or home insurance clauses?
- How could I anonymously report an unsafe workplace?

Information resources may not need to be as minimalist for caregivers; they would prefer to know more details up front, in comparison to the short versus long-term focus preferred by injured young workers. Once again, any judgement calls should err on the side of more being better than less.

Information Format

No one likes to be treated as a number. Personalize the information.

Every organization has to implement a system of administration in order to efficiently operate. However, customers in many sectors often complain that they feel they are treated as a number and not as a human being, including certain injured young workers dealing with the WCB.

Regardless of the communications being used, attempt to construct information in such a way as to ensure that the injured young worker sees themselves or their personal situation in the content. Much like the public may often read media articles on the state of health care, as individuals, we ask, "So what does this mean to me?"

Injured young workers prefer a variety of information formats.

It must first be stated that all organizations have limited budgets from which to work. However, injured young workers, particularly seriously injured young workers, prefer to have personal one-on-one contact with their WCB case manager. This may mean travel for the case manager in circumstances where the injured young worker may not be able to travel to a regional office. Alternatively, a personal phone call to establish a dialogue and rapport with an injured young worker is also a highly desired form of communication. Remember that most injured young workers do not have support outside of their family and friends at the onset of their process and appreciate any and all the support the WCB can provide.

"A phone call was OK but I liked seeing a WCB person best."

Reference materials must also be provided. After discussing issues with a WCB case manager, injured young workers may wish to investigate a specific area by referencing written materials or online resources (or CD-Rom). For some participants, the letters they received from the WCB were not clear and, therefore, a personal dialogue with a WCB case manager was required to clarify the issues at hand.

Be prepared to provide explanations.

Workers' compensation insurance is a complex concept for even those working in the sector. Think of a teenager who has just had his/her world turned upside-down and how quickly they need to learn about the system and policies. It can be overwhelming for an injured young worker and WCB representatives need to be aware that they should take the time and effort to patiently provide explanations to injured young workers as required, in terms the individual can understand. They do not and never will know as much about the WCB as the case manager. The case managers should not assume the injured young worker knows anything.

Interventions

Interventions are necessary to help prevent workplace injuries.

Consistently, injured young workers indicate that they wish they had received a greater deal of information, been face-to-face with an injured young worker or had been made aware of safety precautions they should have taken. Young workers feel invincible. They need to learn they are not.

In order to assist with future intervention initiatives with young workers and employers, focus group participants were asked to recommend strategies the WCB could pursue moving forward. The related feedback resulted in two main themes: intervention messages and intervention actions.

Interventions with Young Workers

Young workers are often trying to impress their employer by attempting to be as productive or helpful as possible and fear that any small mistake may cost them their job. In this sense, speed may take precedence over safety, short-cuts may be taken, fatigue may set in during overtime, or activities may be undertaken for which they have not received the proper training.

The following table summarizes the possible intervention messages and actions that could be taken with young workers in the promotion of prevention strategies.

Messages	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are hazards on every work site • All it takes is one moment of carelessness • Every job has different dangers • Safety training is important • Cavalier attitudes regarding health and safety on the job are dangerous • The job site can be a very dangerous place • You may feel pressured by your employer, you shouldn't. • You have rights • It's not a race. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for the right training • Identify what could happen if safety precautions are not taken • Know your rights as a worker • Teach prevention at high schools • Put up posters in schools • Refuse to do it if you think it's not safe • Ask for and know the safety rules at the work site • Provide feedback when something does not look right

Continuous promotion of messages among young workers is key.

Injured young workers acknowledge that young people tend to “tune out” safety messages thinking it could never happen to them personally. Nevertheless, they also believe that the more a message is conveyed, the more likely it will be to resonate with young workers. Using various mediums and settings to promote prevention strategies will ultimately result in messages taking hold and intervention actions being carried out.

Interventions with Employers

Employers' attitudes towards intervention strategies differ. For some, and particularly those in a unionized environment, safety is a must and prevention strategies are undertaken on a regular basis. Therefore, some employers will undoubtedly pay heed to intervention messages and proactively take actions, while others may not.

The following table summarizes the possible intervention messages and actions that could be taken with employers to promote prevention strategies.

Messages	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone needs to be on the same playing field in terms of awareness • Your expenses will be reduced • There is a physical and emotional impact when an injury occurs • What if it were your son/daughter or grandson/granddaughter? • Young workers want to do a good job for you, just make sure it's done safely • Be a positive role model • Safety and productivity go hand in hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a formal orientation program • Hold safety meetings with checklists • Hold frequent safety meetings • Post safety rules • Conduct victim simulations • Put up posters in common areas • Parents of injured young workers could speak to employers • Increase safety audits on site • Make an example of a careless worker to others (discipline) • Point out safety issues when you see them (correct lifting procedures, etc.) • Be clear with young workers • Never assume that kids know how to do something until you've seen them do it

Provide employers with incentives to take action.

Wherever possible, employers should be provided with some type of incentive to actively participate in intervention strategies. Some incentives could take the form of public or industry recognition via a press release highlighting employers who took actions to make their workplace safer. Other incentives could possibly be financial in terms of an award from the WCB, or potential reductions in premiums if claims costs for employers decreased as a result of preventative actions taken by the employer.

Increase WCB's presence in the workplace.

Many injured young workers and their parent caregivers believe that the WCB needs to have a stronger presence in the workplace. Although the WCB may have no control over what an employer does with information materials, concerted efforts should be made to repeat how important it is to take preventative actions. Having WCB representatives visit or call employers to discuss workplace safety issues is useful in terms of helping employers identify what they can do to create safer working environments, as well as likely improving employers' perceptions of the WCB overall.

Interventions with Schools

The classroom is an ideal setting to raise awareness of the WCB and its young worker initiatives.

Interventions are not only important with employers and young workers; they are also important to initiate within school systems. In this manner, prevention messages can be conveyed to yet a wider audience, including teachers and high school students who may not yet have entered the workforce.

Showing a video will have a stronger impact than a lesson plan.

Many focus group participants feel that workplace safety should be a topic incorporated into the school curriculum, either in shop classes or in PREP programs. However, weighing the options, a “talk” from a teacher or other adult will not have as strong an impact with young people as will a video showing actual events or repercussions from a workplace accident.

An aggressive video approach depicting real-life scenarios would be effective in high schools. The trick is to catch their attention.

Any type of video used in high schools should be no longer than 20 minutes in duration in order to maintain the attention span of the targeted teenagers. Injured young workers believe that the video should be aggressive in its approach, incorporating attention-grabbing elements such as actual footage of an injury, case studies profiling severely injured young workers, or mock examples of accidents taking place. With reality TV being such a strong draw for many young people, the more true-to-life the video can be, the greater impact and credibility it will have among high school students.

“People want a story. A really sad story.”

Consistently, injured young workers make reference to other recent graphic social marketing campaigns related to drinking and driving, alcohol consumption or smoking when describing the tone of a prevention video that will be most effective. Graphic or shocking visuals will be compelling with this youth target audience. Showing dramatic events will at the very least get their attention to listen to some of the key messages incorporated into the video.

“It needs to be in your face.”

Other elements of the video that are important in order to have a strong impact with high school students include:

- Using up-to-date fashions and styles (high school students will laugh at last decade's clothing instead of listen to the message being conveyed);
- Using other young people/injured young workers as much as possible avoiding the "preaching" concept associated with adults (peers listen to peers);
- Showing various settings to cover the realm of prevention issues: young workers asking questions/pointing safety issues out to employers; young workers in the midst of doing their job when something may happen (they see something unsafe, are doing something unsafe); and,
- Creating key messages that will resonate with high school students (i.e. Just think about it / Think twice / Don't rush / Be efficient / Take your time / Think before you do it).

Schools can be encouraged to offer flexibility and support to injured young workers.

In addition to participating in intervention strategies such as showing videos or creating specific lesson plans related to workplace safety, schools can be effective in offering support and flexibility when a student is injured on the job. In this manner, schools could proactively send the student their homework to help provide focus and be flexible with deadlines and schedules to encourage the injured young worker they can succeed in their own manner.

As another support mechanism, schools can also be encouraged to communicate best wishes to injured young workers to remind them of the support network they have while recovering (sending cards, notes, paintings or pictures, for example). One injured young worker participant was particularly touched by the card his fellow students and teachers sent him in the hospital which provided him with strength and good humour.

Finally, high schools could also become more involved with WCB young worker prevention initiatives by having a designated contact at the WCB to ask questions, field comments, or to use as a speakers resource for their classroom if required.

Young Worker Initiatives

The WCB-BC has been more proactive than other Canadian jurisdictions in developing and implementing initiatives among young workers to increase awareness about workplace health and safety, provide resources and materials to young workers, and ultimately achieve a decline in the number of claims among young workers in British Columbia. Given these efforts, the WCB has won North American acclaim with an award delivered to the WCB by the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions (IAIABC) in 2002.

With a specific focus on seriously injured young workers, the WCB sought feedback related to potential *future* initiatives under consideration by the WCB that would be helpful to this particular stakeholder group and their caregivers.

Awareness and Perceptions of WCB Young Worker Initiatives

Many stakeholders are aware of at least one WCB young worker initiative and react positively to these efforts.

Not all seriously injured young worker stakeholders and their caregivers are aware of the entire gamut of young worker initiatives in place with the WCB. However, many can identify at least one initiative, including efforts such as the drama group (the Young Worker Peer-to-Peer Theatre Project), the WorkSafe Program, television advertisement campaigns, high school speakers, posters, “taking rings off before using machinery”, or the big annual awareness event. These initiatives are perceived as positive efforts to help raise awareness and change attitudes and behaviours about workplace health and safety.

Participation in WCB Young Worker Initiatives

Participation in young worker initiatives has brought confidence and healing to those involved.

Certain injured young worker focus group participants have participated in WCB young worker initiatives. The act of participation has helped these young adults deal with their emotions and ramifications of the injury upon their lives. Mostly, these individuals have participated as speakers in the annual awareness campaign, as well as at high schools and at other events.

“Getting out and telling people about your story is one of the best ways to come to terms with it and move on.”

Volunteerism can be expected, but only to a certain extent.

Injured young workers have been pleased to volunteer time to participate in WCB events. If participating on a continuous basis, however, the WCB may want to give some thought to offering a wage for time committed to such efforts. Parent caregivers of those who have participated strongly believe in the effectiveness and helpfulness of participation in young worker initiatives. However, certain parent caregivers believe the WCB should consider paying injured young workers for their time instead of ad-hoc per diems for their participation. One parent caregiver also suggested hiring injured young workers to act as advocates in WCB initiatives to show injured young workers that their time is valuable. Other caregivers caution the WCB to not ask for too much time from injured young workers as they will likely willingly offer their time, and in turn, spend less time on other important life issues.

Awareness Campaigns

Raising awareness is important and needs to be continued.

Alerting young workers to potential dangers at the workplace is an essential role in working towards reducing injuries, and even fatalities. Stakeholders involved in these focus group workshops consistently stress the importance of “getting the word out” so that what happened to them will not happen to others. Knowing that not all young injured workers, even having experienced an injury, are aware of all WCB young worker initiatives is key learning to show that increased awareness is required. In other words, messages are reaching some, but could reach more involved.

Upon explaining the various types of activities the WCB undertakes to raise awareness among young workers, stakeholders applaud the WCB for their efforts and encourage the Board to continue with its efforts.

Profile sheets are useful and should be used more extensively.

Focus group participants had an opportunity to review two profile sheets: “Lauren Barwick” and “Nick and Bev Perry”. Injured young workers and their caregivers were touched by these stories and believe that strong messages are conveyed in a concise manner. The fact that these stories are true examples of experiences draws individuals into the profile sheets and what they are aiming to achieve. The profiles can teach youth that accidents happen, and shows injured young workers they are not alone.

Not many participants had seen such profile sheets before the sessions and feel that they could have a strong impact in many arenas: high schools; work sites using similar work site examples in the profiles; as hand-outs at WCB events and speaking tours; and, with recently injured young workers.

“I wish I had read this before.”

“It’s uplifting. It’s a happy story. It shows they’re making it. It shows the light at the end of the tunnel.”

Profiling severe injuries may have the strongest impact, but the “lucky” ones should be profiled as well.

Nine out of the ten injured young workers aged 15 to 19 at the time of their accident agreed to provide consent to have their story profiled in awareness campaigns of this sort. In addition, six of the eleven injured young workers aged 20-24 at the time of their accident provided consent to have their story profiled.

Those who would participate in this initiative in future believe their story could help prevent a similar incident from happening to someone else. For this reason alone, they would offer their help. On the other hand, some believe that their injury was not severe enough to be profiled and have a strong impact. Others did not provide consent to be profiled because they believe that they do not have a story to tell given their accident was just a result of the way “the cards were dealt that day”.

What is important, therefore, is to stress the importance of telling all stories. The “lucky” ones who experienced accidents that could have been much worse - even fatal - can also be profiled in a manner that is inspiring and uplifting with a strong message to young workers.

Interest in participating in awareness campaigns appears to be greater among younger injured workers.

The proportion of injured young workers who were 15-19 years of age at the time of the accident and want to participate in future WCB awareness campaigns is greater than the proportion of those who were 20-24 years of age at the time of incurring their injury. Whether it be having their photo taken, having their story profiled, or having their name associated with comments or quotes, younger injured young workers are more likely to participate and represent a stronger target audience for the WCB in seeking willing volunteers.

The older segment of injured young workers tends to see themselves as more removed from the “teen” life at high schools, perhaps not seeing themselves as having the same impact as younger injured workers may have. The older segment is also dealing with different life issues such as careers, relationships, rent/mortgages whereas the younger segment remains more dependent on their families, thus having more time to commit. The older segment of injured young workers would be more motivated to participate in an advisory role than in an advocacy role.

Injured Young Worker Speakers Resource

Having an injured young workers speakers resource is powerful and effective.

Clearly, all stakeholders support the speakers resource initiative under development by the WCB. Young people relate to other young people, and relate best when the communication is conducted face-to-face. Moreover, real stories, coupled with emotional visuals, truly have a powerful impact on the young worker target audience. Young adults do not want to receive a lecture, they want to hear a story – a story they can relate to themselves. Having other young adults, seriously injured young adults, deliver messages via speaking engagements at high schools or other events is extremely effective.

“It’s the face-to-face action with peers that’s making the difference here.”

Those involved do it because it works. It works on others and it helps them personally.

Two injured young worker focus group participants have participated as speakers for the WCB in the past. In sharing their experiences, these individuals comment that the initiative has had a profound impact on audiences when young workers have a real-life example of what can happen right before their eyes. And it makes them feel good to help others help themselves. It makes them feel good that if they can help even one other person from experiencing what they did, their accident had meaning. Further, it brings meaning to them personally by making them think about what happened, what could have prevented it from happening, and about the vast possibilities that still lie ahead. Participation has given strength to those involved.

“It’s really powerful to have that. People are visibly affected. It’s really emotional. It’s more in front of your mind when you see the person.”

“It’s a way for an injured person to release, make them feel better.”

“It was a confidence-builder for my son.”

The WCB should not be shy to profile themselves at these events.

Seriously injured young workers have a positive image of the WCB. They would like to also help increase awareness of the Board, and improve the image of the Board when speaking about their experiences to others. In creating a new image of the WCB among young workers, the image of the WCB may change in future generations. The WCB should not be shy about profiling what they have done, are doing, and are planning to do to help young workers when speaking events take place. Peers will listen to peers and value their opinions. In this case, the opinions of the injured young workers are positively supportive of the WCB’s young worker initiatives.

The WCB should network their speakers resource regionally and sectorally.

While some feel it may be useful for the WCB to actually hire an injured young worker to conduct speeches on a regular basis, others believe that it may be better to have a variety of speakers at hand. First, having a network of speakers across British Columbia would enable injured young workers to participate in local community events. The perception is that local faces will have a stronger impact than would unknown or outside personalities when speaking to an audience. In the same light, some injured young workers would only be interested in speaking to local audiences than in other communities.

“It would help if it was a local person going to a local place because it hits home more, people are more willing to listen.”

Second, some believe that speeches taking place at industry events or at workplaces would have a stronger impact if the individual was working in that same sector at the time their injury occurred. In this manner, the message that “it can happen” will be more effective because an actual example is presented in person. There is also a sentiment that more speeches could occur at workplaces and that having sectoral experiences in this sense would be useful.

“Jobs vary so much it would work if they went in on an industry basis, then go to employers’ workplaces as someone from that community.”

Tap into parent caregivers as speakers. Their stories can expand the realm of interventions implemented.

Parent caregivers are also willing to participate in a speakers resource. They feel that if they can tap into the “parental side” of employers through speaking engagements, employers may feel more motivated to make changes at their work sites. Parent caregivers could also speak at a number of events such as PTA meetings, industry associations or Chambers of Commerce, for example. In this manner, it is once again peers listening to peers: parent to parent.

Messages to motivate injured young workers to participate in the speakers resource program could include, but not be limited to:

- You make a difference by helping others.
- You'll gain valuable public speaking experience to help with future jobs.
- You meet a lot of cool people.
- It'll help build your confidence.
- If you've been there, you've got credentials.
- Young workers need to hear from other young workers.
- We value your time and will compensate you for your efforts.
- You can help prevent it from happening to others.

Barriers to participating in the speaking resource program also exist. For some, it is simply an issue of not having an appropriate comfort level with public speaking. For others, the severity of the injury plays a role in motivation levels to participate. The perception here is that those with less severe injuries may not have as strong an impact with audiences. The WCB should once again remind individuals with these views that the “luckier” ones also have a story to tell.

“I don’t think that my kind of injury would command the respect of any audience.”

Those already involved with speaking would be willing to continue helping with this initiative. Overall, eight of the ten younger injured workers are willing to speak at events, while only three of the eleven participants who were 20-24 years old at the time of their injury are willing to participate.

Young Worker Certificate Program

The Young Worker Certificate Program is useful, but less influential than other initiatives.

Injured young worker stakeholders and their parent caregivers hold positive impressions of the proposed Young Worker Certificate Program. Indeed those who are aware of the current WorkSafe Program believe the initiative is helpful. In comparison to other WCB efforts, however, the Certificate Program has less sex appeal to grab the attention of young workers and make a significant lasting impression. Why? It’s like school – yet another course young people are supposed to take before going out into the work world. Because of this association and the efforts involved on the part of the young worker completing the program, motivation levels to participate appear to be less enthusiastic.

Promote the Young Worker Certificate Program by saying:

- You’d get a job before others would. It has definite resume benefits.
- You may have your probationary period reduced if you have done this.
- It’s free!
- You can use it as a credit towards your high school diploma.
- You can do it on your own time at home online.
- It’s going to be mandatory later on, so it’s best to do it now.
- You’ll feel so much more comfortable walking in on your first day.
- It’s more than common sense; it’s about saving your life.
- It’s an investment in your future.

Injured young workers are interested in participating in the development and implementation of the Young Worker Certificate Program, particularly among the younger segment (9/10 versus 3/11 among the older segment).

Further, the Certificate Program could be promoted to employers, particularly large employers, to incorporate into their workplace safety programs or initial training programs. The WCB could even encourage employers to post the job listing with a line item stating, "WorkSafe Certificate Program holders preferred".

Some potential pitfalls exist that should be addressed prior to implementation.

Offering the Certificate Program online is a motivating medium to entice young workers to complete the program. However, several injured young workers indicate that if offered online, the WCB may not know who actually completes the program as the identity of the user is hidden. Therefore, checks and balances must also be implemented, such as taking a final test or exam in the presence of a supervisor and showing photo ID when doing so.

The Program, in its initial description, appears almost vague – trying to be all things to all people. Injured young workers comment that industries and types of jobs within industries vary so dramatically that to be effective, this Program would have to be segmented into several streams to cover the level of detail required to be certified by the program. Thus, the WCB should consider developing a core set of topics to be covered by all program participants, and be prepared to offer specific streams of interest for young workers.

Lastly, the motivation must be strong. If implemented in a classroom, people may not be personally motivated (like, I have to do this?) to accomplish the goals set out in the program. As one parent caregiver states, "the kids need a reward". The WCB needs to promote the program and review implementation strategies with motivation in mind.

Injured Young Worker Advisory Group (IYWAG)

The concept of the IYWAG is positively received, but the WCB must further define the mandate of the group prior to marketing it to prospective participants.

Many stakeholders were initially unclear about the specific roles of an IYWAG, but supported the concept entirely. This lack of clarity could inhibit enthusiasm to participate at first glance. As a first step, the WCB needs to clarify the positioning of the group, explain its activities, and define its objectives. Specific details of the group do not yet need to be conveyed, as they will develop over time, but information related to the format and location of group meetings is of noted interest to stakeholders.

"The idea is good, but the implementation is fuzzy."

"I respect them [the WCB] for doing that."

The potential accomplishments of an IYWAG are phenomenal.

Suggestions and ideas for roles and activities that the group could undertake cover many intervention areas, among others, and would only expand given a longer duration to brainstorm ideas. Thoughts include:

- Have online chat rooms with other injured young workers and other young workers;
- Have case managers seek advice from the group regarding “grey” matters on cases they deal with involving injured young workers;
- Provide safety certificates to young workers;
- Give speeches at schools, events, work sites;
- Encourage safety assessments at work sites;
- Conduct clinics/workshops;
- Prepare scenarios for training at work sites;
- Raise awareness of the WCB;
- Improve the image of the WCB;
- Raise awareness of workplace health and safety; and,
- Participate in other WCB prevention initiatives.

Ultimately, the accomplishments of this group would assist in reducing the number of injured young workers in the province.

“A really good idea. A bridge between the WCB and young workers – a passageway to help them understand each other.”

The most significant role for an IYWAG is to provide support to other injured young workers.

All stakeholders shared the same view that the main purpose of an IYWAG should be to provide a network of support and resources to other injured young workers. They were lost when it happened. Apart from physiotherapy, they have experienced little, if any, true peer support: injured young worker to injured young worker. Many commented that their participation in the focus groups was the first peer group experience they had been involved with and expressed that they appreciated the opportunity.

Now they could see an IYWAG communicating by various mediums (written, email, face-to-face, house calls, hospital visits) to others who have been injured on the job at a young age. Creating a database of injured young workers, their locations, industry sectors, and types of injuries would assist the group in being able to match injured young workers in the group to those in need.

Encourage participation in the group by saying:

- It is a support network of injured young workers;
- There is a role for everyone;
- There are valuable career skills to be learned;
- They will assist in forming future WCB strategies; and,
- Other injured young workers need your help.

Barriers to participation may involve the perceived time commitment. A more formal group structure instinctively implies that a more formal time commitment would be required. Injured young workers are willing to commit some of their free time (i.e. 5-10 hours/month), but without compensation, extensive requests for volunteer services should be limited. This element of involvement with the group will be a decision-making factor for some injured young workers when considering their willingness to participate.

Another barrier to participation involves the format of the group and its meetings. If travel is often required to conduct meetings face-to-face, this will inhibit participation levels, necessarily excluding those in the most remote corners of BC. Alternative meeting concepts should be established to include injured young workers across the province by email, conference calls, or even an annual conference.

Finally, if the IYWAG is perceived to be simply a social gathering, a "hen session", or a part of a larger political agenda, and decisions made by the group carry little or no weight within the WCB or with its stakeholders, some injured young workers will lose interest in the group. These individuals want to be part of something consistent, something meaningful, to have an opportunity to give meaning to their injury.