

## Information Letter



**EPID**  
at work



**Lakehead**  
UNIVERSITY

### WORKER INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

**Title** Northwestern Ontario Workplace and Worker Health Study (NOWWHS)

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**Funder** Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

**Dear Potential Participant,**

You are invited to participate in this study because you either clicked on the study link or your workplace agreed to participate in the study and gave permission for us to reach out to you. To participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey at the beginning of the study, as well

as shorter follow-up surveys every 6 months afterwards. This study is being conducted by researchers from the Enhancing the Prevention of Injury and Disability @ Work (EPID@Work) Research Institute at Lakehead University. Please read this explanation about the study and its risks and benefits before you decide if you would like to take part. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and your decision to participate or not will have no impact on your employment status.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to establish a group of workplaces and workers that we can follow over time to better understand how the workplace affects mental wellbeing, mental disorders, and other health events in Northwestern Ontario workplaces. Over time, we will develop and test various interventions with this group.

## **Study Eligibility**

Individuals who are at least 14 years old, currently employed, self-employed, or have been employed in the past year are eligible to participate in this study. Those who would have liked to work in the past year, but could not due to a workplace injury (including mental health disorder) are also eligible to participate. Members and staff of the EPID@Work Research Institute are not eligible to participate in this study.

## **Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a confidential web-based survey now that should take approximately 40 to 60 minutes to complete. Six months from now, we will email you a link to complete another survey that will be about half the size. We currently anticipate the study to be ongoing for 5 years, dependent on funding. The survey includes questions about your mental health, physical health, workplace conditions, personal factors, and workplace/personal demographics. The entire web-based survey does not have to be completed at one time. You may exit and resume the survey as many times as you wish as long as you return on the same browser where you started the survey, or you can email [workinghealth@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:workinghealth@lakeheadu.ca) to retrieve your survey.

## **Risks Related to Participating in the Study**

With the sharing of personal health information there are possible risks of breach of confidentiality. We are taking several extra precautions to ensure this doesn't happen. First, we are using premium data collection software that encrypts all the information entered. This means that even if someone were to intercept the data, it would not be able to be understood. Second, the survey itself does not include your name, email address, or workplace name. That information is included in the informed consent. Third, the informed consent document is submitted separately from the survey data so even if someone were to intercept either the consent form or the survey data they would not be able to connect any information to you. Researchers can connect the consent data to the survey data through a Response ID that is generated by the survey software but is only accessible to researchers. Fourth, no identifying information will ever be shared with your workplace, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (the study funder) or the WSIB. All study reports and

summaries will include only aggregate or grouped findings. You may refuse to answer any question or stop the survey at any time. Finally, to further protect your information from your workplace we ask you to refrain from completing the survey on your workplace computer. Please contact us if you don't have access to a computer outside of your workplace and you would like to participate.

Although we do not foresee any major risks associated with participating in this study, we do understand that some questions included in the survey (especially about mental health) may be emotional or distressing. If you experience any stress or anxiety after participating in this study, [please consult the resources that you can find by clicking here.](#)

### **Benefits to Participating in the Study**

You will not receive any immediate direct benefit from being in this study. Information learned from this study may, in the future, help workplaces, supervisors, and worker compensation boards improve efforts and policies related to workplace health. In the longer term, there may be opportunities to participate in interventions within this study. This could confer some direct benefit at that time if the intervention tested is found to enhance worker mental health or improve the workplace for the worker in a positive way.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study without penalty, and your workplace will not be notified of whether you have chosen to participate. You may refuse to answer any question in the survey that you do not wish to answer or end participation at any time.

We will be asking participants to provide their OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan) information. This information is being collected so that we may link survey data to the provincial health care utilization data held at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences for a future study. We will obtain informed consent before starting that study, allowing you to choose whether to participate. All information in this survey, including your OHIP information, is encrypted to ensure it cannot be linked to any individual. If you do not wish to share your OHIP information, please skip the question in the survey.

### **Confidentiality**

All information collected during this study will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of the study. The information collected as part of this study will only be used for the purposes of this research study. The survey data will be collected using Qualtrics, which is a secure web-based survey platform. Only the research team will have access to the online data. After each follow-up ends, all information you have provided will be downloaded from the Qualtrics server (which is housed in Canada), deidentified and then stored on a secure password protected server at Lakehead University. This secure server can only be accessed by the research team. The encrypted information stored on the Qualtrics server will be kept until the last follow-up is completed (expected to be 7 to 10 years from now) and then all encrypted information from Qualtrics will be erased. All downloaded and

deidentified study information will be stored securely in a locked cabinet and on a password-protected computer at Lakehead University. The data will be housed on a Lakehead University server for the duration of the project. After the study is completed, all data will be stored at Lakehead University for a minimum of seven years. The research team will not share any personally identifiable information with anyone outside the study. Data will be published in aggregate or grouped form (i.e., a summary of results from all participants). All information collected during this study, including your personal information on the consent forms, will be kept confidential. You will not be named in any reports, publications, or presentations that may come from this study.

### **Expenses Associated with Participating in the Study**

There are no expenses associated with participating in this study. If your employer has agreed to participate in this study, we will visit your workplace to collect data from you and your workplace. Your workplace has agreed to provide you with time at work to complete the survey by visiting us at our research van. Although you are able to complete the survey using any computer/tablet/phone, we do not recommend using your workplace computer to complete the survey, just to better protect the confidentiality of your information.

### **Research Results**

We will be maintaining highlights of results on our study website after the first 6 months of the study (<https://www.workinghealth.ca/>), so you may see what we are learning from this study. We will also send highlights to draw your attention to the website when we have recently published an article. We will post a summary of the scientific articles on our study website. No participant will be identified in any of these postings.

### **To Show our Appreciation**

To thank you for taking the time to participate in our study, we will hold random draws for \$1000 every two months. Once you have completed your baseline survey, you will be entered into the draw. Additionally, completing your 6-month follow-up survey will earn you an extra entry in the next draw. This process will continue until the study concludes.

To thank participating workplaces, they will receive a comprehensive report of all aggregate or grouped findings of their workers (if there are at least 20 participants who would not be able to be identified through provision of the information) after the baseline data collection is complete and yearly thereafter for as long as they continue to participate in the study. For those workplaces that are too small or have too few participants to allow for provision of aggregate data, we will provide aggregate data from all participating workers from organizations of the same size and from the same industrial sector. This is to help them identify where they can improve their workplace for their workers.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Lakehead University, the Enhancing the Prevention of Injury and Disability @ Work (EPID@Work)

Research Institute, and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development will pay the researchers for the costs of doing this study. All these people have an interest in completing this study. Their interests should not influence your decision to participate in this study. You should not feel pressured to join this study.

### **Questions About the Study**

This information letter will be available online on our study website (<https://www.workinghealth.ca/>) if you would like a copy. If you have any questions, concerns or would like to speak to the study team for any reason, please email the principal investigator, Dr. Vicki Kristman at [epid.director@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:epid.director@lakeheadu.ca) or phone at (807) 343-8010 x7184. This study has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or have concerns about this study, contact Sue Wright from the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board (REB) (phone: (807) 343-8010 x8283; email: [research@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:research@lakeheadu.ca)) or the REB Chair at the St. Joseph's Care Group (phone: 807-346-3697; Toll Free within Ontario and Manitoba: 1-855-239-807; email: [SJCG.REBChair@tbh.net](mailto:SJCG.REBChair@tbh.net)). The Research Ethics Board is a group of people who oversee the ethical conduct of research studies. These people are not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss with them will be kept confidential.