

## Information Letter



Lakehead  
UNIVERSITY

### WORKPLACE 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 your workplace was either randomly selected or you volunteered your workplace to participate in the study. To participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey at the beginning of the study, as well as follow-up surveys every 12

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.

## **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**

Any workplace that is in Northwestern Ontario with at least one employee who is not also the employer is 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 10 to 20 minutes to complete. One year from now, we will email you a link to complete another survey that will be similar in size. We currently anticipate the study to be ongoing for 5 years, dependent on funding. The survey includes questions about your workplace and its policies. 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 if 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**

Since you are providing information on behalf of your workplace, there is very little risk to participating in this study. However, at the EPID@Work Research Institute we value maintaining the confidentiality of all our data. Therefore, we take several extra precautions to ensure confidentiality. 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 or your workplace. Fourth, no identifying workplace information will ever be shared with anyone, including the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (the study funder) or the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (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.

## **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 no one will be notified of whether you have chosen to participate or not. You may refuse to answer any question in the survey that you do not wish to answer or end participation at any time.

### **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 identifiable employer information with anyone outside the study. Data will be published in aggregate 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. Your workplace 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. We will visit your workplace to collect data from you and your workers. We would appreciate you giving your workers time to participate by allowing them to visit us throughout the day.

### **Research Results**

We will be maintaining a dashboard of aggregate or grouped 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 newsletters 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 participating workplace will be identified in any of these postings.

## **To Show our Appreciation**

To thank you for participating, you will receive a comprehensive report of all aggregate findings of your workers (as long as 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 you 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 in an effort to help you identify where you can improve your workplace for your workers. We may be able to assist you by providing some suggestions as well.

To thank your workers for participating, we will hold sixty random draws for a \$500 gift card. A draw will be held after every 100 surveys are completed. Once someone has participated, they will remain in the draw until the entire \$30,000 is awarded. We will use a similar procedure to thank participants for completing each follow-up questionnaire as well.

## **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 x7168. 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 at (807) 343-8010 x8283 or [research@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:research@lakeheadu.ca). 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.