

Study: Lack of trust leads to poorer workers' comp outcomes

Workers should be able to trust their employers while they recover from work-related injuries and illnesses. After all, workers' compensation is a right, and it's illegal in many states for an employer to retaliate or fire a worker for reporting a workplace injury and filing a workers' compensation claim. Yet firing – and the fear of it – persists.

A recently released study found that fear of retaliation isn't just uncomfortable for injured workers. It can actually lead to poorer outcomes for workers' compensation claims, meaning that workers who feared for their jobs had more problems returning to work than other workers did.

The study involved phone interviews with more than 3,200 injured workers in eight states, including Pennsylvania. Interviewers asked workers who received workers' comp benefits for workplace injuries suffered in 2010. The interviews were conducted about three years after the injuries occurred. They found:

- One in five workers who were worried about being fired were not working, which was twice the rate for workers without these concerns.
- Workers who were “strongly concerned” about being fired had poorer return-to-work outcomes than workers without these issues.
- There was an average four-week increase in the average duration of disability associated with concerns about being fired.

The studies were completed by the Workers Compensation Research Institute, which says that these and other predictors identified in the study could help improve treatment of

workers after injuries and lead to better outcomes.

In Pennsylvania, the state Supreme Court has held that an employer may not fire you against you because you are seeking workers compensation benefits. If they do, you may have a claim for retaliation against your employer. However, the law in this area is complicated. If you fear that your employer may fire you or retaliate against you, contact an experienced attorney.

For more information, see our section on employer retaliation for a workers' compensation claim.

Source: Workers Compensation Research Institute, "[WCRI identifies new predictors of worker outcomes](#)," June 19, 2014