

Executive Summary: Health Impact Review of SSB 5043

SSB 5043, Concerning industrial insurance coverage for posttraumatic stress disorders affecting correctional facility workers (2025 Legislative Session)

Evidence indicates that SSB 5043 would likely result in some correctional facility workers filing workers' compensation claims related to PTSD and some claims being accepted, which would increase use of mental health services, improve mental health outcomes, and decrease mental health inequities for some correctional facility workers.

BILL INFORMATION

Sponsors: Senate Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Dhingra, Nobles, Conway, MacEwen, Saldaña, Lovick, Salomon, Stanford, Wagoner, Wilson, J., Shewmake, Trudeau, Valdez, Bateman, Liias, Chapman, Lovelett, Cleveland, Frame, Hasegawa, Orwall, Slatter, Wellman, Wilson, C.)

Summary of Bill:

- Amends [RCW 51.08.142](#) to exclude certain correctional facility workers from the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) rule that claims based on mental conditions and mental disabilities caused by stress do not fall within the definition of occupational disease for industrial insurance (workers' compensation).
- Adds a new section to [Chapter 51.32 RCW](#) specifying that it is a prima facie presumption^a that posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an occupational disease under [RCW 51.08.140](#) for correctional facility workers who develop PTSD after being employed on a fully compensated basis as a correctional facility worker in Washington State for at least 90 consecutive days.
- Defines correctional facility worker as an employee of the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) working at a correctional facility^b where adults sentenced to the jurisdiction of DOC are held in total confinement^c in a facility or institution operated directly by DOC.

^a Typically, the burden of proof in workers' compensation claim is on the employee to show that an injury is work-related or an illness is occupational (personal communications, February 2025). However, a prima facie presumption reverses the assumption. The prima facie presumption in the bill would establish that there is sufficient evidence that PTSD is an occupational disease by the nature of the person being employed as a correctional facility worker, if they meet specific criteria (personal communications, February 2025). Therefore, the burden of proof is on the employer to show that an employee's PTSD is not the result of their occupation (personal communications, February 2025).

^b SSB 5043 refers to the definition of correctional facility in [RCW 72.09.015](#), which defines correctional facility as a facility or institution operated directly or by contract by the Secretary of Corrections for the purposes of incarcerating adults in total or partial confinement. However, the bill provisions only pertain to facilities where adults sentenced to the jurisdiction of DOC are held in total confinement in a facility or institution operated directly by DOC. That is, the bill does not relate to facilities where people are held in partial confinement or to facilities contracted by DOC.

^c [RCW 9.94A.030](#) defines "total confinement" to mean "confinement inside the physical boundaries of a facility or institution operated or utilized under contract by the state or any other unit of government for 24 hours a day" or

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HEALTH IMPACT REVIEW

Summary of Findings:

This Health Impact Review found the following evidence for SSB 5043:

- **Informed assumption** that 1) excluding certain correctional facility workers from the L&I Mental condition/mental disabilities rule ([WAC 296-14-300](#)) and 2) creating a prima facie presumption that PTSD is an occupational disease for correctional facility workers who develop PTSD and meet specific criteria would likely result in some correctional facility workers filing workers' compensation claims related to PTSD and some claims being accepted, which would increase use of mental health services. This informed assumption is based on bill provisions, workers' compensation PTSD claims data for other occupations, and information shared by key informants.
- **A fair amount of evidence** that increasing use of mental health services among some correctional facility workers with PTSD would likely improve mental health outcomes.
- **Strong evidence** that improved mental health outcomes would likely decrease mental health inequities for some correctional facility workers.

FULL REVIEW

For review methods, logic model, strength-of-evidence analyses, and citations of empirical evidence refer to the full Health Impact Review at

<https://sboh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/HIR-2025-05-SSB5043.pdf>

work or labor camps. SSB 5043 only pertains to facilities where adults are held in total confinement in a facility or institution operated directly by DOC.

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