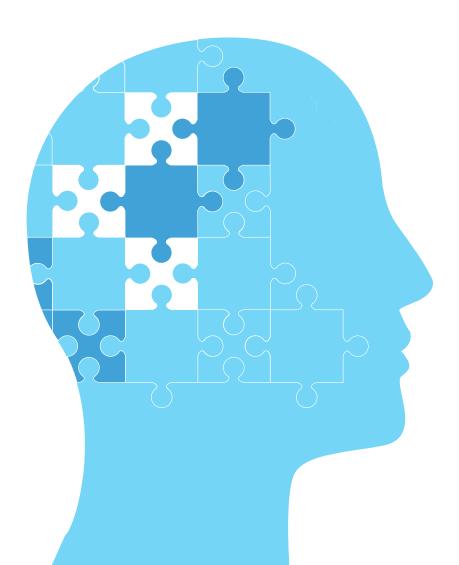
# Employers' Guide to Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace





If you would like this information in another official language, call us. English
Si vous voulez ces informations dans une autre langue officielle, contactez-nous.  French
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Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit. Inuinnaqtun
Kīspin ki nitawihtīn ē nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān. Cree
Tłıcho yatı k' ę̀ę̀. Dı wegodı newo dè, gots'o gonede. Tłıcho
?erıhtł'ís Dëne Sųłıné yatı t'a huts'elkër xa beyáyatı thezą zat'e, nuwe ts'ën yółtı. Chipewyan
Edı gondı dehgáh got' je zhatıé k' é edatł' éh enahddhe nıde naxets' é edahli.  South Slavey
K'áhshó got'įne xədə k'é hederi zedįhtl'é yeriniwę nídé dúle. North Slavey
 Jii gwandak izhii ginjìk vat'atr'ijąhch'uu zhit yinohthan jì', diits'àt ginohkhìi. Gwich'in
——————————————————————————————————————

#### **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

wscc.nt.ca

#### Yellowknife

Box 8888, 5022 49th Street Centre Square Tower, 5th Floor Yellowknife, NT X1A 2R3

Telephone: 867-920-3888 Toll Free: 1-800-661-0792

Fax: 867-873-4596

Toll Free Fax: 1-866-277-3677

#### Inuvik

Box 1188, 85 Kingmingya Road Blackstone Building, Unit 87 Inuvik, NT X0E 0T0

Telephone: 867-678-2301

Fax: 867-678-2302

#### **NUNAVUT**

wscc.nu.ca

#### Iqaluit

Box 669, 630 Queen Elizabeth II Way Qamutiq Building, 2nd Floor Iqaluit, NU XOA 0H0

Telephone: 867-979-8500 Toll Free: 1-877-404-4407

Fax: 867-979-8501

Toll Free Fax: 1-866-979-8501

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#### **DEFINITIONS**

These definitions are borrowed from Assembling the Pieces: An Implementation Guide to the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, a joint publication of the CSA and Mental Health Commission of Canada.

#### **HEALTH**

 A state of complete physical, social, and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

# MENTAL HEALTH (PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH)

 A state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.

#### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY**

 The absence of harm and/or threat of harm to mental well-being that a worker might experience.

Reference: Guarding Minds @ Work (adapted wording)

# PSYCHOLOGICALLY HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKPLACE

 A workplace that promotes workers' psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm to worker psychological health including in negligent, reckless, or intentional ways.

Reference: Guarding Minds @ Work (adapted wording)

#### **PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK FACTOR**

 Hazards including elements of the work environment, management practices, and/or organizational dimensions that increase the risk to health.

## INTRODUCTION

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) programs are integral to the functioning of workplaces, and are often focused on eliminating physical hazards and preventing bodily injuries or accidents. However, a healthy and safe workplace must take into consideration factors that go beyond the physical hazards employees may face in their day to day work.

The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace<sup>1</sup> (CSA<sup>2</sup> Standard CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013) is a voluntary standard that outlines the essentials of ensuring psychological health and safety in the workplace. WSCC has developed this *Employers' Guide to Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplaces* to assist employers in implementing the National Standard. Psychological health and safety should be part of your overall Occupational Health and Safety Program<sup>3</sup>.

According to the National Standard, workplaces should try to "actively prevent harm" while "promoting psychological well-being<sup>4</sup>." Psychological health and safety in the workplace does not require you to assess the mental health of your workers, but instead to support and promote worker mental well-being through your company's processes and procedures. Your employees and your organization can benefit from employee mental well-being in the following ways:

Workers thrive	Decreased occupational injuries & illness	Decreased turnover
Increased productivity	Decreased workers'     compensation claims	Increased attraction of top talent
Decreased absenteeism	• Increased job satisfaction	• Return on investment

You can enjoy these benefits even with small changes to your psychological health and safety processes and procedures, such as asking employees for their opinions on their workloads and tasks, giving employees autonomy when organizing their day, and supporting employees in using their skills and abilities in the workplace where possible.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace can be found on the websites of the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the CSA Group.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> <u>CSA Group</u> is a global organization dedicated to safety, social good and sustainability. Leader in Standards Development, Testing, Inspection and Certification around the world.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Occupational Health and Safety Programs can be developed according to the <u>WSCC Code of Practice</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Psychological well-being refers to a state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to their community

Content in this guide is based on <u>Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace: Prevention, Promotion, and Guidance to Staged Implementation</u> and <u>Assembling the Pieces: An Implementation Guide to the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.</u>

## **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

This guide is designed to get you started in planning and managing psychological health and safety in your workplace. You will find essential elements that employers and workers can use as a guide in assessing, improving, and developing processes and procedures that support mental well-being for everyone in your organization.

*Note:* The information in this guide is **not** to help diagnose or assess an employee's mental health, as this is the responsibility of mental health professionals.

The guide is organized into three major sub-sections:

- **Step 1** Organizational Commitment
- Step 2 Planning and Implementation
- **Step 3** Ongoing Commitment and Continual Improvement

These three sections will help you develop a successful psychological health and safety program for your workplace.

When you are ready for a more complex approach to psychological health and safety in your workplace, an excellent resource to consult is Mental Health Commission of Canada's Assembling the Pieces: An Implementation Guide to the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.

# STEP 1: COMMITMENT, LEADERSHIP, AND PARTICIPATION

As with any OHS topic, to advance mental well-being at your workplace, the organization itself must make a commitment to psychological health and safety practices. There are many ways that employers, managers, and supervisors can show employees that mental well-being is important in the workplace. Respecting employee confidentiality, embracing diversity, and allowing employees to participate in discussions about changes in the organization are just a few examples.

#### COMMITMENT

#### **Policy Statement**

One way employers can show commitment to psychological health and safety in the workplace is to develop a policy statement. This policy statement should outline the importance and value of psychological health and safety in your workplace, and any actions the organization will take to ensure it is a priority. You can post this policy in an area of your workplace that is visible to all employees.

Use the sample policy in Appendix A to get started.

#### **Confidentiality and Diversity**

The National Standard includes confidentiality and diversity as an essential part of the commitment to psychological health and safety in your workplace.

#### What does this mean?

Confidentiality: Employee privacy around psychological health and safety should be protected in the same way that all other confidential employee, client, and customer information. Encourage a culture among your employees that understands that psychological health and safety-related incidents are confidential and private. Only those who need to be involved in discussions about the incident should be aware of what happened. Exposing information about an employee's psychological health could have a severe impact on their mental well-being.

**Diversity:** Most organizations include diverse populations resulting in greater innovation, creativity, and corporate reputation. It is a legal requirement to respect diversity in the workplace, but it is also an important part of supporting the mental well-being of your employees. Employers can set a standard of respect for diversity by including a variety of

employees in decision-making processes and procedures to ensure that all voices in the workplace are heard.

#### **LEADERSHIP**

All levels of an organization should work to support the overall mental well-being of the workforce, but employers and managers set the example of how the rest of the organization will manage psychological health and safety. This can be demonstrated through treatment of coworkers, attitudes and morale, and many other examples.

Employers can also promote and provide learning and development opportunities for employees about psychosocial hazards at the work site, and programming that supports mental well-being. Encourage your employees to participate in available and relevant programs. Some sources for such programs include: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, Canadian Mental Health Association, Mental Health Commission of Canada, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

#### **PARTICIPATION**

Including employees in conversations about changes happening in the organization can promote mental well-being, especially when those changes will directly affect them. Encouraging employees to specifically participate in discussions and decisions about how psychosocial hazards can be assessed, eliminated, or controlled will improve your workplace programming. Include a diverse group of employees to participate in the development of your psychological health and safety processes.

Decisions on psychological health and safety should also include your OHS representative or Joint OHS Committee<sup>5</sup>, depending on the number of employees you have.

Psychological health and safety should be considered in combination with your overall health and safety management and should be part of regular health and safety discussions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> By law, employers with less than 20 employees shall have one person assigned to OHS management. Employers with 20 or more employees are mandated to have a joint OHS committee.

## STEP 2: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### **PLANNING**

The main tasks involved with planning and implementing your workplace psychological health and safety plan are:

- Assessing where you currently are in terms of managing mental well-being;
- Identifying and assessing risks of psychosocial hazards;
- Develop and implement hazard controls;
- Have a plan to assess if the hazard controls are working, and;
- Communicate with your employees at all stages of the planning and implementation process.

#### **Assess Your Current Situation**

To find out how your workplace is currently managing psychological health and safety issues, you can conduct an internal audit. This audit can be referred back to as you work through your planning and implementation process to help track progress. Use the sample audit tool in <a href="#">Appendix B</a> that was developed based on the National Standard.

#### Psychosocial Factors for Mental Well-Being in the Workplace

The National Standard identifies 13 psychosocial factors that impact psychological health and safety in the workplace:

- Clear leadership and expectations
- 2. Civility and respect
- 3. Workload management
- 4. Engagement
- Work/life balance
- 6. Protection of physical safety

- 7. Psychological protection
- 8. Psychological support
- 9. Organizational culture
- 10. Recognition and reward
- 11. Growth and development
- 12. Involvement and Influence
- 13. Psychological job demands

These 13 factors are not the only things that affect mental well-being in the workplace, but by considering these factors, you will be more successful in supporting the mental well-being of your workforce. For a complete description of the 13 factors, and examples of other elements that can affect mental health in the workplace, visit CCOH's site on <a href="Mental Health - Psychosocial Risk Factors in the Workplace">Mental Health - Psychosocial Risk Factors in the Workplace</a>.

In addition, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety offers <u>a free course</u> on these psychosocial factors and how to apply them in your workplace.

#### **Hazard Assessment for Psychosocial Factors**

You have likely assessed a variety of physical hazards in your company as part of your OHS program. Psychosocial factors can be assessed in a similar way, and used to develop a hazard control plan as part of your psychological health and safety plan. Identify and assess the factors in your workplace that could be potential psychological hazards. You can begin by using the Sample Hazard and Risk Assessment in Appendix C.

#### **Preventative and Protective Measures: Controlling Workplace Hazards**

Once you have identified and assessed your workplace's psychological hazards and their related risk levels using your Hazard and Risk Assessment form, your next step is to incorporate them into your existing workplace hazard control plan to mitigate any hazards you have identified.

As with any workplace hazard, the best way to control a hazard is to eliminate it completely. If it is not possible to eliminate a hazard, plan to mitigate it so it has less impact on your employees.

**Example:** The potential psychosocial hazard of an employee feeling disconnected or unimportant at work could be eliminated by setting regular meetings to check in with employees, and involve them in decision-making. When employees are not able to give their input, they may feel indifferent and lose interest in the success of the organization.

There may be situations where a psychological hazard cannot be completely eliminated. This is where assigning a control mechanism can minimize the risks.

#### **Emergency Response Plan and Critical Psychological Events**

In addition to updating your current hazard control plan to include psychological hazards, your emergency response plan must be updated to include preparation for critical psychological events<sup>6</sup>. Critical psychological events happen unexpectedly and can be very overwhelming to anyone experiencing the event. To ensure that you do not cause harm in these situations, have an emergency response plan ready to provide psychological support until professional services are available.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> A critical psychological event is an event or a series of events that has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual, a group, or the organization as a whole.

**Remember:** You are not expected to provide professional psychological or psychiatric services, but there are actions you can take to support an employee in crisis before they access professional resources.

Items you can include in your emergency response plan for critical events are:

- Acknowledge the event with those involved or affected.
- Take the individual(s) affected to a quiet location where you can ask them to explain the event and produce an incident report from your discussion.
- Have a resource document ready with a list of mental health resources that those affected can use to access support. Examples of mental health resources for Northwest Territories and Nunavut are located in <a href="Appendix D">Appendix D</a>.

If you are an employer with 20 or more employees, your OHS committee could be a starting point for the development of both hazard controls and emergency responses. If you have less than 20 employees, you can set up a small working group to develop these resources. Ensure that committees represent the diversity of your organization.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

You now have the following processes and procedures developed in your planning phase:

- Hazard identification, assessment, and control plan
- Emergency response plan for critical psychological events
- A plan for how you will regularly communicate with employees

In this section, we will discuss ways to bring your planning to life. Consider the following tips before implementing psychological health and safety in your workplace:

- 1. You do not need to be an expert in the fields of psychology or psychiatry to support employees' mental well-being, even during a critical event.
- 2. Reflect on and highlight the effective measures your organization is already taking in terms of supporting mental well-being, confidentiality, diversity, and communication.
- 3. Start small and continue to build on your plans into the future. Psychological health and safety development is expected to be ongoing and it changes with our workplace needs.
- 4. Involve employees as much as possible in the planning and implementation processes to make systems more applicable and relevant to your workforce.
- 5. Be patient: change takes time. Work slowly and effectively toward your goals.

#### **Communication and Engagement**

Provide clear and transparent communication to all employees. Make sure everyone is getting the same, complete information on any changes in processes or procedures that will support the mental well-being of your employees. Allow space for constructive feedback and questions from employees.

#### **Incident Investigation and Reporting Process**

Establish a process to investigate and report any hazards or critical events that do occur, and keep a record of these incidents. Ensure that confidential details are kept private so that the individuals involved in the incident cannot be identified. A sample incident report form is attached as Appendix E.

#### **Performance Monitoring Process**

Plan regular internal audits of your psychological health and safety management system. Report the results to your entire team, and acknowledge strengths while providing clear direction on how to work on areas of improvement. Be sure to document and record your results for future reference..

Some questions that you may want to answer through your monitoring process are:

- 1. Are you following your plan?
- 2. Have you met your objectives and targets for advancing psychological health and safety in your workplace? If not, why? Are there issues with available resources?
- 3. Are the processes that you have established being followed by employees? If not, what are the barriers for employees to follow these new processes?
- 4. Are there areas for improvement?

# STEP 3: ONGOING COMMITMENT AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

A successful workplace psychological health and safety management system requires ongoing commitment and continual improvement. As we learn more we can improve more. Review and renew steps 2-3 regularly to ensure that your program is still current and relevant.

## **CONCLUSION**

The process of incorporating psychological health and safety into your occupational health and safety planning is not an easy or perfect process. However, it is a critical piece of workplace health and safety, and this planning will benefit your employees, yourself as an employer, and your organization as a whole.

Refer back to this guide and included reference documents as needed for assistance with the process.

#### **Appendix A: Sample Policy Statement**

Use the following sample policy statement to create your organization's commitment to workplace psychological health and safety.

Let your employees know about this policy, and post it in a common area or wherever you post information for your employees.

# \_\_\_\_\_ is committed to the establishment, promotion, maintenance, and continual improvement of a workplace psychological health and safety management system (PHSMS) that:

- Is aligned with our organizational values and ethics and respects the principles of mutual respect, confidentiality, and cooperation;
- Has the resources (human and financial) and authority needed to ensure successful establishment, promotion, maintenance, and continual improvement of the PHSMS;
- Ensures a cross-section of employees (including workers/worker representatives) are involved in the development, implementation, and continual improvement of the PHSMS, and;
- Establishes and implements a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the system and implement changes.

# **Appendix B: Sample Audit Tool**

You can use this audit to evaluate your workplace psychological health and safety. The full National Standard Audit Tool is located in <u>Assembling the Pieces</u> implementation guide.

Consult your employees for their feedback on the existence of these components and how to make improvements.

	RNAL AUDIT CHECKLIST: PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY o be completed annually)		
Audi	t completed by:	Date:	
Com	ponents		Y/N
1	Responsibility and authority related to workplace psychological health and safety is defin to employees, including the involvement of the workplace safety person or OHS committed.		
2	Time is provided to those involved for activities related workplace psychological health and implementation of audits, hazard assessments, incident reports, and all other related procedures.		
3	A policy statement on psychological health and safety is complete and approved, and em the policy.	ployees have access to	
4	A confidentiality and privacy statement is complete and approved, and employees can re	ad the statement.	
5	Workplace diversity is respected and supported. This could be learned through conversal sampling of your workforce.	ions with a diverse	
6	A diverse group of employees is consulted on major decisions that need to made in the o affect employees.	rganization that will	
7	Employees are informed on major decisions that affect their work, in a timely manner.		
8	Plan to ask employees for their input on decisions that will affect their work, where possi	ble and relevant.	
9	A psychological health and safety risk assessment has been completed this year.		
10	10 If employee records are kept, a plan is in place to keep personal details confidential and private.		
11	Psychological health and safety resources are provided to employees – for example: training, EFAP, local mental health organizational information.		
12	An Incident Report template is completed and approved. This Incident Report is available to those responsible for completing them.		
13	A plan is ready to support employees in distress and employees are aware of local menta	l health resources.	
14	A plan is ready to communicate the results of this audit to employees and they have been further improvement of psychological health and safety in the workplace.	n invited to help in	

# **Appendix C: Sample Hazard and Risk Assessment**

Here are some examples of psychological hazards that can impact worker mental well-being. Save your completed hazard assessments in the same place.

Area of Concern	Examples	Yes or No	Risk Level (Serious, Minor, Minimal)
Pace of work	Discussion with or observation of employees who may mention work scheduling issues		
	Workload (too much/too little), comments made such as "I never have time to take my breaks" or "I always work through lunch" or "I don't have enough work to do"		
	Observing actions including rushing to complete tasks		
Fatigue	Hours of work mentioned, feeling or looking tired		
Conflicting demands	Comments made such as "I don't know which item to work on first" or "I have so many priority projects, I don't know if I will get them all finished in time"		
	Comments about little or no participation in decision making		
Hours of work	Working extra time (paid or unpaid) to complete work, including working through breaks or lunch, on the weekend, etc.		
Work environment	<ul> <li>Issues that interrupt concentration are mentioned, as well as other hazards including ergonomic set up, indoor air quality, noise, etc.</li> </ul>		
Working in conflict with others	<ul> <li>Comments made such as "That person does not speak to me the same way as they do to others", "I have to be careful what I say" or "I don't feel I can raise that issue with that person"</li> </ul>		
Working in social isolation	Comments made such as "I'd be the last person to know" or "I'm never told that"		
	Comments about communication or function/dysfunction of the group		
Working alone	Concerns about communication methods, fear for safety		
Working from home	Concerns about isolation from team		
Poor communication	Comments regarding not knowing about something, lack of feedback, no response, receiving only negative comments, etc.		
Relating to management,	Comments that suggest inappropriate and unfair decisions around work policies and rules—for example approval (or no approval) regarding leaves or training requests		
policies, organization of work, etc.	Lack of opportunities for training or professional growth		
- , <del>-</del> -	Comments regarding uncertainty about the individual's role		

#### **Appendix D: Mental Health Resources in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories**

Below are examples of mental health resources in the north, but there may be others that you can add to this list. Make mental health resources available to all employees, for example, by posting them on a bulletin board.

#### **Northwest Territories Resources**

- NWT Help Line: 1-800-661-0844 (24/7)
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 (24 hours, for young people 25 and under)
- Contact Your Community Counsellor
- Family Violence Information and Resources

#### **Nunavut Resources**

- Kamatsiagut Helpline: 867-979-3333 (local) or 1-800-265-3333 (toll-free outside of Igaluit)
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 (24 hours, for young people 25 and under)
- Your Local Health Centre
- Family Violence Information and Resources

#### **National Resources**

- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety:
  - o <u>Healthy Minds at Work</u>
  - OHS Answers: Mental Health How to Address and Support
  - o OHS Answers: Workplace Health and Well-being
- Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Group:
  - o CSA-Z1003-13 Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace
  - o SPE Z1003 Implementation Handbook
- Guarding Minds at Work
- Mental Health Commission of Canada: National Standard information
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: Workplace Mental Health: Core Concepts & Issues
- Canada Suicide Prevention Service: Call 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645

#### **Corporate Resources**

• Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), if available.

#### **Appendix E: Sample Outline of Incident Report**

Your incident report could include the following details, but there may be further information that you want to collect for your organizational records:

- 1. Company Department or Unit
- 2. Location of event
- 3. Date and time of event
- 4. Date of report (if not the same date as the event, state reason for delay)
- 5. Name and contact information of injured party
- 6. Nature of injury
  - a. Examples may include: discrimination, bullying, working alone, critical incident, harassment, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, physical attack, threat. This is not an exhaustive list and you may have found other types of injury.
- 7. Duration of injury was it sudden? Was it gradual over time?
- 8. Detailed description of what happened
- 9. Identify the hazard and what control can be used to eliminate or minimize this hazard in the future.
- 10. List any treatment administered
- 11. Names and contact information for witnesses of the event
- 12. Description of follow-up actions to be executed
- 13. Signature of injured party
- 14. Name, contact information, and signature of reporter

