



Preventing Stigma

Protecting Yourself and Others

- Continue to follow all safe work procedures. If it is unsafe to work, talk to your supervisor, health and safety committee or representative, and/or union.
- Practice physical distancing by working more than 2 metres (6 feet) apart from others.
- Stay home if you are sick or might be sick. Follow the Public Health Agency of Canada's steps for self-assessment: <https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus>
- Employers should provide daily reminders and education to all workers about COVID-19 prevention, signs and symptoms.

Social Stigma and Microaggression

Stigma occurs when people associate a risk with specific people, places, or things, such as a minority population group. Stigmatization is common in disease outbreaks. Groups that may be experiencing stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic include those that have travelled, persons of Asian descent, emergency or health care professionals, and other essential workers.

Microaggressions are everyday verbal, non-verbal, and environmental snubs or insults that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages. These messages target persons based on the group the other person perceives them to belong to. Individuals who may be experiencing microaggressions during the COVID-19 pandemic include truck and delivery drivers, hospital workers, retail clerks, individuals perceived to be ignoring or downplaying public health advice, and individuals closely connected with someone who has been confirmed as having the virus.

The language we use can reinforce false assumptions and harm individuals' well-being. Be mindful and use factual language when referring to the virus and people who have or may have it.

Workplace Violence and Harassment Policies

During the stress of a pandemic, the risk of violence or harassment toward certain individuals, those working alone or people performing critical tasks (e.g., providing care or other services to the public, working with vulnerable individuals, etc.) may be greater.

Employers are encouraged to establish or review risk assessments and policies on violence and harassment prevention in the workplace. Employees who are experiencing or have witnessed harassment or violence are asked to report the circumstances to their employer or supervisor as soon as possible.

Education

Everyone has a role to play in preventing microaggression and social stigma related to COVID-19. Employers can provide information from reliable sources about virus transmission and steps that workers can take to protect themselves and their families. Display posters or send email updates to staff.

Know the facts:

- Diseases (including COVID-19) can make anyone sick, regardless of their race or ethnicity.
- Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation is not a source of infection to other people.
- There are steps everyone can take to protect themselves and others.
- Know the symptoms and monitor your health.



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Supporting Someone with COVID-19 Symptoms, or who is in Quarantine or Self-Isolation

- Be a part of the solution. Correct misinformation, challenge myths, and show empathy.
- Keep in regular contact with the individual.
- Acknowledge the impact on the team, productivity, and morale.
- Address fears and concerns.
- Offer to support them or their caregivers:
 - Maintain social contact through phone calls, video chats, etc.
 - Arrange for food or essential supplies to be delivered to them.

Coping with Social Isolation, Microaggression or Stigma

- Talk to your employer or supervisor, someone trained in mental health first aid, or someone else you trust about what you are experiencing.
- Contact your employee assistance service, if available.
- Contact your local public health or community resources that offer mental health services.
- Check out organizations online:
 - Canadian Mental Health Association <https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health>
 - Canadian Psychological Association <https://cpa.ca/psychologyfactsheets/>
 - Kids Help Phone <https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/were-here-for-you-during-covid-19-novel-coronavirus/>

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact to your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a Crisis Centre in your area.
<https://suicideprevention.ca/need-help/>



For further information on COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada
<https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus>

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.