Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers

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Outline for the session

1. The Mental Health Commission of Canada
2. Workplace psychological health and safety: what it is and why it matters
4. Implementing the Action Guide
This project was commissioned by The Mental Commission of Canada, Workforce Advisory Committee
New Psychological health and safety standard for Canadian workplaces

Initiated by the Mental Health Commission of Canada with the intent of improving work environment

Employees will benefit from workplaces that promote and protect their psychological health and safety

Employers will benefit from enhanced cost effectiveness, improved risk management, increased organizational recruitment and retention as well as demonstrated corporate social responsibility

Publication of the Standard is anticipated in late summer 2012
CARMHA asked by the Workforce Advisory Committee to identify best practices for improving psychological health and safety in the workplace
WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH & SAFETY (PH&S)?
Just as the OH&S movement raised employers’ awareness and triggered improvement in the physical domain, PH&S aims to increase awareness and trigger action in the psychological domain.
What is a psychologically healthy and safe workplace?

• Fosters psychological well-being while enhancing organizational performance

• Offers opportunities for staff to develop skills & knowledge

• Promotes respectful interactions between staff, customers and the public

• Supports staff experiencing psychological difficulties
WHY ORGANIZATIONS MUST ADDRESS PH&S
FINANCIAL
Big impact on productivity

LEGAL
Regulators & courts demand it

PRAGMATIC
It’s hard to solve problems with distressed workers

ETHICAL
It’s the right thing to do ...
The choice:

- **Do nothing**: Outcome is increased costs, decreased productivity/morale, loss of skilled workforce

- **Act**: Outcome is decreased costs, increased productivity/morale, recruitment/retention of skilled workers

Available as an e-book at no cost at:
http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/
The P6 Model

- Policy
- Planning
- Prevention
- Process
- Persistence
Commitment by organizational leadership to enhance psychological health and safety through workplace interventions

**Example:** Build an action team
Determination of key psychological health indicators across the organization, selection of actions, and specification of objectives

Example: Survey your employees
Actions taken to promote the general psychological health of the workforce

**Example:** Build employee resilience.
Changes in individual or organizational conditions that may contribute to psychological health problems, thus reducing the likelihood that problems may occur.

Example: Provide stress management training.
Efforts to identify and address psychological health problems when they are in a relatively mild state and early stage, so that fast response will forestall more serious problems.

Example: Provide Manager Training
PREVENTION (Tertiary)

Efforts to reduce the distress and dysfunction associated with an identified mental disorder

Example: Provided Coordinated Disability Management
Evaluation results of actions taken to enhance psychological health and safety

**Example:** Measure Implementation
Sustainment of effective actions in a process of continuous improvement

Example: Support Organizational Champions
24 employer actions to enhance and protect PH&S.

Actions are:
- Evidence-consistent
- Practical
- Stand-alone

Includes stories, resources, references and topics of special interest (e.g. PH&S for small business)

**POLICY ACTIONS**
- Get Management Endorsement
- Build the Action Team
- Communication the Policy

**PLANNING ACTIONS**
- Gather the Facts
- Survey your Employees
- Measure Readiness to Change

**PROMOTION ACTIONS**
- Build Employee Resilience
- Create a Respectful Workplace
- Enhance Understanding of Psychological Health

**PREVENTION ACTIONS**
- Primary
  - Provide Stress Management Training
  - Use the PH&S Lens for Job Design & Selection
  - Support Work-Life Balance

**Secondary**
- Provide Self-Care Tools
- Provide Manager Training
- Provide EFAP Early Intervention

**Tertiary**
- Support Stay At Work
- Ensure Access to Psychological Treatment
- Provide Coordinated Disability Management

**PROCESS ACTIONS**
- Plan your Evaluation
- Measure the Implementation Process
- Measure Short- and Longer-Term Outcomes

**PERSISTENCE ACTIONS**
- Support Champions and Communities of Practice
- Create a Culture of Psychological Safety
- Conduct PDCA Cycles
For Each Action...

What

Why

How
Obtain endorsement from organizational leaders

Support from senior organizational leaders underlines the importance of psychological health

Might take the form of a statement expressing the priority of PH&S or a comprehensive strategy for organizational change
Survey employees

Your employees know a lot about PH&S risks and protective factors in your organization. They don’t realize how much they know.

Guarding Minds@Work examines 13 psychosocial risk factors: free & easy-to-use

www.guardingmindsatwork.ca
Enhance mental health knowledge (to reduce stigma)

Stigma makes it more difficult for individuals to acknowledge or seek help and reduces the level of support from colleagues

* Mental health literacy programs
* Contact-based education, in which individuals who have experienced mental health problems are invited into the workplace
Provide self-care tools

Individuals with psychological distress are more able to cope with their problems then we ever realized, especially if they get self-care tools

Tools include workbooks & websites that teach skills for managing mood difficulties E.G. Antidepressant Skills at Work: www.carmha.ca/selfcare/
Provide early intervention through EFAP

Addressing psychological health problems at an early stage can prevent more serious problems and functional impairment

Counselors should be trained in delivery of brief interventions for mild psychological problems, including mood and substance use issues
Provide coordinated disability management

Coordinating among employees, care providers, HR, managers & insurance companies is critical to effective and timely RTW

Assign RTW coordinator to facilitate conversation among the key players. In smaller organizations, this would be a part-time consultant.
Ensure access to psychological treatment

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, CBT, is effective in treating common mental health problems and fostering work return from disability

Canadian health system basically does not provide CBT. Consider coverage of CBT psychologists via Extended Health

Graph: Proportion of participants fully sick listed against calendar days until full return to work.
Measure organizational readiness for change

Organizations differ in readiness to take particular kinds of actions. Starting an initiative without considering specific readiness risks failure and demoralization.

SWOT analysis (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).
Readiness survey
e.g. new Measure of Organizational Readiness for Psychological Health (MORPH)
HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE GUIDE?
1. How will your organization respond to the Standard?
2. Which actions are most relevant and feasible?
3. Who needs to be involved?
4. What resources will be needed?
5. How will you kick-start action on PH&S?
Psychological Health
Actions Strategies Tools (PHAST)

One day to identify, plan and start implementation in your workplace

Aim: To help organizations move from awareness to action on PH&S
- Workplace psychological health issues are prevalent, pervasive and costly
- The Guide shows how to take effective and practical action
- Check out the Guide

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