

Suggested Responses

Please consult the *Selection of Suggested Actions* and *Applying a Quality Framework* documents to help you select suggested actions to undertake for Psychological Support.

PF1: PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

OBJECTIVE: A work environment where coworkers and supervisors are supportive of employees' psychological and mental health concerns, and respond appropriately as needed.

PF1: Survey Results
(check rating, if applicable)

Serious Concerns	Significant Concerns	Minimal Concerns	Relative Strengths
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PF1: Organizational Review Results
(check rating, if applicable)

Serious Concerns	Significant Concerns	Minimal Concerns	Relative Strengths
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Serious Concerns = 5 to 9 Significant Concerns = 10 to 13 Minimal Concerns* = 14 to 16 Relative Strengths** = 17 to 20

* Although this is a Minimal Concern, it is important to attend to it and review the Organizational Review Results and the Survey Results for any additional or individual-identified areas of concern.

** Although this is a Relative Strength, it is important to review the Organizational Review Results and the Survey Results for any additional or individual-identified areas of concern.

The list below contains actions that you can take to respond to actual or potential concerns related to **Psychological Support**. Many of these actions have been found to be effective in research studies, have been recommended as best practices, or have been found valuable in applied settings. Some have been informed by emerging case law and regulatory requirements. *Psychological Support is an area of particular importance from this perspective (see also: PF4, 5, 9 and 12)*. The actions are drawn from diverse industries and sectors, and not all may be applicable or feasible in your particular workplace. This list is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to be prescriptive. Rather, these are suggestions for possible courses of action.

If **Psychological Support** has been flagged as a **Relative Strength** in your workplace, it is important not to overlook this finding. You can do this by developing policies that protect this relative strength and engaging staff in discussions of how this strength can be enhanced by implementing the suggested actions below.

If **Psychological Support** has been flagged as an area of concern in your workplace, consider which of these actions might be appropriate. In making your decision, it can be helpful to keep the following six key quality dimensions in mind: Appropriateness, Acceptability, Accessibility, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Safety (see *Applying a Quality Framework* for more information).

The actions below fall into four main categories: (1) norms, values and practices of the work environment; (2) training and development initiatives; (3) communication strategies and approaches; and (4) formal policies and programs. You may have already initiated some of the actions – but consider the others. You may also have other ideas for actions you could implement – there is a space for writing these down at the end of this document. **Remember, not every action that might enhance Psychological Support in your workplace is listed here. Implementing the following actions, however, will provide a strong foundation for building a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.**

Work Environment (Norms, Values & Practices)

- Work to eliminate the stigmatization of those facing mental health challenges
- Develop formal and informal networks to support management, human resources teams and union representatives when dealing with employee mental health issues
- Incorporate best practices for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of employee mental health issues
- Create a workplace culture where it is safe to discuss mental health issues without fear of discrimination

Training & Development

- Provide education and training to all staff to heighten mental health awareness (i.e., mental health literacy)
- Provide additional education about mental health issues to all staff whose role involves leading, supporting or managing (e.g., human resources teams, health and safety representatives, union representatives)
- Create opportunities for training and/or mentoring to enhance interpersonal and people management skills
- Provide training and/or mentoring to help deal appropriately and supportively with employees who have possible mental health concerns
- Supply the tools and supports (including time and incentives) needed to succeed in supporting employees with mental health concerns
- Review third-party providers of psychological services to ensure adherence to evidence-based practices and focus on work function
- Train or engage peer-support workers focused on mental health issues

Communication

- Encourage respectful workplace communication where psychological health concerns can be discussed safely and openly
- Ensure widespread awareness of company benefits and programs that employees can access to address their psychological health concerns
- Share community or online resources to help with psychological health concerns
- Maintain regular and supportive communication with employees who are off work due to mental health concerns

Formal Policies & Programs

- Provide comprehensive benefits that support employee mental health (i.e., coverage for the following: psychologists or other regulated mental health professionals; Employee and Family Assistance Programs; prescription drugs; and short-term and long-term disability plans)
- Provide or link to early intervention supports and programs for employees who may have psychological health concerns. Note that Employee and Family Assistance Programs are well-positioned to provide early intervention.
- When appropriate, help employees to obtain assessment of psychological function to determine treatment and accommodation needs
- Create “stay-at-work” policies and programs to assist those who remain at work while dealing with mental health concerns (including formal and informal accommodations)
- Develop programs and procedure to address occupation-specific risks to psychological health and safety
- Identify a contact person who is knowledgeable about mental health issues and is responsible for facilitating healthy and successful work-returns
- Collaborate with employees to create detailed return-to-work plans that include a range of options for coping with mental health concerns (e.g., graduated return-to-work). It is important to ensure coordination among key participants in the return to work process.

- Consider a range of accommodation options (both formal and informal) for employees returning to work following an absence due to mental health concerns
- In collaboration with employees and/or union representatives, create plans to ensure sustained work-return, including strategies to deal with possible relapse

Additional resources have been created to help you take action, including: presentation slides and supporting materials (freely available at www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/ota) and a new resource - *Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers*, developed on behalf of the Mental Health Commission of Canada Workforce Advisory Committee, that is a practical tool designed to help employers develop implementation plans on the basis of Guarding Minds at Work findings (freely available at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Workforce/Workforce_Employers_Guide_ENG.pdf).

We encourage you to review these resources for additional suggested actions.

Other Actions:

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There won't be a perfect set of actions – often it's a matter of choosing the actions most likely to accomplish positive outcomes while generating the fewest potential problems.

Once you have selected one or more actions to undertake, enter them into the corresponding *Action Planning Worksheet*, pick your start date, identify who will be involved – your Action Team, and get started!