GuardingMinds @ WORK

Suggested Actions and Resources

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

OBJECTIVE: A work environment where the organization is supportive of employees' psychological health concerns and provides assistance as needed.

Engage your employees to improve psychological and social support

Putting psychological and social support On the Agenda is easy with these resources. A workshop slide presentation and facilitator guide help you have a productive conversation with your team about this psychosocial factor and each of the relevant statements from the Guarding Minds at Work survey.

If this factor shows up as a relative strength in your workplace, have a team discussion to find out why they scored this factor higher than the national average. This can lead to appreciation and understanding of what is already good. Policies and processes can also be developed or refined to continue to support positive psychological and social support.

If this factor has been flagged as an area of concern in your workplace, engage all stakeholders in discussion about which actions might provide the best solutions. You can use ideas from the list below to begin the conversation. When everyone contributes to improving psychological health and safety, the responsibility is shared, the outcomes are more effective, and the effort is sustainable.

Below are actions and resources related to improving psychological and social support. This list does not contain every solution. There may be other ideas that you find or think of and want to try. However, these suggestions can help provide a strong and cost-effective foundation for addressing psychological and social support.

The practical strategies come from research studies, have been recommended as best practices, or have been applied effectively in workplaces. The resources included here are free. You can also find excellent services available at a cost from a variety of reputable providers.

Once you have reviewed the actions and resources below, we encourage you to use the Action Planning process to help you think critically about which combination of free, paid, or internal resources will best meet the needs in your workplace.

Actions by statements

If there are specific psychological and social support statements from your Guarding Minds at Work survey that you want to address you may want to consider one of the actions or resources provided directly under the statement below. More general actions and resources, relevant to psychological and social support, are also included at the end.

1. **My employer offers services or benefits that support employees.**
   - Create an inventory of the services and benefits available in your organization, community, and online. The Mental Health Resource List tool within Identifying Workplace Issues can help you get started. Have leaders explain what is available to their team at a meeting.
   - If you have an employee and family assistance program or benefit provider, invite them to do a presentation to all employees. Most will do this at no cost.
2. **My employer would support me if I were psychologically distressed.**
   - Train leaders to effectively refer employees to relevant and available resources. This can also help set up appropriate boundaries for leaders to resolve workplace issues and support work success and refer to other experts for personal, health, family, or financial stressors.
   - To support employees who choose to stay at work or return to work while still psychologically distressed, Supporting Employee Success can help you develop an effective plan.
   - Volunteers in the workplace may make it more complex to identify and approach individuals who may be psychologically distressed. The Protecting the Psychological Health and Safety section in this Volunteers Toolkit can help.
3. **People in my workplace understand the importance of protecting psychological health and safety.**
   - Ensure every employee understands how their words and behaviours can impact both physical and psychological health and safety. Being a Mindful Employee is a resource that can help.
   - Provide education and training to all employees to heighten mental health awareness. This can be done anytime, including in May and October during mental health and mental illness awareness weeks. Subscribing to weekly emails and briefly discussing them at team meetings can help encourage conversations about positive mental health.
4. **People with disabilities are supported to do their jobs effectively.**
   - To enhance your accommodation or return to work program, provide your leaders with a resource like Supporting Employee Success to increase their comfort level in discussing productivity in spite of disabilities.
   - An approach that provides Supportive Performance Management can be used safely and effectively with employees who have disabilities.
   - Addressing Co-worker Reactions can help with the perception that people with disabilities get preferential treatment or do less work.
5. **My employer helps employees to cope with workplace stress.**
   - Team activities can help build resilience and reduce stress. Building Stronger Teams contains many easy and effective ways to improve the way your team works together.
   - Help employees develop personal coping strategies that can improve the way they respond to stressors. Plan for Resilience is one tool that can help.

Additional actions and resources

- Assign mentors to employees who are new to a position to ensure they have someone to go to for support in addition to their leader.
- Discuss how to stay connected when people are away from work due to illness, injury or caregiving obligations. Check out Maintaining Contact During Leave to begin a conversation and set expectations.
- Work to eliminate stigma and discrimination. Framework to Eliminate Stigma may help.
- Identifying Workplace Issues can be used as a conversation starter to develop a shared understanding for management, human resources, and union representatives who support employees who may be struggling.
- Have employees define Psychologically Safe Interactions by facilitating a workshop that engages everyone in thinking about how behaviours and words impact the work environment.
- Support volunteers in the workplace to be psychologically safe using the Protecting the Psychological Health and Safety section in this Volunteers Toolkit.
- Incorporate mindful practices in day-to-day work such as gratitude moments, meditation before meetings, and expressing appreciation. Take Your Break has some ideas that could help.
- Review third-party providers of psychological services to ensure adherence to evidence- based practices and focus on work function. Employee Assistance Programs and Mental Health Related Issues can help you ask relevant questions.
- Develop Peer Support Programs that allow trained employees to provide assistance to colleagues and co-workers. Having similar experiences in both life and work increases the potential of being an effective peer supporter.
- Share community or online resources to help with psychological health concerns such as those mentioned in Approaches to Wellness and Personal Well-being.
- Identify and incorporate best practices for protecting employee psychological safety in your policies and procedures. Policy Recommendations can help.

Use this space to jot down additional ideas and suggested actions:

To consider which actions are most likely to result in the outcomes you desire, use the Action Planning process to guide your decision making and help you identify timelines, milestones, budgets, responsibilities, and measures of success.

Thank you to Workplace Safety and Prevention Services for their generous contribution to the development of these action items. For more tools and resources, please visit Think Mental Health.ca

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