GuardingMinds @ WORK

Suggested Actions and Resources

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROTECTION

OBJECTIVE: A work environment where employees' psychological safety is ensured.

Engage your employees to improve psychological protection

Putting psychological protection 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 protection.

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.

Unlike other factors where specific actions are provided for each statement, psychological protection comes down to interacting directly with employees to find out what each response means to them. For example, psychological protection for a police force would be very different than for a ballet school. And within the police force, psychological protection would look very different for civilian employees than for sworn officers. For sworn officers, those in leadership or homicide may need something different than those who are school officers. In every case, a discussion with those in each job role is necessary to understand and assess what will support psychological protection for them.

Statements related to psychological protection:

1. **My employer is committed to minimizing unnecessary stress at work.**
2. **My employer makes efforts to prevent harm to employees from discrimination.**
3. **My employer makes efforts to prevent harm to employees from unsafe behaviours by clients, customers or patients.**
4. **I would describe my workplace as being psychologically safe.**
5. **My employer deals effectively with situations that may threaten or harm employees (e.g., harassment, discrimination, or violence).**
6. **My employer makes efforts to prevent harm to employees from bullying and harassment.**
7. **I am able to raise concerns about psychological safety in my workplace.**

Below are actions and resources related to improving psychological protection. This list is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to be prescriptive. It can help provide a strong and cost-effective foundation for addressing psychological protection.

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 and resources

Psychological protection is as much about how safe people feel in the workplace, as it is about actual exposure to risk. The only way to ensure that both elements are addressed is to collaborate with workplace stakeholders in developing your policies and procedures. Some resources that can help include:

- Psychologically Safe Leader Assessment is a set of free action resources to identify and support leadership strategies pertaining to psychological health and safety. The assessment can be assigned to leaders by an administrator authorized by an organization or used by individual leaders for their own personal and confidential learning and development.
- Psychologically Safe Interactions can help increase psychological health and safety through awareness of how our workplace behaviours may be interpreted as bullying, even when that wasn't our intention.
- Inclusivity and Discrimination - having approaches in place to address potential discrimination and promote inclusivity can help strengthen our workplaces, creating more positive and inclusive environments where all employees are supported to thrive and succeed.
- Recognize that the assurance of psychological safety is more than just a policy – it involves an ongoing process of education, implementation and evaluation, with revisions as needed.

  Preventing Chronic Mental Stress *is a comprehensive set of resources to help understand how chronic mental stress might be defined, how to recognize the hazards and reduce risk, and how to protect both employer and employees.*
- Provide ongoing orientation and training on organizational and union policies and programs on harassment, discrimination, violence at work, and conflict management.
- Orient and train managers or supervisors, human resources providers, and union personnel to be knowledgeable and accountable for ensuring a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.
- Provide safe opportunities for employees to identify and participate in the remediation of psychological safety concerns.
- Comply with the *National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.*

- Provide internal or external support to employees who have experienced psychological distress.
- Conduct regular risk assessments and reviews to help understand, monitor, and address factors that may negatively affect employees' psychological health and safety.
- Consider programs and services for those working in vulnerable situations or hours, such as debriefing, peer support, safe-walk programs, and secure parking access where relevant.
- Provide employees with adequate rest, break, or job rotations for particularly tiring mental or physical tasks.

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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