

Implementing Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace Webinar Q&A



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What are employers' responsibilities for employees who have personal mental health challenges that they choose not to address?

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Employers are responsible for providing a psychologically safe workplace, not for diagnosing or treating employees' mental health conditions.

Under the Workers Compensation Act (this is legislation passed by the BC government that establishes the legal authority and duties related to workplace health and safety), and OHS Regulation (provides detailed rules, standards, and procedures explaining how to meet the requirements of the Workers Compensation Act), employers must identify and control workplace hazards, including psychosocial hazards, that may negatively affect mental health (e.g., bullying, harassment, workload).

If an employee has personal mental health challenges, the employer's duty is to:

- Maintain a respectful, stigma-free environment.
- Offer access to supports and mental health resources (e.g., Employee Family Assistance Program, workplace accommodations, workload flexibility).
- Avoid discrimination under the BC Human Rights Code.

Employers should check in respectfully, share mental health supports and resources, and document accommodations offered, but are not obligated to force workers to engage in treatment.

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What would a wellness champion look like or embody?

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A wellness champion is a peer advocate (i.e. a worker from your team or a worker representative from your Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee) who models healthy behaviours, promotes open dialogue about well-being, and connects their colleagues to mental health and well-being resources and supports.

In tourism and hospitality, a wellness champion might do the following:

- Have check in conversations with colleagues after busy shifts or guest incidents. **Tip:** Watch the recording of go2HR's April 2025 webinar, [*Engage & Inspire: Strategies to Elevate Workplace Communication for Managers and Supervisors*](#), for practical tools and a conversational framework to help you engage your team around mental health and well-being.
- Help normalize mental health and well-being conversations about stress, fatigue, and burnout. Incorporate conversations about mental health in team meetings. **Tip:** People Working Well has [*Psychological Safety Talks*](#) intended to help open the discussion around mental health with your team. Leaders can use this in their team huddles or regular safety discussions to help normalize the conversation and reduce mental health stigma in the workplace.
- Promote use of breaks and establish designated rest areas for workers.
- Share wellness resources like [People Working Well](#) training courses, [Bounce Back](#), [Here to Help](#) or [Mind the Bar](#).

WorkSafeBC encourages a proactive, peer-support culture where wellness champions embody care, empathy, and a commitment to preventing workplace psychological harm.

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What are an employer's responsibilities in managing psychosocial hazards?

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Employers have a legal and ethical duty of care to identify, assess, and control psychosocial hazards under *Sections 115–117* of the [Workers Compensation Act](#).

[WorkSafeBC's Psychological Health & Safety Framework for Success](#) outlines five psychosocial hazard categories, which must be addressed in an employer's health and safety program:

1. **Interpersonal Environment** – how workers treat one another in the workplace.
2. **Job Design** - how work is structured and organized.
3. **Workplace Conditions** - the physical and psychological environment where work takes place.
4. **Need for Employer Supports** – the availability and promotion of mental health resources and supports.
5. **Exposure to Traumatic Events** – when workers are exposed to traumatic or violent situations.

Aligned with WorkSafeBC's identified psychosocial hazards, psychologically safe and healthy practices may include the following practices:

1. Interpersonal Environment

- Promote respectful communication and conflict resolution among workers and between workers and guests.
- Establish, implement, and educate workers on bullying, harassment, and violence prevention policies.
- Provide de-escalation and bystander training for front-line workers who may face aggressive or intoxicated guests.
- Encourage supervisors to model calm, professional behaviour during high-stress periods (e.g., peak season or event rushes).
- Recognize and celebrate teamwork to build trust and morale among workers.

2. Job Design

- Ensure fair and predictable scheduling with adequate rest between shifts (check in with your team about their energy levels).
- Clarify roles and responsibilities to prevent confusion and overload.
- Rotate demanding tasks (e.g., long check-ins, kitchen prep, late-night cleaning) to avoid worker fatigue.
- Involve workers in decision-making where possible, especially around workflow or customer service changes.
- Monitor workloads during busy seasons and adjust staffing or priorities when psychological indicators rise.

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3. Workplace Conditions

- Maintain safe, clean, and well-lit environments, especially for late or overnight shifts.
- Establish working-alone procedures for housekeepers, maintenance, or night clerks.
- Provide functioning equipment and ensure maintenance issues are addressed promptly to reduce frustration and maintain safety.
- Offer break areas that are comfortable and free from customer view to allow real rest.
- Manage noise, temperature, and lighting levels to support comfort and focus.

4. Need for Employer Supports

- Provide access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) or mental health resources such as Here to Help, BounceBack BC, 9-8-8 Crisis Line.
- Train supervisors to recognize signs of fatigue, burnout, or interpersonal conflict early and respond with empathy.
- Offer mental health awareness training for all workers.
 - [People Working Well](#) offers free mental health training for workers and leaders.
- Encourage regular wellness check-ins or peer support programs during high-demand periods.
- Create return-to-work plans that accommodate both physical and psychological recovery. Use the [go2HR Safety Talk: Understanding Return to Work](#) and the [go2HR Return to Work Plan Template](#) to get started.

5. Exposure to Traumatic Events

- Develop clear critical incident response procedures (e.g., after guest deaths, violent incidents, or robberies).
- Offer immediate debriefing and psychological support following traumatic events.
 - Use Critical Incident Support Services: [WorkSafeBC Critical Incident Response](#) and the [Canadian Mountain Community CISM team](#). For employers who have Employee, Family and Assistance Programs, check in with your provider to see if they offer critical incident support services.
- Train managers on how to recognize trauma responses and provide compassionate follow-up.
- Maintain confidentiality and ensure no worker is penalized for expressing emotional or psychological impact.

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In order to check if employers are upholding psychological health and safety in their workplaces, WorkSafeBC has created a *Psychological Health & Safety Planned Inspectional Initiative*. Through this initiative, WorkSafeBC prevention officers are actively inspecting workplaces and assessing how psychological health and safety is being managed by reviewing whether the basic elements of a health and safety program are in place, these programs include:

- Working alone
- Violence prevention
- Bullying and harassment prevention
- New and young worker training
- Monthly meetings (including worker representatives and joint occupational health and safety committees, where applicable)
- First aid procedures

Having these components in place supports a psychologically healthy and safe workplace. If any gaps are identified during inspection, employers are usually given time to make improvements before a follow-up visit to verify progress.

Need help putting these pieces in place? The go2HR Health and Safety team provides free, one-on-one support to tourism and hospitality employers across B.C. as you strengthen your workplace's psychological health and safety. To schedule a meeting, [click here](#).

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Are there laws that address psychosocial risks in the workplace?

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Yes, there is legislation that addresses psychosocial risk in the workplace.

- WorkSafeBC's OHS Regulation and the Workers Compensation Act require employers to take all reasonable steps to protect workers' mental and physical health.
- Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policies mandate procedures for prevention, reporting, and investigation.
- BC Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination based on mental health or disability.

Currently, there is no standalone 'psychological health and safety act' that is regulated. Instead, psychosocial risk management is assumed as part of an employer's overarching legal duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace.

Q How often should an employer be assessing psychosocial hazards?

A Psychosocial hazards should be reviewed as frequently as physical hazards and examined more closely when:

- Major operational or staffing changes occur.
- There's an incident, complaint, or significant sign in the workplace of acute stress, burnout, or turnover.
- Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee meetings or workplace inspections identify emerging risks.

WorkSafeBC recommends integrating psychosocial risk review into regular OHS inspections, staff surveys, and incident investigations. Like physical hazards, psychological hazards require continuous monitoring and improvement.

Q How do we measure whether our workplace culture is psychologically safe?

A You can measure psychological health and safety through:

- Employee surveys, making a suggestion box workers can provide feedback to, or informal check-ins with your team e.g., leading weekly team huddles and asking:
 - "How's everybody doing today?"
 - "What's something or someone that made work feel a bit easier this week?"
 - "What's one small thing we could do to make today's shift smoother or more enjoyable?"
 - "If you could change one thing about how we handle busy periods, what would it be?"
- Reviewing worker turnover, absenteeism, and incident trends.
- Reviewing Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee discussions about bullying/harassment, workload, and communication.
- Focus groups or post-incident debriefs to gauge openness and trust.

A psychologically safe culture is one where workers feel heard, supported, and included, and where feedback leads to real action. [WorkSafeBC's Psychological Health & Safety Framework for Success](#) and [People Working Well](#) mental health training and resources provide checklists and indicators to help employers track progress over time.

NEED MORE SUPPORT?

If you have additional questions about implementing psychological health and safety practices in your workplace, or would like one-on-one guidance, our Health & Safety team is here to help.

CONTACT US

go2HR – Health & Safety Team

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Psychological Health & Safety Advisory Services

Get free, confidential support to:

- Identify and manage psychosocial hazards
- Develop respectful workplace and anti-bullying policies
- Build a mentally healthy, safe, and inclusive workplace culture



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Additional Resources:

[People Working Well](#)

[WorkSafeBC: Psychological Health & Safety Framework](#)

[BounceBack BC](#)

[Here to Help BC](#)