Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life

Workshop series



Participant handout

Putting workload management on the agenda: **creating change**



The results from employee input during the Creating awareness workshop on this topic should accompany this handout. If this piece is missing, please notify the workshop facilitator.

If you haven't already done so, please read through this handout before starting the workshop.

This session aligns with the recommendations of the National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (CSA z1003).



Process

- **Review** psychologically safe discussions
- **Recap** definition and statements
- **Align** employee input with evidence-based actions
- **Define** criteria for choosing actions
- **Complete** Creating change worksheets
- **Share** ideas
- **Vote | Refine | Commit**



Psychologically safe discussions

- **Focus** on moving forward and not on the past
- **Offer** constructive suggestions for improvement
- **Discuss** ideas, not individuals
- **Allow** everyone the chance to contribute

Guarding Minds at Work description of positive workload management:

"A work environment where assigned tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available."

People in this type of work environment would be able to say:

- The amount of work I am expected to do is reasonable for my position.
- I can talk to my supervisor about the amount of work I have to do.
- I have the equipment, resources and time needed to do my job well.
- My work is free from unnecessary interruptions and disruptions.
- I have control over how my tasks and responsibilities are prioritized.

Appendix

Evidence-based actions for creating change in workload management
Adapted from Guarding Minds at Work

Consider whether your work culture increases or decreases workload stress.

- Cultivate a work culture that clearly values the quality and effort of work performed over output alone.

Ensure all supervisors and leaders set clear and reasonable expectations.

- Provide supervisors with the necessary time to meet with employees about workload challenges.
- Provide training so leaders have the skillset to support employees to meet their workload requirements.
  - A tool to support employee success can help.
- Have all leaders work with employees to:
  - → Create solutions
  - → Agree on reasonable expectations
  - → Identify any barriers to success
  - Task improvement process includes a fillable form to help employees focus on specific tasks that require attention.
  - The Getting employee commitment for leaders approach actively engages employees in developing a plan that meets the organization's needs and increases their willingness to commit over the long term.

Develop strategies for managing workloads with your employees.

- Review the results of the Putting workload management on the agenda: creating awareness workshop. This will provide input from employees about their workload stressors and proposed solutions.
- The higher the demands at work, the more important it can be for employees to have some level of control. However, it may not be possible to give employees control over how their work is prioritized due to regulations, safety concerns, customer or patient demands. Explore where employees can have some control over their assigned tasks to help them work more effectively.
- Inform new employees of accurate and realistic job demands and expectations.
- Include explicit and reasonable productivity expectations in job descriptions.
- Review productivity expectations on a regular basis.
- Provide pay or lieu time for approved overtime worked.
- Analyze and audit jobs to determine:
  - Workload demands
  - Equity in work distribution
  - Areas for improvement

- Help with prioritizing, eliminating redundant tasks and managing deadlines.
  - Developing employee plans for leaders can help you create a workplace plan that considers both what and how work gets completed.
  - Performance management focuses on developing solutions.
- Provide education on topics related to workload management, such as time management and the use of technology.
- Ensure employees have the necessary equipment and supports to complete their work competently and efficiently. These may include adequate time, tools, technology and clear instructions.
- Create and implement strategies for dealing with peak periods of demand, sick leave or unfilled positions. For example, temporary employees, job pools or job-sharing could cover staffing shortages.
- Prepare employees for anticipated periods of increased work, such as seasonal demands and peak shift hours.
- Consider providing non-remunerative perks during times of excessive work demands. These could include:
  - Meals
  - Covering transportation costs
  - Help running personal errands
- Discuss workplace interruptions and disruptions with employees. Brainstorm potential solutions, including:
  - Changing the use of technology
  - Limiting meeting times
  - Revising communication strategies
  - Scheduling quiet time
  - Managing lights, noise or foot traffic
  - Although you may not be able to eliminate all interruptions, providing protected time during the day may help.
- Include best practices for protecting employee psychological safety in your policies and procedures.

Additional actions and resources

- Review Psychological health and safety policy recommendations to see where you can improve psychological health and safety. Include best practices for protecting employee psychological safety in your policies and procedures.

  Adapted from Guarding Minds at Work

Creating change criteria:

- Honours the input of our employees
- Improves workload management
- Is within our budget
- Is easy to implement now
- Minimizes risk to psychological safety

Up to 3 evidence-based actions chosen by our group and why we feel this will create the change we want:

1

2

3



Creating change process

It can seem daunting to prioritize and choose those evidence-based actions most likely to improve psychological health and safety in the workplace. Use this Creating change process to help you think through the options and guide your decision making.

Psychological health and safety is a process of continual improvement. Trying to do too much all at once can create stress and put pressure on employees. Instead, consider implementing smaller changes over time. Focusing on one initiative at a time may be ideal. After you incorporate these initiatives, or when they're no longer necessary, you can add more.

Choose your evidence-based action. Then, use the Creating change worksheet to refine your plan.

Step 1: Assess potential actions

Weigh risks and benefits to help identify potential challenges and opportunities before you commit. Review each of the following points against your proposed action. Then write your response on the Creating change worksheet you've already started:

1. **Appropriateness** is the degree to which the action's relevant to our work situation and good for our organization.

   This would be an action compatible with our work demands and setting. Record on the Creating change worksheet why you feel the action's appropriate.

2. **Acceptability** is the degree to which the employer, union if applicable, and employees would agree to implement the action. Actions should be:

   - → Beneficial for all
   - → Easy to explain to decision makers
   - → Easy to communicate to employees
   - → Straightforward to implement

   Decision makers and employees may reject actions that are overly complicated or interfere with the ability to meet objectives. In unionized environments, the action should align with the collective agreement. Record on the Creating change worksheet why this action will be acceptable to all workplace stakeholders.

3. **Accessibility** is the degree to which everyone can participate regardless of ability or location.

   There are many considerations in terms of who can access the action. They include location, method of delivery and timing. Language, literacy level and format also can slow or hinder access.

   It's important to include and support employees with differing abilities. Record on the Creating change worksheet how this action will be accessible to everyone.

4. **Efficiency** is the degree to which we have the resources to implement and sustain the action.

   Do a cost-benefit analysis on the action. Estimate these costs:

   - → Material
   - → Delivery expenses such as transportation, venue or refreshments
   - → Time and expenses for developers, facilitators, participants and evaluators to participate

   Weigh the expenses against the value this action may achieve for each participant. Here's an example:

   - → The total cost is $5,000.
   - → 50 or more employees will become more aware of protecting their own mental health.
   - → The potential cost-benefit is decreased absenteeism and improved productivity for $100 per employee.

   Record on the Creating change worksheet why this is an efficient action.

5. **Effectiveness** is the degree to which the action will have a positive measurable impact and lead to the intended outcomes.

   Ensure anyone can see a link between the selected action and the intended outcomes. This is critical. This evidence can come from established workplace practices, evidence-based resources or academic literature. Record on the Creating change worksheet the evidence for why the action will be effective as well as how you'll measure success.

   Measurements of success could include the following approaches and metrics:

   - **Participation** – measure how many people take part in your action.
   - **Behaviour changes** – track the number of times participants do things differently. Give specific direction in advance. What behaviour change are you looking for? How do participants or their leaders report this action?
   - **Absenteeism** – track the number of days off in the months before and after implementing the action. Look for changes in trends. Look for ways to maintain confidentiality while tracking absence.
   - **Complaints, conflicts or grievances** – track the number reported in the months before and after the action.
   - **Awareness** – survey employees to determine the level of awareness about your action or the intended outcomes.
   - **Participant perception** – ask specific questions about the experience with the action.
   - **Supervisor perception** – survey supervisors about changes resulting from this action.
   - **Focus groups** – bring together participants to discuss how the action impacted them and suggestions for improvement.
   - **Stress satisfaction scan** – administer this 6-question survey before and after the action to measure changes in how employees feel about work.

6. **Safety** is the degree to which all potential risks to both physical and psychological safety are eliminated or managed.

   Unintended consequences can happen at an individual or organizational level. For example, we may trigger or stigmatize employees when we discuss mental illness. Come up with potential risks to physical and psychological safety. This will reduce the likelihood of them happening. In the Creating change worksheet, record the risks you identified and how to prevent or mitigate them.

   Once you've added your ideas to the Creating change worksheet, you may need to get approval.

Step 2: Choose actions that meet criteria

Prioritize the actions that meet your criteria, identifying what will be done first. This can include one or more actions.

Step 3: Choose the action planning team

Assign people to the various responsibilities found in the Committing to our success form.

Step 4: Implement the action(s)

Be sure to use the methods of measurement to assess the effectiveness of your action.

Step 5: Evaluate the outcomes

Analyze your measures of success to report on the extent to which the action(s) were able to reach the intended outcomes.

Step 6: Use a continual improvement approach

Your evaluation can support a process of continual improvement. Take what you learn from the action and consider how you can do it better or if the best course of action is to continue as is.



Creating change worksheet

Relevant psychosocial factor: workload management

Group members: _____

Date: _____

Description of action proposed:

Appropriateness is the degree to which the action is relevant to our particular work situation and good for our organization.

Relevance to our organizational or team objectives:

Acceptability is the degree to which the employer, union if applicable, and employees would agree to implement the action.

The chosen action will be acceptable to our employees (and union if applicable) because:

The chosen action will be acceptable to our employer because:

Approval may be needed for:

Accessibility is the degree to which everyone can participate regardless of ability or location.
(Indicate how those with any of the disabilities below would be supported to participate.)

- Language
- Sight
- Mobility
- Hearing
- Mental illness

Description of method:	Location and timing of the action to allow everyone to participate:

Efficiency is the degree to which we have the resources to implement and sustain the action. Create a cost-benefit analysis – be as detailed as you can.

Estimate costs including any:

- Staff time for planning, development, delivery and participation
- Materials including copies
- Equipment or technology
- Refreshments or meals
- Venue
- Other

Describe resources available without cost, such as:

- Volunteers
- Repurposing or recycling existing materials

Describe potential benefits, such as:

- Reduced absenteeism
- Fewer grievances
- Less injury or illness
- Improved employee energy
- Improved well-being
- Increased engagement
- Boosted morale
- Increased productivity

Effectiveness is the degree to which the action will have a positive measurable impact and lead to the intended outcomes.

State your intended outcomes:	Evidence that this action will lead to each of the intended outcomes:

How we'll measure success: see the Creating change process for examples of ways to measure success. Choose one from there or describe your own.

Safety is the degree to which all potential risks to both physical and psychological safety are eliminated or managed.

Identify all potential risks and list strategies to address them:

Notes about potential actions

Use this space to record any questions or comments about the actions presented

Refining our top action(s)

This space is for notes about potential challenges, solutions to those challenges and ways to improve the effectiveness of the actions chosen.

Committing to our success

Improving workload management in our workplace – potential implementation team

Recommend names and emails, including your own, of who should be involved in:

	Name	Email
Leading the project		
Finalizing the action plan		
Developing measurement tools like surveys or interviews		
Researching, securing or creating resources to use for the action		
Communicating about and promoting the action		
Managing registration if necessary		
Facilitation of the action		
Participation in the action		
Facilitating the completion or analysis of measurement tools		
Presenting on the outcomes of the action to senior leaders		
Evaluating the outcomes against the objectives		
Authorizing continual improvement		



Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health resources are:

- For all employers, people leaders, employees and facilitators of workplace psychological health and safety
- Available in English and French
- Evidence- or practice-based
- Available to anyone at no cost



Examples of the resources available at clwsmh.com include:

Employees' role in psychological health and safety
Help employees understand their responsibility and opportunities to contribute to a mentally healthy workplace as described in the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety.

Burnout response for leaders
Learn the steps that can help you identify, prevent or reduce the impact of burnout for employees or yourself.

Healthy break activities
Use these low-cost to no-cost ideas to improve mental energy and focus. They're designed to encourage employees to take regular breaks even during the busiest workdays.

Resolving personal conflict
Use these ideas to help individuals resolve their own conflicts at work.

Emotional intelligence for employees
These activities can help develop your emotional intelligence, including monitoring your impact on others, managing your stress and responding more effectively to others.

Resources for employees
Use these tools and resources to help improve employee well-being.

Retiree interview for leaders
Plan ahead to capture the knowledge and expertise that may be lost when employees retire from your organization.

Team building activities
Teams can face many challenges in the workplace, including conflict, bullying, low control, and high demands. Discover team building activities, facilitation strategies for discussions, the importance of resilience and more. The resources are both practical and easy to use in a variety of workplaces.

All Workplace Strategies resources are available to anyone at no cost, compliments of Canada Life. To learn more, visit clwsmh.com.

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