



## Policy recommendations

### Summary

This framework provides policy recommendations related to potential impact on psychological health and safety. It covers the five elements of a standard management approach (policy, plan, implement, check and review) and applies it against different employment life cycle stages.

A group of executives, labour leaders, health and safety professionals, government agency representatives and experts in law and policy came together to look at the implications of Dr. Martin Shain's paper entitled [Tracking the Perfect Legal Storm: converging systems create mounting pressure to create the psychologically safe workplace](#). The group was tasked with considering what employers need to know and/or access to provide a psychologically safe workplace in today's economic environment. The full report titled *Elements and Priorities for Working Toward a Psychologically Safer Workplace* is also available at [clwsmh.com](http://clwsmh.com).

The following adaptation takes the five elements of a standard management approach (policy, planning, implementation, evaluation and review) and applies it against different employment life cycle stages.

**Use this to help guide your own policy planning and review.**

**Workplace Strategies  
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# Recruiting and hiring

The hiring procedure is the first impression of your organization and its leadership – what it’s like to work with you, how your organization values its employees, and the workplace culture a recruit can expect.

<b>Policy and commitment</b>	<p>Articulate the values of organization and how they will be upheld or measured</p> <hr/> <p>Define <a href="#">psychologically safe workplace</a> for new recruits</p> <hr/> <p>Define <a href="#">psychologically safe leadership</a> for new recruits</p> <hr/> <p>State that no negligent, reckless or intentional injury to employee mental health is tolerated or condoned</p> <hr/> <p>Communicate consequences for violations</p>
<b>Planning</b>	<p>In the hiring process, consider the psychological demands of the role as well as the required emotional/social skills</p> <hr/> <p>Consider leadership skills in selection and promotion of those whose roles involve supervision or support of employees</p> <hr/> <p>Ensure the hiring process includes consideration of psychological safety for interviewees</p>
<b>Implementation</b>	<p>Discuss accommodation and organizational supports as well as the process to obtain assistance in the workplace</p> <hr/> <p>Define cultural and social expectations or norms within your workplace</p> <hr/> <p>Increase psychological comfort by considering recruiting options such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sharing the interview process in advance</li><li>• Providing written questions at the time of interview</li><li>• Offering a choice of sequential versus panel interviews</li></ul>
<b>Evaluation and correction actions</b>	<p>3 to 6-month review of job-fit to assess the effectiveness of recruiting and hiring practices</p> <hr/> <p>Measure satisfaction and engagement as well as performance</p> <hr/> <p>Consider a short survey asking about the recruiting and hiring process to seek input for improvement</p> <hr/> <p>If necessary, provide relevant training and support</p> <hr/> <p>If changes are needed, review again in another 3 to 6 months as necessary</p> <hr/> <p>Survey recent hires about their experience of the hiring process and use as part of continual improvement.</p>
<b>Review</b>	<p>Annually review recruiting and hiring practices overall and analyze the outcomes</p>

# Orientation and training

Integrating psychological health and safety principles into all orientation and training protocols, especially for leaders, supports continual improvement.

<b>Policy and commitment</b>	<p>Require the organization's values be embedded in both orientation and all training approaches</p> <p>Ensure the principles of psychological health and safety, including psychologically safe leadership, are embedded in training, policies, strategies, changes and processes</p>
<b>Planning</b>	<p>Consider how all orientation and training processes (or the absence of) may impact psychological health and safety</p> <p>Ensure psychologically safe leadership strategies are embedded in training for both potential and existing leaders</p>
<b>Implementation</b>	<p>Develop an orientation program that takes into account psychological safety on the job, the culture, rates of change within the organization, application of organizational values and how to access support or accommodation</p> <p>Set up a leadership development process that includes awareness of mental health and mental illness, development of interpersonal competence, access to just-in-time resources, psychologically safe leadership strategies and coaching/mentoring</p> <p>Set up a shorter orientation process for job changes within the organization</p>
<b>Evaluation and correction actions</b>	<p>Require all training and orientation to be assessed for impact on behavior of the trainee and others as well as outcomes</p> <p>Ask what challenges there were in new job placement to learn how to improve orientation and training approaches</p> <p>Ask about training requirements and training refreshers to understand the needs</p> <p>Consider the use of <a href="#">Psychologically Safe Leader Assessment</a> for continual improvement</p>
<b>Review</b>	<p>Do scheduled reviews of organization-wide, department and job-specific orientation and training approaches and compare to other measures of psychological safety and engagement</p> <p>Review the impact individual leaders have on the psychological health and safety of their direct reports</p>

# Evaluation, performance management, discipline and promotion

It's important to evaluate both individual employees and management strategies to ensure the optimization of productivity.

<b>Policy and commitment</b>	<p>Require senior leaders and those responsible for governance to “walk the talk” of organizational values</p> <p>Ensure all leaders express their understanding and commitment to psychologically safe leadership</p> <p>Support psychologically safe leadership through policies and processes that recognize and reward success</p>
<b>Planning</b>	<p>Develop a system that supports psychological safety in the approach to management, evaluation, discipline and promotion</p> <p>Engage leaders in developing solutions that allow them to balance psychologically safe leadership with meeting organizational objectives</p>
<b>Implementation</b>	<p>Ensure those in leadership positions are competent to manage in a psychologically safe way or <a href="#">develop</a> this skill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a <a href="#">supportive performance management</a> system that rules out health problems before beginning discipline</li><li>• Engage employees in developing solutions that allow them to accomplish the tasks assigned</li><li>• Help supervisors and managers to <a href="#">identify and address workplace issues</a> promptly</li><li>• Have leaders embed solution-focused approaches in <a href="#">responding to workplace issues</a></li></ul>
<b>Evaluation and correction actions</b>	<p>Take regular account of productivity by measuring outcomes rather than outputs (for example, measure results, the extent to which the work gets done, rather than effort, such as working longer hours)</p> <p>Consider external influences on performance such as economic pressures, family or health issues, community disasters as well as leadership approaches, employee conflict and organizational pressures</p>
<b>Review</b>	<p>Consider the impact of the various management strategies and whether they result in desired outcomes</p> <p>Consider pilot projects to test out alternative approaches</p>

# Intervention and crisis response

This is a critical time to ensure psychologically safe approaches and the availability of supports for all concerned.

<b>Policy and commitment</b>	Require clear standards of response for each job role in the event of crisis
<b>Planning</b>	Ensure crisis response programs include aspects related to those with mental health concerns as well as considering the psychological impact of a crisis on all employees
<b>Implementation</b>	Develop programs for proactive crisis prevention
	Develop intervention programs to assist troubled employees
	Employee assistance programs (EAP) must be relevant to your organization
<b>Evaluation and correction actions</b>	Assess efficacy of programs and relevance to need
<b>Review</b>	Review all programs, look for synergies and consider gaps

# Accommodation and return to work

Although every situation must be treated as unique, following best practices aligned with human rights legislation will support success.

<b>Policy and commitment</b>	Ensure leaders are physically present and communicate effectively during accommodation and return to work
	Ensure leaders have the necessary skills and resources to support the success of employees being accommodated or returning to work
	Consider use of the tool: <a href="#">Supporting Employee Success</a>
<b>Planning</b>	Define accommodation opportunities that address issues related to communication, feedback, directions, relationships, triggers and stressors in the workplace as well as task-oriented approaches
	Consider the impact on others during accommodation and return-to-work planning
	Proactively remove or reduce barriers to work-related psychological safety and support
<b>Implementation</b>	Create a return to work process that includes consideration of psychological impacts, even for physical injuries or illness
	Consider refresher or new training for anyone who has been away for 2 months or more or during a time of change in processes or procedures
	Develop an accommodation approach that engages the employee fully in finding solutions that allow them to be successful at their job
	Support supervisors in understanding and sustaining all aspects of a successful return to work including changes in communication and feedback
<b>Evaluation and correction actions</b>	Have regular follow up for at least the first 6 months of a return to work
	Have at least annual follow up for accommodation to ensure it's still the most effective solution
	Make sure needs are being met
<b>Review</b>	Review annually against changes in human rights or disability legislation changes and for effectiveness from the perspective of employee and supervisor
	Make changes as needed

# Redeployment and termination

Consider the impact on all stakeholders including managers, human resources, union reps and workers.

<p><b>Policy and commitment</b></p>	<p>Mandate leaders be physically present and communicate effectively, in a psychologically safe manner, during times of layoff or redeployment</p> <p>Review: <a href="#">Psychologically Safer Terminations</a></p>
<p><b>Planning</b></p>	<p>Explore community resources, organizational or benefit provider resources and external providers for approaches and supports available to those who are losing their jobs</p> <p>Consider the psychological impact on "survivors" as well as those who must facilitate downsizing, layoffs or redeployments</p> <p>In times of significant change consider the psychological impact of job insecurity, lack of role clarity, competition or collaboration with newcomers/replacements and changing or unclear expectations/values</p>
<p><b>Implementation</b></p>	<p>Provide targeted training programs for those managing organizational change and those who are involved with the termination process</p> <p>Ensure availability of resources to support the employee in dealing with the emotional fallout and subsequent job search</p> <p>Consider the needs of those who may have mental health issues at the time of termination and the psychological safety of those who are terminating</p>
<p><b>Evaluation and correction actions</b></p>	<p>Solicit feedback from both those who are let go (exit interviews) and those left behind about the perception of the company and leadership response to layoff or redeployment</p>
<p><b>Review</b></p>	<p>Prepare for possible future situations by having plans in place or consider next steps if the event has already occurred</p>

# Organizational structure

<b>Policy and commitment</b>	<p>Consider the potential psychological impact from governance, new developments and existing organizational structures</p> <p>Require integration of psychological safety in existing and future programs</p>
<b>Planning</b>	<p>Collect data that will help guide the development or evolution of the organizational structure including focus on psychological impact</p> <p>Analyze data and involve stakeholders in developing alternative approaches</p> <p>Consider the psychological impact of communication and feedback loops, job security, role clarity, levels of competition and collaboration, clarity of expectations, values and policies</p>
<b>Implementation</b>	<p>Ensure psychological safety for all positions including those that utilize non-standard approaches such as telecommuting, working alone and other flexible work arrangements</p>
<b>Evaluation and correction actions</b>	<p>Audit programs to ensure psychological factors are measured and addressed at regular intervals</p>
<b>Review</b>	<p>Review results using continuous improvement framework</p>



# Job design

<b>Policy and commitment</b>	Organizational policy should include a process to assess healthy and safe job design (for example, job risk assessment and cognitive demands analysis)
<b>Planning</b>	Plan/review jobs to ensure psychological demands are assessed and psychological safety is addressed
<b>Implementation</b>	Job design for those in supervisory or management positions includes adequate time to provide a psychologically safe work environment
<b>Evaluation and correction actions</b>	Seek feedback from those in the jobs to assess if the design is psychologically safe and clearly defined
	Make adjustments as necessary
<b>Review</b>	Review job design when new jobs are developed and when there are significant changes to jobs

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