

LEADING PRACTICE GUIDE

**Expanding
Mental Health
Supports
for Younger
Workers**

Introduction

Talent attraction and retention have never been more critical. We live in both an innovation age and a highly competitive market for talent. Businesses of all sizes are under more pressure than ever to set themselves apart as a great place for talented people to work.

Managing and developing talent remains critical to a company's growth prospects. Our region's businesses must rise to the occasion, leveraging best practices and established expertise to build their talent pipeline over time. That's why the Board is pleased to introduce our six Leading Practice Guides, born from our workforce development strategy, "[Unlocking Talent](#)".

Unlocking Talent highlighted how we can turn system gaps and barriers into opportunities in three areas: (i) collaborating to narrow the skills gap; (ii) promoting collective workforce development in the skilled trades; and (iii) growing the region's youth talent pipeline and immigrant talent pipeline.

To build on these areas, the Board convened senior business leaders for a series of roundtables, to share lessons learned and best practices on pressing workforce development challenges and opportunities. As a result, we have focused on 6 urgent priorities for the Leading Practice Guides:



Supporting Employee
Soft Skill Development



Reducing Integration Barrier
for Immigrant Workers



Finding the Right
Entry-Level Workers



Increasing Work-Integrated
Learning ("WIL") Opportunities



Tapping into the
Immigrant Talent Pool



Expanding Mental Health
Supports for Younger Workers

We hope they will be used as blueprints for success, helping businesses of every size contribute to a workforce that thrives in tomorrow's economy.

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Overview

According to the Conference Board of Canada's report on [Future-Proofing Investments in Workplace Mental Health](#), strong workplace mental health is the cornerstone of employee engagement and productivity, and employers have a pivotal role to play. In any given year, approximately one in five people in Canada experience a mental health problem or illness, and mental health issues will directly impact close to half of all Canadians over their lifetime.¹ An estimated 22 per cent of the working population suffers from a mental illness that may be affecting their productivity at work.²

Throughout consultations for the [Unlocking Talent](#) report, and at the Board's Talent Summit, stakeholders identified the growing mental health crisis among young individuals and how it will undoubtedly impact them as they enter the workforce. With provincial funding for specific projects at some colleges and universities, the Board is interested in exploring employer-based programs and policies that support mental health.

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This Leading Practice Guide will:

- Identify resources available to employers who are looking to implement programs at their workplaces
- Advance examples and best practices of programs or policies that have been implemented at different workplaces

The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

Commissioned by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (the Standard) was developed in 2013 to provide a systematic approach to develop and sustain a psychologically healthy and safe workplace. It was also accompanied by a set of tools and resources to help employers promote mental health and establish best practices. The five core tenants of the standard include:



Policy, commitment, and engagement



Planning



Implementation



Evaluation and corrective action



Management review and continual improvement

More information on the Standard, including the comprehensive Standard document, an implementation guide, and other resources can be found on the Mental Health Commission of Canada's [website](#).

Best practices advocated by the MHCC include:³

1. Define a solid business case to justify the investment of resources.
2. Ensure commitment exists throughout the organization.
3. Communicate widely and effectively to maximize awareness and engagement.
4. Embed psychological health and safety in the overall organizational culture.
5. Dedicate the necessary human and financial resources required for implementation.
6. Select relevant programs, practices and policies best suited to your organization.
7. Consider and mitigate where possible the impact of organizational change on employees' mental health.
8. Regularly measure the impact and results of implementing the Standard.
9. Sustain organizational focus on the Standard beyond its initial implementation.



Leading Practices

STEP 1

Employer's Roadmap for General Employees

Employers often suffer from paralysis on where to begin on implementing a mental health program at their workplace. Prior to instituting any formal mental health support programs for their employees, companies should conduct a self-assessment to determine their current stage of readiness and preparedness.

Think Mental Health provides a [roadmap tool](#) to help organizations determine their readiness to implement a program and actionable steps and resources based on their relative readiness.

Their website also includes a comprehensive database of resources available for staff related to the prevention, intervention and accommodation of mental health problems in the workplace. These include:

- [A booklet \(tool kit\) to support employee success](#)
- [20 Questions for leaders about psychological health and safety](#) - to identify workplace hazards and manage the potential for risk

To start, the roadmap tool will ask a series of questions to determine an organization's current readiness for program implementation

Getting Started

Raising the Bar

Gaining Momentum

Actions to Consider



STEP 2

Supporting Young Workers

The importance of younger workers' mental health in the workplace cannot be overstated. As these individuals embark on their careers, they are particularly vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and burnout, often juggling the demands of work with personal and academic responsibilities. Fostering a mentally healthy work environment not only supports their well-being but also enhances productivity and retention. Younger workers bring fresh perspectives, innovation, and a digital fluency that can greatly benefit organizations. Moreover, addressing mental health concerns early in one's career can establish healthy habits and coping mechanisms that endure throughout a lifetime, contributing to a more resilient and productive workforce in the long run.

[Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#) suggests a guide for employers to investigate workplace processes and procedures to support young workers' mental health and safety. The following is a high-level guideline on how to support young workers at the workplace. For more detailed information please refer to the website.

GUIDE FOR SUPPORTING YOUNG WORKERS



LEADERSHIP

Leadership commitment to enhancing mental health and safety through workplace intervention



ASSESS

Evaluate the mental well-being of your employees, recognize and examine potential psychological threats, and implement measures to reduce these risks.



PREVENTION

Execute tactics that minimize psychosocial risks and advance mental well-being, adhering to the guidelines outlined in the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.



SOCIAL SUPPORT

Create initiatives tailored for young workers to nurture camaraderie with colleagues and leadership within the organization, while also promoting open communication and mutual support.



CULTURE

Promote a culture of mental safety to ensure that every employee feels secure and included.



TRAINING AND SUPPORTS

Offer training to both employers and employees on the fair and equitable treatment of younger workers.



STEP 3

Audit the Progress

Auditing mental health supports within a company is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it allows organizations to assess the effectiveness and impact of existing mental health programs and initiatives. By conducting regular audits, companies can identify areas for improvement, fine-tune their strategies, and ensure that resources are allocated efficiently. Secondly, audits demonstrate a commitment to transparency and accountability, reassuring employees that their mental well-being is a priority. This, in turn, fosters trust and a positive workplace culture. Additionally, auditing helps companies stay in compliance with evolving mental health legislation and best practices, reducing legal and reputational risks. Ultimately, a well-executed mental health audit not only safeguards the psychological well-being of employees but also enhances organizational performance, resilience, and sustainability.



Action Summary

1. Understand the key tenants of the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace and explore best practices advocated.

2. Determine your organization's relative readiness to implement a program and determine next steps using this assessment.

3. Pay particular attention to younger workers and their needs.

4. Audit your organization's progress towards providing sufficient mental health supports.



Other Employer Resources

StressAssess

An online survey tool designed for workers and managers who are interested in assessing psychosocial hazards in the workplace, to anonymously, collectively and confidently identify issues.

Not Myself Today

The Canadian Mental Health Association's workplace mental health program to help support the mental health of employees.

Mental Health Works

A national social enterprise of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) that provides workplace mental health training to organizations nationwide.



Case Study

Educating City Employees About Mental Health and Increasing Resiliency⁴

Approach

The City of St. Paul initiated efforts to enhance employee resilience and mental health support by partnering with MeQuilibrium after releasing an RFP for accessible resilience tools and training. They launched MeQuilibrium in May 2019, emphasizing the importance of employee engagement. The city also provided training for supervisors in utilizing the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) more effectively and offered Mental Health First Aid training for HR Liaisons. St. Paul pioneered the use of the Vitals app in the police force to respond to mental health-related calls, which has since been adopted by numerous jurisdictions in Minnesota. Nance Lee Mosquera, St. Paul's Employee Benefits Manager, participated in a Minnesota Health Action Group subcommittee focusing on mental health access, leading to the creation of an Employers Guide on Mental Health. Additionally, a Community Dialogue event on mental health, featuring Nance, garnered extensive media coverage and encouraged collective efforts to address mental health in the community.

Lessons Learned, Challenges and Recommendations

In an effort to address workplace mental health, the City of St. Paul faced challenges related to determining where to begin due to the extensive range of possible approaches. They started by examining the co-morbidity of mental health with other chronic conditions, aiming to address both aspects for those already engaged with health providers. Educating the workforce about mental health became a primary focus for the first year, as many employees had limited knowledge on the subject, including the teachability of resilience as a skill.

ORGANIZATION

The City of Saint Paul, Minnesota

BACKGROUND

The Healthy Saint Paul Committee realized there were persistent mental health concerns and challenges for city employees year after year. This was a serious concern that needed to be addressed.

St. Paul pioneered the use of the Vitals app in the police force to respond to mental health-related calls, which has since been adopted by numerous jurisdictions in Minnesota.

Endnotes

- 1 Mental Health Commission of Canada and Canadian Psychological Association, Extended Mental Health Benefits in Canadian Workplaces; International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans, “Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Benefits.”
- 2 Smetanin and others, “The Life and Economic Impact of Major Mental Illnesses in Canada.”
- 3 Promising Practices. Mental Health Commission of Canada. <https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/promising-practices/>
- 4 City of St. Paul. American Psychiatric Association Foundation. Center for Workplace mental Health. <https://workplacementalhealth.org/Case-Studies/City-of-St-Paul>

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