Step towards a psychologically healthy workplace

How does your organization align with Canada's new *Voluntary National Standard for Psychological Heath and Safety in the Workplace*?

If there was ever a need for a psychologically safe and healthy workplace, it is now. Mental illness is the leading cause of disability claims in Canada and is expected to grow[1]. To help employers respond to these challenges, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) championed the development and release of Canada's first voluntary National Standard on workplace psychological health and safety – available at no cost at **www.shop.csa.ca** or **www.bnq.qc.ca**.

The new Standard encourages employers to identify, assess, and mitigate risks that may impact an employee's psychological health and well being. There are 13 psychosocial factors[2] within the workplace that can have a positive or negative impact on employee health.

Complete the following high level assessment – it's designed as a first step to help you prioritize areas of focus for your organization.

What are the 13 psychosocial workplace factors[3]?

	YES	NO
PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT: A work environment where coworkers and supervisors are supportive of employees' psychological and mental health concerns, and respond appropriately as needed.		
Are the majority of your leaders comfortable when addressing employees with signs of distress?		
Do your employees have access to Mental Health support such as short term counselling, to address family and/or personal issues?		
Do you have supports in place to assist employees returning from an absence related to a mental health condition?		
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: A work environment characterized by trust, honesty and fairness.		
Would you say that the majority of <u>employees</u> would rate the work environment as having a culture of trust, honesty and fairness?		
Would you say that the majority of <u>leaders</u> would rate the work environment as having a culture of trust, honesty and fairness?		
Are employees held accountable for their actions (i.e. Engagement survey, 360 Evaluations, performance reviews, Human Resources and Employee Relations)?		
CLEAR LEADERSHIP & EXPECTATIONS: A work environment where there is effective leadership and support that helps employees know what they need to do, how their work contributes to the organization, and whether there are impending changes.		
Do leaders spend sufficient time defining and clarifying roles and accountabilities?		
Does the organization communicate changes to all employees in a timely and effective manner?		
Does your organization demonstrate effective and functional leadership?		
CIVILITY & RESPECT: A work environment where employees are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients and the public.		
Does your organization support and encourage civility and respect for diversity amongst employees?		
Is there a mechanism for leaders and employees to address interpersonal issues and inappropriate behaviours?		
Do you provide leaders with training on conflict resolution?		

[1] Employee Benefit News, Manulife Financial, Spring 2013 edition.

[2] *Voluntary National Standard for Psychological Heath and Safety in the Workplace* and 2012 by J.Samra, M. Gilbert, M. Shain & D. Bilsker. Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA)

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	YES	NO
PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPETENCIES & REQUIREMENTS: A work environment where there is good fit between employees' interpersonal and emotional competencies and the requirements of the position they hold.		
Does recruitment take into consideration various aspects of job fit (including people skills, cultural fit and the social and emotional skills required to do the job)?		
Do your leaders value social skills as a component of job fit?		
Do employees feel that their personal strengths contribute to their position?		
GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT: A work environment where employees receive encouragement and support in the development of their interpersonal, emotional and job skills.		
Are employees given feedback on performance, and the opportunity to advance where appropriate?		
Do your leaders encourage employees to take on new projects and initiatives?		
Does your organization provide opportunities for employees to continue to grow and develop?		
RECOGNITION & REWARD: A work environment where there is appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' efforts in a fair and timely manner.		
Do leaders recognize employee efforts, and are shared accomplishments recognized?		
Are employees fairly compensated?		
Are traits like commitment and passion recognized and valued?		
INVOLVEMENT & INFLUENCE: A work environment where employees are included in discussions about how their work is done and how important decisions are made.		
Are employees involved in how their work is organized and performed?		
Is employee feedback encouraged in the area of job function and structure?		
Are changes that impact an employee's job communicated effectively?		
WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT: A work environment where tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available.		
Do the majority of employees have the time and the tools required to complete their job?		
Are employees able to provide input to their leaders regarding their workload?		
Is the work environment conducive to minimizing distractions and disruptions?		
ENGAGEMENT: A work environment where employees feel connected to their work and are motivated to do their job well.		
Would you say that the majority of employees feel connected to the workplace, with a sense of loyalty?		
Would you say the majority of the workforce is motivated to perform at work, most of the time?		
Do employees feel that their personal efforts contribute to the overall success of the organization?		
BALANCE: A work environment where there is recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family and personal life.		
Are employees encouraged to take/use their available vacation time?		
Are employees given the tools to adequately balance work and life (e.g. work from home, flexible hours)?		
Are leaders encouraged to support employees in balancing work and life?		

	YES	NO
PSYCHOLOGICAL PROTECTION: A work environment where employees' psychological safety is ensured.		
Can employees report mistakes and errors without fear of inappropriate negative consequences?		
Are leaders encouraged to support employee's well being?		
Does the organization take steps to prevent harm as a result of harassment, discrimination and violence?		
PROTECTION OF PHYSICAL SAFETY: A work environment where management takes appropriate action to protect the physical safety of employees.		
Is the physical workplace conducive to the effective completion of tasks, without undue stress or risk?		
Do you provide job-specific training on health and safety precautions?		
Do you provide a formal mechanism for Employees to report suspected health and safety risks?		

Where to go from here?

The questions above are designed to help you identify where you may have gaps in your organization. In order to fully assess your organization's psychological health and safety risks, you will need to conduct a thorough review. The following resources can offer free, easy to use materials to guide you through a more detailed assessment process. Also included are resources and supports for both your people leaders and your employees.

Website	What you will find
Workplace Solutions for Mental Health from Manulife Financial **www.manulife.ca\mentalhealth**	Manager and employee education, prevention, return to work and workplace accommodation tools and resources.
Guarding Minds @ Work **www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/info/gmaw_resources/assessment_tools**	Organizational assessment, action and evaluation tools.
Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction **www.sfu.ca/carmha.html**	Organizational assessment tools. Employer, employee, youth and healthcare professional tools and resources for dealing with mental health.
Mental Health Commission of Canada **www.mentalhealthcommission.ca**	Public and workplace resources with respect to mental health.
Mental Health Works **www.mentalhealthworks.ca**	Mental health training for people leaders. Supports for employees dealing with mental health issues.
Homewood Human Solutions™ **www.homewoodhumansolutions.com**	Employee and Family Assistance program.

If you are interested in discussing your results or in receiving further assistance with managing workplace psychological health, please contact your Manulife Group Benefits representative.

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