

Mental Health During COVID-19

MAY 26 - BCFED HEALTH & SAFETY CENTRE

Thank you for joining us on the webinar: Mental Health during COVID-19 hosted by the BCFED HEALTH & SAFETY CENTRE.

This outline is being provided to give participants an overview of the presentation and a resource to share with others. The content covers potential Psychosocial Hazards (working from home and the traditional workplace) and the link between OH&S and Psychosocial health and ways to support yourself and others in the workplace.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

- In public Mental Health terms, the main psychological impact is elevated rates of stress or anxiety
- Increased levels of loneliness
- Increase of fear and worry
- Depression
- Alcohol & Drug Misuse

WHO: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/technical-guidance/mental-health-and-covid-19>

Angus Reid Survey CBC News: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/canadians-angus-reid-pandemic-survey-1.5545594>

Information is shifting and evolving almost daily, and overconsumption leads to many questions to consider. Ask yourself- are the resources reliable and reputable and are you able to disconnect?

HAZARDS IN THE WORKPLACE

Working from home:

- Loneliness/Isolation
 - Family Pressures
 - Domestic violence
 - Stress
 - Grief
 - No separation between work and home
 - Financial
 - Fear and worry
 - Role ambiguity or conflict
 - Workload
 - Bullying & Harassment
- [\(Tips on protecting your mental health when working from home\)](#)

Traditional workplaces:

- Fear of contracting the virus
- Bullying and Harassment
- Racism
- Violence
- Stress
- Financial
- PPE
- Workload
- Trauma
- Grief

[\(Tips on protecting your mental health in traditional workplaces\)](#)

ASSESSING THE RISK OF PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

***Risk is the likelihood that the hazard could cause injury, illness/disease, or death:**

- The joint occupational health and safety committee must participate in conducting a risk assessment.
- Consideration of exposure and probability must be given to identified hazards
- An Exposure Control Plan (ECP) is a document that explains how workers will be protected from hazardous exposures
- COVID-19 is a new virus requiring an ECP.
- In developing the ECP, consideration will be given to potential exposure to COVID-19 in work areas, job functions and job tasks as applicable.
- All workers and the supervisors must be trained in the modes of transmission for the virus and the control measures implemented, as documented in the ECP.
- After implementing control measures it is necessary to reevaluate that the risk has been eliminated or minimized.
- Sometimes, the introduction of control measures can bring forth new, unexpected hazards.

CONTROLS TO MITIGATE PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

- A definition for Workplace Psychosocial Hazards
- A requirement for assessment
- Train to Recognize
- Support
- Confidentiality
- Focus on Prevention

What can Employers do?

- Encourage reporting
 - Understand there may be a need to accommodate employees
 - Foster a culture of connectivity - stay connected
 - EFAP/EAP information recirculated
 - Have flexibility in work scheduling
 - Offer support, show empathy & be available
 - Identify workers who may be struggling, recognize impact of isolation/loneliness
 - Work from home policy
 - Ensure critical incident defusing and debriefing is being offered
 - Encourage dialogue regarding mental health
 - Run an anti-stigma campaign
 - Ensure 'Bullying and Harassment Policy' is current and understood
 - Remind workers of their entitled benefits
- <https://www.worksafefbc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/health-and-safety/what-employers-should-do>

What can the committee do?

- OH&S meetings need to continue during COVID!
 - Have discussions around mental health & stigma. Put it on the agenda
 - Stay current on information and distribute it to workers
 - Consider doing a mental health check in survey (Free OCHOW stress assess tool)
 - Set up regular check-ins with workers & employer
 - Open communication and validating workers' concerns
 - Increase awareness about safety protocols
 - Best practices in other workplaces
 - EFAP information recirculated and known
 - Consider training on 'Mental Health First Aid'
 - Making sure policies are posted and understood
 - Anonymous concern/question box
 - Learn more about the CSA Standard on 'Psychologically Healthy Workplaces'
- <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/workplace/national-standard>

What can workers do?

- Report hazards
- Have open conversations about mental health
- Support fellow workers
- Stay connected
- Follow established safe work procedures
- Practice good hygiene, wear PPE, respect PHO orders
- Make use of EFAP or other related benefits if needed
- Exercise empathy
- Exercise the right to refuse unsafe work

What can everyone do?

- Get up! Dress up! Show up!
- Set a routine
- Follow the advice of health authorities
- Stay connected to family, friends, and colleagues
- Manage your internal dialogue
- Think positively
- Stay Active
- Get enough sleep
- Maintain a healthy diet
- Make use of your benefits inclusive of EFAP (Employee/Family Assistance Program)

Self-Care:

- Plan after work schedule
- Set boundaries
- Do something for yourself
- Meditation
- Exercise
- Spiritual/Religious Connections

POST COVID-19 OPPORTUNITY

- Awareness
 - Reduced Stigma
 - Physically and Mentally Safer Workplaces than ever before
 - Larger conversations about Mental Health
- <https://www.worksafefbc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation>

Conversions to be had:

- PTSD-Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- ASD-Acute stress Disorder
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Substance Use
- We already know that 1 in 5 Canadians will suffer a mental health problem or illness within a year



RESOURCES

- [COVID-19 Psychological First Aid Service: Information and Signup](#) (British Columbia Psychological Association) – Free virtual counselling provided by registered psychologists.
- [COVID-19: Staying Well in Uncertain Times](#) (Canadian Mental Health Association – BC) – Tips and information on how to reduce and manage anxiety in the workplace due to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- [Managing COVID-19 Stress, Anxiety and Depression](#) (Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions) - Tips and resources on things we can do as individuals and collectively to deal with stress and support one another during these challenging times.
- [Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (World Health Organization) – These mental health considerations were developed by the WHO's Department of Mental Health and Substance Use as messages targeting different groups to support for mental and psychosocial well-being during COVID-19 outbreak.
- [Mental Health and COVID-19](#) (Conference Board of Canada) – Videos on different aspects of mental health, including coping with anxiety, job loss, and dealing with isolation.
- [Taking Care of Your Mental Health \(COVID-19\)](#) (Public Health Agency of Canada) – Tips and resources for taking care of your mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak.

References:

- Mental Health First Aid
<https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/course-calendar/course-descriptions/#toc-10>
- Mental Health & The CSA Standard
<https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/course-calendar/course-descriptions/#toc-9>
- Canadian Mental Health Association
<http://www.cmha.ca/fast-facts-about-mental-illness>
- Mental Health Commission of Canada
<http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English>
- Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers
<http://www.ohcow.on.ca/>

- World Health Organization
<http://www.who.int>
- BC Center for Disease Control
<http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>
- Battered Women Support Services
<http://www.bwss.org/>
- BC211
<http://www.bc211.ca/>
- MRT
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/overdose/mobile-response-team>

CONTACT THE BCFED HEALTH & SAFETY CENTRE:

Email:
ohsadmin@bcfed.ca

Website:
<https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/about/contact/>

We hope that you stay healthy and safe during this crisis and we look forward to staying connected with you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

BCFED Health & Safety Centre: 1-888-223-5669

WorkSafeBC: 1-888-621-SAFE

ESDC Labour Program: 1-800-641-4049

If you are a member of a union in BC, contact your union local.