

Catholic
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Managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace: Guidelines

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Managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace: Guidelines

These guidelines are provided to assist HR managers, Operations managers, WHS specialists, Line managers, and others within your organisation that hold management and leadership roles generally.

Each of the following steps must be supported by **consultation** at all levels of the workforce.

Step 1 – Educate

- › It is important that the entire workforce including the general workforce, leadership, management and the board are educated in relation to what constitutes a psychosocial hazard in the workplace, the risks posed by such hazards and the ways to eliminate/reduce/prevent such hazards (including how to create a psychologically healthy safe workplace).
- › Ensure that there is a sufficient framework of policies and procedures in place such as bullying and harassment, discrimination, violence in the workplace, Code of Conduct, conflict management including a ‘Speak Up’ policy.
- › Ensure that the general workforce, leadership and management are sufficiently trained in relation to the implementation of these policies and procedures.

Step 2 – Identify the psychosocial hazards

It is important to identify psychosocial hazards in the workplace by:

- › Discussing with and listening to your workforce (including workers, supervisors, managers and health and safety specialists)
- › Inspecting your workplace to see how work is carried out (noting any rushing, delays or backlogs)
- › Observing how your workforce (including management, customers, the general public or those from the supply chain) interact with each other during work activities and taking note of those interactions
- › Reviewing documentation such as records, reports, workers compensation claims, staff surveys, productivity levels, absenteeism, complaints and exit interviews
- › Using an anonymous survey tool to obtain information from your workforce
- › Discussing the results of the surveys with your workforce

Step 3 – Assess and prioritise the psychosocial hazards and risks

- › Understand the nature of the harm the hazard could cause, the frequency of the harm, the duration of the harm, how serious the harm is and the reasonably foreseeable likelihood of it happening. Consider what could occur if workers are exposed to the identified psychosocial hazards and risks and determine the consequences and likelihood in combination. A psychosocial risk assessment should be part of a continuous improvement process.

Step 4 – Control psychosocial hazards and risks

- › It is important to eliminate hazards and the risks as much as possible. If this is not possible, endeavouring to minimise the risk through planning and prevention is the next alternative.
- › Upon assessing the risk and determining which hazard(s) have the greatest contribution to that risk, establish, implement and maintain the most appropriate control measure(s) that are reasonably practicable in the circumstances. Consultation with your workforce is an important part of this step.

Step 5 – Maintain, monitor and review control measures

- › Maintain, monitor and review the implementation of the control measures, in order to ensure that they are working effectively or whether they require modification. A process of regular review will ensure that the control measures put in place remain effective for their purpose and that legal obligations are fulfilled.

Step 6 - Programs

You may wish to implement the following programs in your workplace in order to help reduce psychosocial hazards:

- › Regular debriefing sessions
- › Peer support and mentor groups
- › Regular check-ins (proactive consultation)
- › Safe-walk programs (i.e. safety walk-arounds)
- › Identify one or more safety champions
- › Establish a psychological health and safety working/focus/steering group
- › Continual leadership and management coaching and training in relation to psychological health and safety in the workplace
- › Recovery at work program
- › Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- › Workplace Wellness Program

Further information and assistance

If you:

- › would like to learn more about psychosocial hazards in the workplace and your obligations
- › need support or help with enabling positive psychological health and safety in your workplace or
- › need further advice or assistance

please contact us via email at enquiry@cer.catholic.org.au or contact us on (02) 9189 5999.

Disclaimer

These guidelines are intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter and are not legal advice. Specialist advice should be sought in relation to your specific circumstances.

Source: These guidelines have been adapted from Safe Work Australia, SafeWork NSW and WorkSafe Queensland websites. Please refer to the Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work published by SafeWork NSW (May 2021), as the approved Code of Practice.