



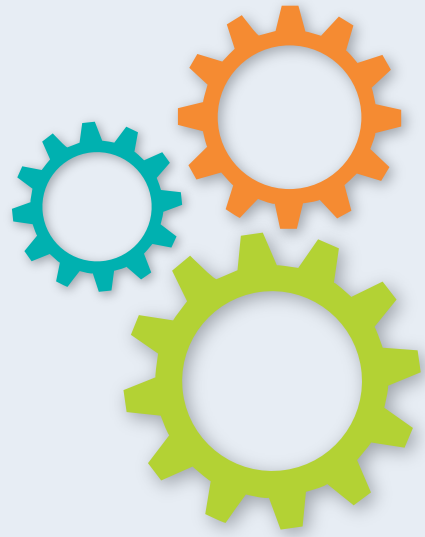
Mental Health in the Workplace

An Accommodation Guide
for Managers and Staff



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ontario





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Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to outline some key skills that managers in Ontario workplaces should have when presented with an employee who has a mental health concern. The main portion of the Guide is broken into three parts:

1. Building Awareness

2. Responding Skills

3. Collaborating

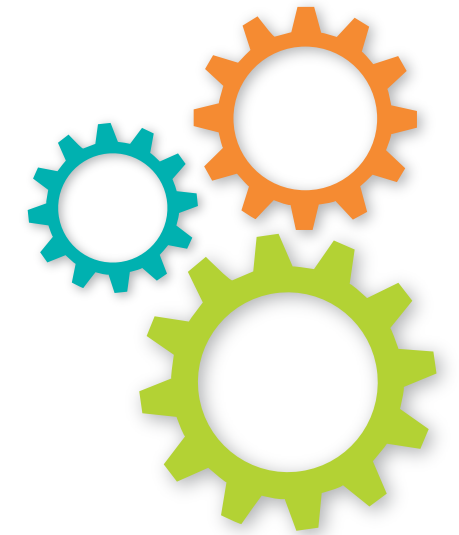
This Guide complements in-person training provided by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario's Mental Health Works™ program. Inside it you will find tools and techniques to not only manage your inter-personal relationships with staff, but also strategies to use when developing an accommodation plan or getting ready for an employee to return-to-work after an absence due to a mental health concern.

As you work through it, remember that just as people are not the same, an adequate response to a mental health concern in the workplace will not be the same for two people. We advocate for adopting a person-centered approach to addressing mental health concerns, and encourage workplaces to build a focus on psychological health and safety into their business plans.

The final portion of this Guide is meant to ensure that your accommodation plans, and responses, meet the requirements of the Accessible Employment Standard under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*.

While this guide is meant for managers and supervisors in Ontario's workplaces, it can be used by employees seeking out information about how to begin a discussion on accommodation.

We begin the guide with some Frequently Asked Questions about Mental Health in the Workplace.



Frequently Asked Questions About Mental Health in the Workplace

1. Can I ask someone whether they have a mental illness during a job interview?

- No, you may not ask someone whether they have any type of disability. You may ask whether they will be able to perform all the essential duties of the job. In doing this, they may disclose that they have a disability that requires an accommodation.
- In order to ensure compliance with the *Accessible Employment Standard* you must write in your job advertisements that you will accommodate employees, as well as prospective hires during the interview process.

2. An employee has requested an accommodation, but has not disclosed detailed information. What information can I request?

- The employee is not required to disclose specific diagnoses or even the category of disability, but is required to provide enough information to enable the employer to provide the accommodation. This can include a note from a medical doctor stating that there is a valid disability requiring accommodation, what the work-related limitations are, and what the prognosis for recovery is.

3. I am concerned about alcohol and drug use among employees. Can I require employees to submit to random testing?

- Both the Canadian and Ontario Human Rights Commissions have specific policies on this type of testing.
- Testing of an employee can only be done where the employer can objectively show that drug or alcohol use would impair an employee's ability to do their job, or there is a real safety risk present.
- The federal guidelines state that where an employee has returned to work after treatment for a substance use concern, testing might be permitted under some circumstances if it is part of the return to work plan or their treatment.
- Always consult your legal advisor before you begin instituting such a policy.
- Problematic substance use may be considered a disability under certain circumstances. If this is the case you will be required to accommodate the individual up to the point of undue hardship.

4. I have an employee whose performance has deteriorated over the past year. I am concerned this person may have a mental health concern. Can I ask them about it? What if they deny there is a problem?

- An employer may, as part of a discussion about performance, ask an employee whether there are any problems that are interfering with their work. Without asking if the employee has a mental health concern, you can suggest that the employee consider speaking with your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or their family doctor, if a health concern is impacting their work.

- It is appropriate to mention that there is an accommodation policy in your workplace and what the individual should do if they believe they require accommodation. It is important that in the event an employee discloses a mental illness, they are reassured that the disclosure does not jeopardize their employment. An employer may follow normal disciplinary processes if there is no request for accommodation.

5. An employee has returned to work after an extended leave due to a disability and is fine when taking medication, but has behavioural problems when they stop. Can I require an employee to take their medication?

- It is difficult to find any legal basis for an employer to require an employee to take, or continue, a particular treatment. However, the employer can make it clear that when the person returns there are certain performance expectations. If these are not being met, then the return-to-work will be reviewed and a determination made about whether the person can carry out the requirement of the job.

6. What is a return-to-work discussion?

- The return-to-work process after extended leave is an important process in terms of the ultimate success of the employee's ability to meet their job requirements as well as complete a treatment paradigm. To facilitate this, employers should:
 - Establish essential duties of the job;
 - Consider any possible challenges in meeting objectives;
 - Help the employee understand any concerns and goals;
 - Review the healthcare provider's report on limitations;
 - Know about previous performance or workplace relationship issues that were not resolved prior to the absence;
 - Ensure that the employee and supervisor have a shared understanding of what will happen upon the return-to-work. Seek out training opportunities to ensure the supervisor is prepared.

7. I am concerned that an employee with a mental health concern may be a safety risk. Can I refuse to hire the person on that basis?

- Safety is one of the criteria that can be used to refuse to hire someone based on a disability, provided that it is directly related to a bona-fide occupational requirement and there is clear evidence that the individual cannot do the job in a safe manner. Basing the decision upon stereotypes of mental illness, rather than on the actual and probable safety risk would be considered discrimination.

8. What should I do if an employee is experiencing a crisis or has expressed they are considering suicide?

- As a manager, you should not avoid the situation, TAKE ACTION. You should talk to the employee and listen actively to what they have to say. Contact your local emergency department or crisis telephone line immediately for assistance, or call 911. The time following a crisis or suicide attempt is critical. The employee should receive intensive care during this time. Maintain regular contact and work with the employee to organize support. It is important that the employee does not feel cut off or shunned. For more information visit www.ontario.cmha.ca.

Tips for Managers in Accommodating Employees

Accommodating an employee with mental health concerns requires tact and compassion.

Some tips managers can use are:

Build Trust

To build trust with your staff, maintain integrity and confidentiality at all times.

Make Time to Talk

If you have only one or two employees at a time, overlap their shifts by a few minutes to encourage employees to talk to each other, and to you. This builds the team.

Encourage Participation

To increase your employees' personal commitment, encourage their participation in decision-making processes. Meetings don't need to be formal to be effective.

Be Specific

Talking about specific behaviours, rather than using vague language or judgemental terms, will make the conversation easier. Instead of saying "you're acting strange", try something like, "you seem to be much quieter during meetings, that's not like you".

Respect Privacy

Privacy laws state that employees have a right to not disclose. You are not entitled to a diagnosis.

Educate Employees

Just because you 'get it', doesn't mean other staff do. Ensure your team and workplace are educated on mental health concerns and receive training to smash-stigma.

Be Positive

Capitalize on the employers strengths, and highlight how they add value to the team.

Tips for Staff in Requesting an Accommodation

It can be hard to approach your supervisor with a concern. Even when they have articulated what the work-place accommodation policy is.

Some tips you can use in your conversation are found below.

Start the Conversation

Sometimes, even the most astute manager won't notice when something is wrong. Start the conversation by asking for a meeting in private. Don't feel like you need to disclose everything, but let them know you may need an accommodation.

Focus on Effects

Accommodations should be effects based. Its not about treating disabilities but accommodating a symptom of them. Focus on what would make your workplace more conducive to your wellbeing.

Make an Appointment with your Doctor

After the initial conversation with your manager, make an appointment with your care provider to ask for their input on what an effective accommodation might be. Be sure to request documentation that states the limitations.

Be Honest

If it is safe to do so, give as much context as possible to your supervisor so that they can aid you in crafting an appropriate accommodation. Sometimes it takes a few attempts. It is important to let your supervisor know if the plan needs to be updated.

Participate in Check-Ins

Let your manager know on a regular basis how things are going. Participating in check-ins, even if informal, is a great way to manage the accommodation plan.

Take Care

Take care of yourself. Sometimes the best thing is a leave of absence in order to attend treatment, focus on your care, or use the time to assess your path forward. Speak with your supervisor about sick-leave policies and supports outside of the workplace, such as benefit plans and employee assistance programs.



Building Awareness



Mental Health Concern or Mental Illness?

Throughout this guide, you will see the terms 'mental illness' and 'mental health concern'.

A **Mental Illness** is a diagnosed disorder of thought, mood, or behaviour that has been present for an extended period of time (is not transient) and causes significant distress to the individual.

A **mental health concern** is a concern held by the individual due to a perceived deficit in mood or thought that is distressing, but has not necessarily been present for an extended period.

Some common mental illnesses are:

1. Anxiety Disorders, such as Generalized Anxiety or Agoraphobia;
2. Major Depressive Disorder;
3. Bipolar Disorder;
4. Schizophrenia;
5. Eating Disorders, such as Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa.

Our **mental health** is based on physical, social, and mental factors; they all contribute to the state of our mental health. It's important to note that someone can have a mental illness, but have excellent mental health! Likewise, someone may not have a mental illness, but have poor mental health.

Intermittent or situational **stress** is not a mental illness, but it certainly is not conducive towards good mental health.

A Challenge for Leaders

Much of the time supervisors and co-workers are not aware a performance problem stems from a mental health concern. This is the product of social stigma, which means that supervisors and other staff aren't aware of the signs of mental illnesses, and the person experiencing a difficulty isn't prepared to discuss their concerns with a supervisor.

- ▶ Only **36%** of employees would discuss a mental health concern with a manager.

As a result, mental health concerns often go unrecognized and unaddressed until much later. This means that things don't get better. Issues can be easily addressed through a minor change in routine, or the work environment. Ignoring them can make things worse.

- ▶ Employee well being is a responsibility of **Leadership**.

Proper leadership practices can make employees more comfortable with disclosing mental health related difficulties. Maintaining a workplace culture built on trust, honesty, and fairness creates an environment conducive to good mental health, and enables staff to flag concerns with management.



The Reality

The complex nature of mental health, mental health concerns, and mental illnesses leaves many workplaces struggling to address the problem. Sometimes, workplaces will simply refuse to address concerns entirely. We can't escape the problem though, because -

- ▶ **1 in 5** Canadians will experience a mental health problem each year.

This means that you know someone who has, or is currently, affected by a mental illness.

- ▶ **1 in 3** will experience a mental health concern in their lifetime.

Every week, 500,000 Canadians will miss work due to a mental health concern. The costs to both business and society are also enormous. 30% of all disability claims are related to mental health.

- ▶ **\$51 Billion dollars** are annually lost from the Canadian Economy due to mental illnesses.

Problematic Substance Use and Addictions

Addiction is a complex process, with multiple factors contributing to the problematic use of substances (alcohol, drugs, solvents). There is a difference between **substance misuse** and **addictions**.

Substance misuse is defined as the harmful use of substances for non-medical purposes, with the potential to lead to addictions — such as Binge Drinking.

Addiction is a condition that leads to a compulsive engagement with a stimuli, despite the negative consequences experienced. Addictions can be substance related, such as opioid addiction or alcohol addiction, as well as process related — such as problem gambling.

To understand and describe addictions, CMHA Ontario recommends using the 4 C's:

1. **Craving**

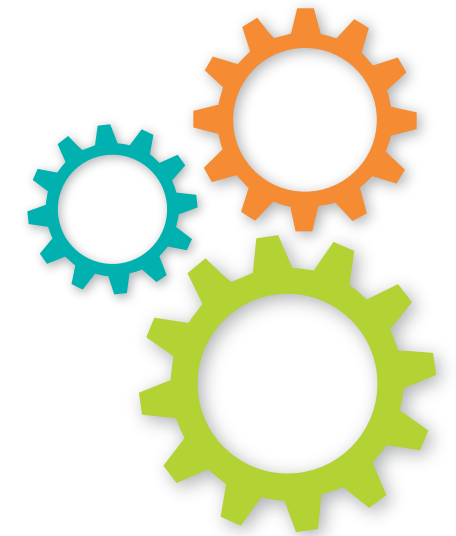
2. **Loss of control of amount or frequency of use**

3. **Compulsion to use**

4. **Continued substance use despite concerns**

Addiction is a Canada-wide problem. It is estimated that 21% of the Canadian population will meet the criteria for addiction in their lifetimes. In Ontario, it is estimated that 10% of the population have a substance misuse issue.

A misconception exists that a one-time user of a substance is likely to get 'hooked'. This is not the case. Addictions are a product of the effect the drug or process has on the brain, a person's lived experiences, mental health, and social factors.



What is Good Mental Health?

Mental health is an integral part of overall health. It is more than the absence of mental illness. As stated before, someone can have good mental health despite being diagnosed with a mental illness. Also, just because someone has good mental health does not mean that they are immune from mental illness.

Remember, mental health is one component of health. There are three components that comprise good health:

1. **Mental Health;**
2. **Social Health;**
3. **Physical Health.**

This means that while someone has good mental health in a particular moment, a poor social environment and declining physical health leaves them less protected against the development of a mental health concern or mental illness. Likewise, individuals with a mental illness often find they suffer from physical ailments and a reduction in their social engagement. The three are connected.

The workplace impacts these three areas on a daily basis. Chronic workplace stress for example, whether due to physical demands (high-tempo work, such as construction) and social ones (harassment and bullying) may contribute to the development of a mental health problem.

Building **awareness** of all the factors previously discussed is the first step towards ensuring the workplace can be conducive towards good mental health.

The National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety

The National Standard was developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada in order to provide workplaces with a systematic approach to creating a psychologically healthy workplace. The framework found in the standard includes four tasks that organizations can take:

1. **Identify and eliminate hazards in the workplace that pose a risk to psychological health;**
2. **Assess and control of the risks associated with hazards that cannot be eliminated;**
3. **Implement structures and practices which promote good mental health and psychological safety; and**
4. **Foster a culture which endeavours to sustain good mental health and psychological safety.**

Part of the Standard includes 13 Psychosocial Factors which workplaces can address. This not only increases participation, but also improves efficiencies and the 'bottom-line' for organizations.

In the following pages you will find a brief description of each factor. As you read, think about how are they are present (or not present!) in your place of work. What should you continue to do? What should you endeavour to change?

If you are interested in implementing the Standard, and are not sure where to start, visit:

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/implementing-standard>.

13 Psychosocial Factors

The 13 Psychosocial Factors are found in the National Standard developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. 12 of the Factors are adapted from **GuardingMinds@Work** with the 13th factor, Physical Safety, being added during the development of the Standard. The 13 Factors are:

1. Organizational Culture

A mix of norms, beliefs, and expectations that group members hold in common. A good culture is built on trust, honesty, and fairness.

2. Psychological and Social Support

This comprises all social interactions at work that are supportive. When workers feel supported at work, they believe that the organization values their contribution.

3. Clear Leadership and Expectations

This means that the organization clearly communicates expectations to workers, and supervisors work to inspire their workers.

4. Civility and Respect

is based on showing esteem and consideration for others; adopting a value of care for people who interact within the work environment — including the public!

5. Psychological Demands

dictate how an organization implements protective processes for an activity that might be harmful to a worker's health. When a hazard is identified the organization seeks to minimize it.

6. Growth and Development

Presents itself in an environment that sees workers receiving encouragement and support. These workplaces provide opportunities for workers to increase their competencies, and pursue interests.

7. Recognition and Reward

A mentally healthy workplace recognizes the efforts of its employees, and rewards both success and effort.

8. Involvement and Influence

This is present when workers are included in the discussion about how their work is done; workers are able to inform upon changes in the work environment.

9. Workload Management

This is present when assigned tasks can be accomplished in the time allotted — impossible goals are not set. In addition, workers are given the necessary resources.

10. Engagement

Is present in an environment where the worker feels connected to, and enjoys, their work. There is motivation to do the job, and they view work as an energizing experience.

11. Balance

Means that there is acceptance of a need for harmony between home and the office or work environment. Management encourages employees to take time for other interests and families.

12. Psychological Protection

Is present in a workplace where the worker's psychological safety is ensured. This workplace promotes emotional wellbeing, and stress management, while mitigating risk.

13. Protection of Physical Safety

Is the care taken by employers to protect the physical health and safety of their employees. It means recognizing the risks in the environment, and mitigating or eliminating them.

The Accessible Employment Standard

In Ontario, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* sets an accessible employment standard which requires organizations with one or more employees in Ontario to make their employment practices accessible for all Ontarians. Requirements depend upon the size of the Organization:

1. Organizations with 50+ employees; and
2. Organizations with 1-49 Employees.

Organizations with 1-49 employees must complete the first 4 requirements of the Accessible Employment Standard, whereas larger organizations must complete all 6:

1. Hiring

Notify employees and the public that you will accommodate the needs of people with disabilities in your hiring process.

2. Workplace Information

You must provide information in an accessible format if an employee requests it.

3. Talent and Performance Management

You must consider the needs of employees with disabilities when you hold a formal performance review or promote them or move them to a new job.

4. Communicate Accessibility Policies

You must tell your employees about your policies to support people with disabilities using whatever means are available, such as newsletters, emails, memos, and meetings.

5. Accommodation Plans

You must develop and write a process for creating plans for accommodating disabilities in your workplace. We will discuss this in further detail later in the Guide.

6. Return-to-Work Process

You must develop and write a process to support employees who are absent from work due to disabilities and might require accommodation upon their return.



Responding Skills



First Steps in Responding to a Mental Health Concern

One of the first steps to **respond** to a mental health concern is to **listen for understanding**. Listening for understanding is the practice of participating in a conversation for the purpose of gaining understanding of the perspective of the other person. Many of us already do this naturally. For those who are new to this, or for those wishing to improve, here are some helpful tips to start the conversation.

Show Interest

Throughout the conversation consider adopting a 'mirroring' technique to signal to the speaker that you are listening. Relax your posture (arms uncrossed, face the speaker) and offer some short verbal affirmations that you are still engaged with what they have to say. Another important step, especially when discussing mental health, is to ensure you are not distracted. This means putting the phone on mute and in your pocket!

Demonstrate Their Value

Before you begin the conversation, think about what you value in this employee. Your people are your most valuable resource, this should ground any conversation. Use concrete examples of work they have done that is valued in order to boost self-esteem. Be honest, and reaffirm their worth.

Ask One Question at a Time

Mental health concerns are invariably complex phenomena. Due to this fact, we often ask many questions of the person at once in order to get a better understanding. This, however, can confuse the speaker and lead to misunderstandings. Focus on one question at a time and let the employee dictate the tempo of the conversation.

Pause

As a leader in your workplace, you are used to being active; taking charge of the situation. This, however, can mean that you don't allow time for the employee to think about your question. Remember to let pauses in conversation occur — often this enables the employee to think about what they want to say and better articulate their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

Don't Interrupt

Interrupting someone who is talking about sensitive personal issues, even when your intent is to offer support, can delegitimize their feelings. This also steers the conversation in your direction, which defeats the purpose of being an active listener!

Listening for the Employee's Interests

While we are listening, one way to stay engaged is by listening for the employee's interests. This means that you are actively seeking out what is important to the employee. From what the employee is saying, what do you figure the employee values, believes, and endeavours for?

Seek Out Clarification

At some point, you will begin to get a better picture of what the employee is going through. Once this occurs, seek clarification in order to affirm that you understand where they are coming from and what they are experiencing. It's ok if you need to talk longer, often times you won't retain all the information being provided.

Talking to Your Employee - Mental Health Concerns

You may be wondering about how to approach an employee whose behaviour is indicative of a mental illness. Discussions with employees should focus on performance issues. This is in order to ensure you are not straying into an area where you may abrogate your employee's human rights. While the conversation may lead to the individual disclosing a mental health concern, this should be considered a secondary effect of the conversation being about their performance/behaviour. Always ensure you keep the discussion confidential, and reaffirm your organization's commitment to accommodating a mental health disability.

Remember to:

- Approach your concern as a workplace performance issue
- Inform the employee of the possibility of accommodations
- Provide access to an EAP or EFAP, or refer them to community services
- Set a time to meet again to review their performance
- Document the meeting in an objective fashion, without commentary

Do not:

- Probe or attempt at a diagnosis — you are not a clinician!
- Don't provide a pep talk or tell them to 'get over it'
- Don't accuse the person of faking it, or malingering
- Don't bring in personal anecdotes — while many of us have an experience of mental illnesses, don't assume your experience mirrors theirs
- If they disclose a diagnosis, don't focus on that. Focus on solutions for symptoms that impact their work

If after your meeting you are convinced your employee might be suffering from a mental health concern remember that you can mention you are willing to talk about any accommodation solutions they might need. If the employee decides to disclose, be supportive but don't attempt to solve the health concern — focus on what you can change, which is the work environment.

Talking to Your Employee - Substance Use and Misuse

If you are concerned that an employee might have a substance use concern, or is misusing substances on the job, there are some important steps that you can take in order to ensure their safety and wellbeing. It is important to treat problematic substance use as a health concern, because it is. Adopting a similar approach to how you would discuss a mental health concern will set you on the right path.

Some things to remember:

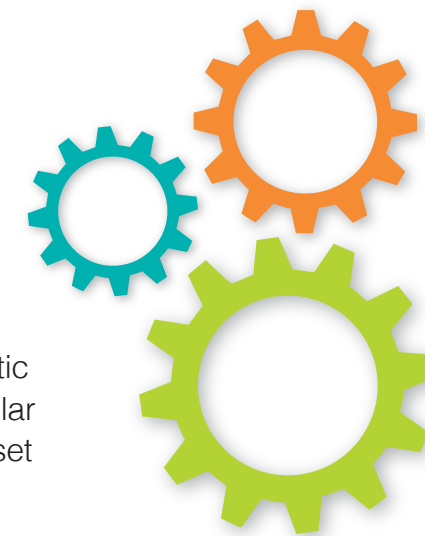
- Approach any conversation without judgement
- Often, problematic substance use is accompanied with a mental health concern — they occur together
- Ensure your safety and the safety of the employee. If there is a concern do not hesitate to contact emergency services
- If the employee is under the influence, do not have a conversation with them in which decisions needs to be made at that moment
- If an employee discloses problematic substance use, treat it as you would a disclosure of a mental illness. Your first step should be accommodation

Substance use in the workplace is both a health concern and a performance issue. Ensuring that you are not judgemental does not mean that you have to tolerate unacceptable behaviour or performance.

For information on how to implement a safety policy, specifically in relation to overdose, we encourage you to access the **Reducing Harms: Recognizing and Responding to Opioid Overdoses in Your Organization** Toolkit developed by CMHA Ontario.

It can be found at:

<http://ontario.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CMHA-Ontario-Reducing-Harms-Nov-20-2017.pdf>



Questions to Ask Yourself Before Responding to an Employee

Consider your own needs

1. Do I have the time to do this properly or am I pressuring myself to rush through it?
2. Am I responding to hearsay or speaking about known facts?
3. Am I in the right frame of mind to do this, or should I reschedule?
4. Am I considering my role in this, or believing that I have no need to improve?

Approach issues with a solution-based focus

5. Am I looking for solutions or just rehashing the problem?
6. Am I looking for bringing about new behaviour or focusing on old behaviour?
7. Am I looking to champion long term solutions or short term results?

Explore possible effect on the employee and co-workers

8. Am I seeing the bigger picture or just this particular solution?
9. Does the solution provide energy or deplete it for the employee?
10. Can I preserve the dignity of those involved or will someone be shamed?
11. Am I looking to encourage the employee to engage in their own success, or am I micromanaging?
12. Have I adequately addressed the fears and stigma of others, or am I ignoring them?

Work together

13. Can the employee and I develop a shared plan of action, or are we at an impasse?
14. Am I helping my employee be successful at work or am I focused only on their personality?
15. Will I monitor and follow-up, or do I think one conversation will solve everything?





Collaborating



What is Collaborating?

Collaboration is the final step used by the Mental Health Works™ program. It's about taking the more complete picture you've gathered in **Building Awareness**, along with the strategies you've acquired in **Responding Skills**, and putting them into action.

This is all about **'meeting the person where they are'**; rather than imposing a solution (being prescriptive) you are gaining buy-in through working with that person to develop a solution that is organic to their needs and the workplace. This isn't about solving a mental health concern, but the work you do here can aid in recovery or complement a treatment plan.

You are not starting the conversation with a message that equates to "fix this, or else". Instead, in order to ensure buy-in you allow the employee to dictate how the conversation around accommodations kicks-off.

At Mental Health Works™ we call this **Collaborative Accommodation**.

You may remember that we touched on the Accessible Employment Standard for Ontario in the **Building Awareness** section. Now, let's take a look at the six key requirements and how you as an organization can **collaborate** to make the workplace more accessible for persons with a mental health concern, illness, or disability.

Hiring

Under the AODA, all organizations across Ontario with one or more employees are required to notify employees and the public that their organization will accommodate the needs of those with a disability in the hiring process.

What this looks like in practice can vary greatly. While some may not request an accommodation during an interview, others may require more prep-time for examinations, to read questions ahead of time, or to only be interviewed by one person.

A good first step in accommodating someone who has disclosed is to ask what they would like to request in terms of an accommodation. Remember, they are not obligated to tell you the nature of their disability — only that they require accommodation.

Accommodations are meant to address a symptom or process of a disability, ensuring equity in the hiring process. On the following pages, you will find some common accommodations that may be used in the hiring process, along with a sample notice for placement in job fact sheets.

Common Accommodations in Hiring

If the challenge for the individual is stamina:

- Provide a break during a longer interview;
- If interviews occur during certain times, ask if they would like them earlier or later;
- If the hiring process is multiple parts, consider holding over two days.

If the challenge for the individual is concentration:

- Pick a quiet room for the interview;
- Choose somewhere with natural light;
- Provide written questions;
- Allow more time for the interview.

If the challenge for the individual is anxiety:

- Have only one interviewer present;
- If possible, provide questions in advance;
- Provide the candidate with a written agenda for the day;
- Consider videoconferencing or phone interviews;
- Allow a support person to be present;
- Choose a place that can accommodate a service animal.

If the challenge for the individual is outbursts or compulsions:

- Ensure the interviewer is aware that these may occur;
- Choose a space away from other workers to put the candidate at ease;
- Ask ahead of time if they have certain triggers (i.e. door handles or scents).

Sample Hiring Notices

1. We welcome and encourage applications from all individuals with relevant experience, people with disabilities, including people with lived experience of mental health and addictions issues and family members. Accommodations are available on request for candidates taking part in all aspects of the selection process.

2. We welcome and encourage applications from people with disabilities. Accommodations are available on request for candidates taking part in all aspects of the selection process.

Note: Be sure to let the person know, if selected, that you are able to provide accommodations. We recommend this because reading it is one thing, but having a representative of the organization verbally give that guarantee is more likely to put the person at ease.

Note: Notice that the first statement makes overt reference to mental health and addictions. This can be helpful, as it lets the applicant know that you view mental health and addictions concerns just as you would a physical health concern or disability. It 'meets them where they are'.

Workplace Information

The second requirement for all organizations in Ontario is to provide workplace information in an accessible format. This includes four key types of information:

1. Any emergency or public safety information;

This includes information about fire-escape procedures, maps, and information about alarms. If someone were to express anxiety about using a fire-escape due to a phobia, offer to go over it with them in verbal form.

2. Feedback processes for the public and staff;

If your organization solicits feedback from employees or the public, consider allowing multiple forms to be used. Verbal, written, email, and telephone may help to alleviate anxiety dependent on the situation.

3. Any information an employee needs to do their job including general organizational information;

Information that an employee requires, or that any other employee has access to, must be accessible. This includes job information, newsletters, notices, emergency information, and meeting minutes. For example, if a team huddle is a regular occurrence for the passage of information, some employees may not be able to participate due to a disability. This information must then be relayed to them, in writing or in person.

4. Public information.

Includes information the public uses in their interactions with your organization.

Talent and Performance Management

Talent and performance management processes are the third requirement under the Accessible Employment Standard. If your organization has formal or informal performance management processes or policies, you must take into account persons with a disability by making them accessible.

Organizations use performance reviews, and talent management processes, to ensure employees are meeting the requirements of the job. Often, an interview and a written appraisal are used. This can present barriers for an employee who is experiencing a mental health or addictions concern — especially if they are worried it has affected their performance.

Meeting the person where they are means that you as a manager or leader take into account their mental health concerns while conducting the performance management process. It also means that you structure their appraisal in such a way that it takes into account any accommodations the employee may have due to mental illnesses or a substance use disorder.

If you only provide oral feedback, consider if the person has problems with memory or attention. A reasonable request may be for you to alter your delivery to paper format. Another solution may be to ask if the employee would like to record the meeting, so they may refer to it later.

If an employee has difficulties with anxiety, and finds these types of conversations stressful, an appropriate accommodation may be to offer comments and appraisal in writing, without a meeting. Solicit feedback from them via email or the phone.

Remember to **collaborate** on any accommodation during this process. Ask them what would benefit their experience.



Communicate Accessibility Policies

The fourth requirement under the Accessible Employment Standard, and the final one for organizations with 1-49 employees, is to communicate accessibility policies. There are three instances where you must communicate policy to an employee:

1. When they are first hired, during the onboarding process;
2. If a policy changes; and
3. If they request the information.

In order to do this you can use a variety of tools to get the word out. Emails, bulletin boards, newsletters, and via letter are all viable options. The reason you must communicate this in a 'push' fashion (as opposed to 'pull', wherein an employee asks) is because the very act of requesting an accommodation can be stigmatizing.

In being proactive about communicating your organization's policies, you are helping to eradicate the stigma around mental illnesses and addictions.

Accommodation Plans

The fifth requirement of the Accessible Employment Standard only applies to organizations in Ontario that have 50 or more employees. While those organizations are required to document a process for developing plans, Mental Health Works™ encourages all organizations to develop them. This isn't only the right thing to do, its also good business!

There are four steps to developing an accommodation plan:

1. Recognize the need:

Can be initiated by the employee, or upon a need being noticed by a manager.

2. Gather relevant information and assess individual needs:

In this step you collect information on the employee's functional abilities, not the disability. For example, an employee does not have to disclose they have Major Depressive Disorder but perhaps their disability precludes them from coming in before 10:00 a.m. Also during this process, you and the employee will work together to find the best solution. Sometimes, this will involve a medical professional providing the employee with a note listing limitations. If your organization requires this, then you must assume the costs of producing the note.

3. Write an individual accommodation plan:

During this step you detail the limitations and the corresponding accommodations in a written form. Included in the write-up should be:

- 1) accommodations provided;
- 2) how to make information accessible to the employee;
- 3) emergency information for the employee — such as contacts; and
- 4) when the plan will be reviewed.

4. Implement and monitor the plan:

After implementing the plan, it is important to regularly check-in with your employee. Mental illnesses can change over time, and sometimes accommodations need to be updated to account for this. Remember, recovery or remission is likely and can be expected given the requisite time and care by professionals!

Sources:

"What Accommodations Work on the Job?" Centre for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Boston University. Retrieved August 8, 2005, from www.bu.edu/cpr/reasaccom/employ-accom.html.

Accommodation List

There is no comprehensive list of accommodations for people who are dealing with mental health issues. In some instances a small employer will be unable to provide the same type of accommodation as a larger employer. In most cases accommodations are inexpensive and involve workplace flexibility rather than capital expenditures.

Common accommodations for people with mental health problems include:

Flexible Scheduling:

- Flexibility in the start or end of working hours to accommodate effects of medication or for medical appointments.
- Part-time shifts (which may be used to return a worker to a full-time position).
- More frequent breaks.

Changes in Supervision:

- Modifying the way instructions and feedback are given. For example, written instructions may help an employee focus on tasks.
- Having weekly meetings between the supervisor and employee may help to deal with problems before they become serious.

Changes in Training:

- Allow extra time to learn tasks.
- Allow the person to attend individualized training courses.

Modifying job duties:

- Exchange minor tasks with other employees.

Using Technology:

- Allowing the person to use a lamp instead of fluorescent lights to eliminate a flicker which may be irritating or cause a reaction.
- Providing the employee with a tape recorder to tape instructions from a supervisor, training programs and meetings if they have difficulty with memory.
- Allowing an employee to use head phones to protect them from loud noises.

Modifying Workspace or Changing Location:

- Allowing an employee to relocate to a quieter area where they will be free from distractions.
- Allowing an employee to work from home.

Job Coach Assistance in Hiring and On-the-Job:

- A job coach may be someone from an outside agency that assists the employee in the workplace. Alternately, someone within the workplace, such as a peer or human resources staff person might perform this role.
- The job coach can help in a number of ways such as assisting the person to fill out applications, helping them to reduce their anxiety by providing feedback, observing their work and making suggestions about accommodation.

More than anyone else, your employee will know what accommodation they need to allow them to work productively. By talking directly with the employee, you will be able to come up with solutions that meet the needs of the individual as well as the organization.

Note: You can find a sample accommodation process document, and a sample plan, at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-workplaces>

Office of Disability Employment Policy, US Department of Labor. "Work-site accommodation ideas for people with psychiatric disabilities." Job Accommodation Network. Retrieved January 20, 2003, from www.jan.wvu.edu/media/Psychiatric.html

Return to Work Process

The sixth, and final, requirement for organizations with 50 or more employees is to develop a return to work process. Similar to accommodations, return to work has four steps:

1. Initiate the leave and stay in contact with the employee:

If an employee needs to take a disability leave, they will inform their supervisor. The employee and manager will maintain regular contact, with the employee's consent, to facilitate the return to work process.

2. Gather relevant information and assess individual needs:

In this step, the employee and your organization will work together to share information and find the most appropriate accommodation.

The manager should:

- 1) provide return to work information;
- 2) maintain regular contact;
- 3) ensure work is safe for employee to return;
- 4) assist in identifying accommodations; and
- 5) assist in analyzing the demands of the job.

The employee during this stage should:

- 1) follow medical treatment as prescribed;
- 2) provide up-dates on progress, include information about functional ability; and
- 3) provide the healthcare provider with return to work information.

3. Develop a return to work plan:

In this step you develop an individualized plan for the employee to return to work. Include any accommodations they may need, as well as the time line for reassessment.

4. Implement and monitor the plan:

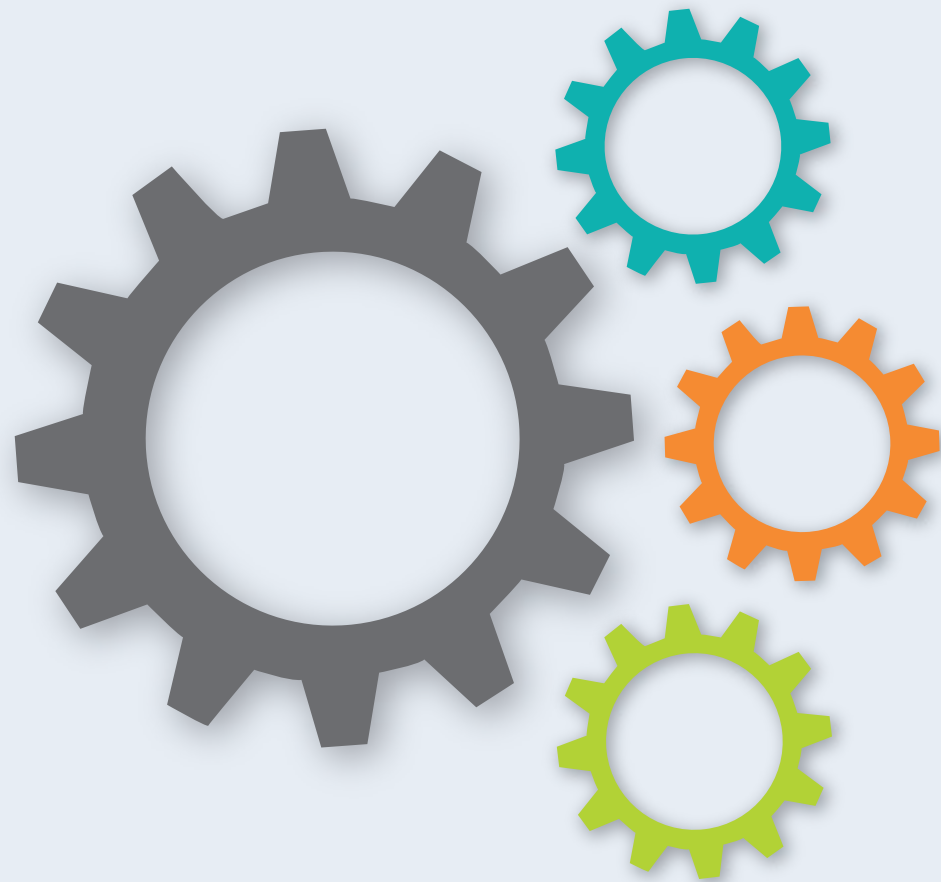
You must implement the plan as it is written and regularly refer to it in order to ensure it is effective. If an accommodation is no longer appropriate, section 2 should be updated.

Note: You can find a sample return to work process document, and a sample plan, at:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-workplaces>



Putting it all Together



A Sample Return to Work Plan

Return to Work Summary for Gerri Smith

RTW Discussion Meeting: 27 May 2017

Present at Meeting:

Gerri Smith (Employee)

John Bloggins (Health Services)

Jack Smyth (Chief Production Engineer)

Linda Veitch (HR Manager)

A meeting was conducted on the 27th of May, 2017 in order to discuss plans for Gerri's return-to-work at ACME Roadrunner Productions.

It was confirmed that Gerri will be returning to her role as a quality control specialist in Anvil development.

However, it has been determined that they will shift from being the evening specialist on duty, to assuming a daytime shift. This was deemed to be a positive change by the employee due to the nature of their disability and the challenges associated with nightshift work.

Jack explained that a new product is currently in development since Gerri left, and there have been a number of systems changes to the assembly process.

Jack also explained that while Gerri will be missed by their team on the evening shift, new hires have enabled this change in shift to occur. In addition, the teams are all currently undergoing retraining on the systems changes, so Gerri will not require retraining separate from the team.

Gerri confirmed that their biggest challenge in returning to work will be with memory and stamina.

In order to address the employee's challenges in this regard, John suggested that Gerri avoid time-sensitive tasks during the initial stages of return to work. It is also suggested that a peer-coach be provided to Gerri so as to have a go-to person available during work hours who can clarify or take the time to aid in retraining on our assembly processes.

It was agreed that Gerri will be allowed more time to complete tasks initially, gradually working towards meeting the productivity standard within 6 months. They will also be given a flexible break schedule to accommodate issues with stamina while on the job.

John reminded Gerri of the support services available to staff in the health services area of the complex, and encouraged them to access the EFAP should any minor issues arise. Noting the lack of natural light in Gerri's current office, John recommended that Gerri consider allowing the Company to install a UV-Light lamp in their workspace.

Jack confirmed that there are no vacation allowances during a gradual return-to-work schedule, but that Gerri would continue to accrue vacation days which can be used after the process is complete. The return-to-work will begin on June 11th, 2018 and continue into July. The schedule is as follows:

11 June: M, W, F (3 Full Days)

18 June: M, W, F (3 Full Days)

25 June: M, T, Th, F (2 Full days, 2 Half Days)

2 July: M, T, Th, F (4 Full Days)

9 July: Full time

Gerri and Jack have both committed to holding weekly performance and wellness check-ins together. Should the schedule or accommodations require amendment this will be placed into writing and submitted to HR. Jack will advise the team that Gerri is to return to the Organization on 11 June, and Gerri has given their permission to let staff know that Gerri will be on a gradual RTW schedule due to a medical concern.

Linda Veitch

Human Resources Manager

ACME Roadrunner Productions

How to Engage with an Employee who is Struggling with Substance-Use

Some key considerations:

1. Focus on the employee's performance objectives, and not on their personality or the characteristics of their substance-use concern when conducting performance reviews.
2. Understand that the issue is not about you, or the employee's respect for you. The employee has a medical concern, and you are addressing performance.
3. Stay calm, and resist lecturing or becoming defensive. Stay within your 'lanes', and speak to workplace concerns.
4. Avoid derogatory terms. These might be 'stoner', 'junkie', 'alkie', 'lush'.

You can utilize a four-step process to working with an employee who has a substance-use concern or addiction.



1. NOTICE

Pay attention to changes in behaviour, or to cues that may indicate inebriation in the workplace.



2. DISCUSS

That first conversation can be anxiety provoking. It is not easy to have. The best strategy to adopt is to remain neutral, non-judgemental, and not imply that THIS conversation is about substance-use. You are talking because there is a performance issue or safety issue.



3. LISTEN

It is important for managers to listen and understand the employees' perspective before engaging in problem-solving. Listening can be a difficult part for traditional managers who are trained and rewarded for problem-solving and quick decision making.



4. ACT

Managers should let the employees know about the support that is available through the organization or local community. Never treat addiction or mental illness as a dirty secret, treat the issue with respect like any other health issue.

Beginning to Think About Accommodations: Managers

What are some strategies or considerations that you should have as a manager?

1. Strive to create an atmosphere in which employees are comfortable discussing the issues that prevent them from being productive at work. This can include information about the organization's accommodation policy and procedures for keeping personal information confidential.
2. Assume that the request for accommodation is being made in good faith. Most people would not lie about the need. Begin the process while waiting for confirmation from a professional.
3. COLLABORATE with the employee on solutions. They need to be a part of this process.
4. Maintain a record of all requests, and the steps you have taken to address them.
5. Respond to any request as soon as possible. Failure to do this could lead to legal liability.
6. Require employees to provide that information which is reasonably required to execute a request for accommodation. Don't make people jump through hoops.
7. Respond to requests even when the word 'accommodation' is not used. Not everyone understand how to navigate the system as well as you.
8. You must pay any costs associated with workplace accommodation, such as physician notes, or assessments.
9. Ensure all team leaders are aware of their obligation to prevent an employee from being harassed due to a mental illness or addiction.
10. Continue to utilize a progressive performance appraisal system, which will be able to indicate if an accommodation is working!

Beginning to Think About Accommodations: Employees

What are some steps that you should take as an employee?

1. Tell your employer that you require an accommodation due to a disability or medical issue. To the greatest extent possible, tell them what you require; speaking with a doctor to get ideas is a great first step. Remember, you do not need to tell your employer what your diagnosis is, and nor should your doctor disclose that information.
2. If it is requested, you will be required to provide supporting information. This comes from a healthcare provider or mental health professional. Within this documentation should be a list of functional limitations or impairments that require accommodation.
3. Work with the employer (and Union, if Unionized) to develop an applicable plan. This might include working with experts who come in to assess your work environment in order to find solutions.
4. Remember, you must continue to meet all relevant job requirements and standards once the accommodation is in place.
5. Engage in regular reviews to determine if the accommodation is still needed, or still effective.
6. Advise your employer if the accommodation is no longer required due to recovery or a change in condition.
7. Before starting a new position, or when transitioning to a new space within the workplace, speak with your care providers to determine if changes need to be made to your accommodations.
8. Remember, sick days can be used for mental health as well. If you are having a particularly bad day, take care of yourself.
9. If safety is a concern, tell your employer who your emergency contacts are and inform those contacts that work has their information.
10. Seek out help if you are struggling or think something might be wrong. Mental health is everyone's business.

Stress Reduction in the Workplace

One of the most common concerns facing modern workplaces is chronic stress. A great tool, that can be used by everyone, is the 'BIG 4'. Managers, especially, need to ensure they take the time to practice good mental health; this helps you to help others.

The Big 4 has its roots in sports psychology, but was adapted by the Naval Special Warfare Center in the United States. In Canada, it is used by the Department of National Defence as part of its Road to Mental Readiness program. This technique should be used after a stressful event, during periods of high stress, and should also be practiced to hone efficiency.

1 Goal Setting (SMART)

Utilize the SMART goal setting technique in order to help motivate as well as provide direction. This helps your prefrontal cortex control the Amygdala, which is responsible for activation of the fight or flight response. Goals should be: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

2 Mental Rehearsal

Use this to rehearse situations, courses of action, and prepare for challenges you may encounter. Don't catastrophize while doing this, but instead think about solutions; be positive. This can be done entirely in one's mind, or can be done through the use of aids, such as a mind-map.

3 Positive Self-Talk

Events don't cause emotion, a perception of an event does. How we quantify if something is 'good' or 'bad' is dependent upon an internal dialogue. As you work through your stress, begin to speak positively about experiences or the effects of particular events. When working through your mental rehearsals, or dealing with a failure, talk OUT LOUD (if necessary) and positively about your skills, and successes. Challenge those negative thoughts we all have.

4 Arousal Control

Practice deep breathing, which means activating your diaphragm in order to fill the entirety of your lungs with oxygen. Shallow breathing results in higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which in turn can cause anxiety. Try searching 'deep breathing' on a video streaming sight, or download an app.





For more information, please visit:
www.ontario.cmha.ca