

Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

PHSA-wide policies are instrumental in creating an equitable, diverse, and inclusive organization, and PHSA is steadfast in pursuing mechanisms to provide greater opportunities, awareness, and better outcomes for people who are systemically vulnerable. This will help create policies that decrease inequities and reflect the experiences of diverse people to address systemic discrimination and racism, eliminate barriers, and provide an inclusive environment that is fair, just, and respectful.

For further details about the application of this policy, please see the Psychological Health and Safety Program Handbook that accompanies this document.

1. Introduction

As an employer of clinical and non-clinical healthcare [Staff](#), PHSA recognizes that the [Psychological Health and Safety](#) of its workforce is not only beneficial for Staff, it directly affects its mission and mandate of providing high quality, province-wide, public health and health care programs and services. Although the risk of [Psychological Injury](#) varies by job duty and discipline, all Staff have a shared responsibility to create a culture and work environment that is conducive to [Psychological Health](#) and [Psychological Safety](#). A [Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplace](#) is one where the psychological well-being of Staff is promoted and protected through the creation of healthy workplaces, the prevention of mitigable psychological harms, and the provision of support for those with a Psychological Injury or [Mental Illness](#).

To prioritize and maintain a continued focus on Psychological Health and Safety throughout PHSA's diverse [Workplaces](#), PHSA has signed the *Declaration of Commitment to Psychological Health and Safety in Healthcare*. This declaration includes a commitment to cultivate a workplace culture that recognizes Staff needs, including their Psychological Health and Safety. To meet this commitment, PHSA is using the [National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace \(National Standard\)](#) as a guide. Integral to the standard are the [Psychosocial Factors](#) that highlight aspects of the workplace that can be influenced at the individual and organizational level and align with the related Accreditation Canada Standards for Leadership. The Psychosocial Factors are as follows: psychological support, organizational culture, clear leadership and expectations, civility and respect, psychological competencies and requirements, growth and development, recognition and reward, involvement and influence, workload management, engagement, balance, psychological protection, and protection of physical safety. Two additional factors have been identified for healthcare organizations: protection from moral distress, and support for psychological self-care. Additionally, two specific factors have also been identified in the Standard developed for paramedic service organizations: other chronic stressors as identified by Staff, and cumulative exposure to critical or stressful events.

PHSA respects the values, culture and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. PHSA has signed the [Declaration of Commitment on Cultural Safety and Humility in Health Services](#), and is mandated

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to implement the actions iterated in the [B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) and the [Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada \(TRC\)](#). These documents affirm the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination and meaningful decision-making. Within a health care context, this means exercising the inherent right to quality health care while challenging the Systemic Racism that is embedded within health care systems. PHSA recognizes that all structures within health care systems participate in ongoing Systemic Racism. PHSA is committed to the application of [Indigenous Cultural Safety](#) to all policies and processes to address and decrease health inequities for Indigenous Peoples. [Wise Practices](#), the inclusion of diverse Indigenous knowledge and health practices that contribute to sustainable and equitable conditions, are given equal space and weight with [Best Practices](#), a Western evidence-based approach to care reflecting current medical and therapeutic perspectives on standards or points of view.

1.1.Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Outline PHSA's commitment to Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace;
- Provide the guiding principles and focused efforts for PHSA to create Workplaces that are Psychologically Healthy and Safe;
- Describe the requirements of a [Psychological Health and Safety Management System \(PHSMS\)](#) in accordance with the National Standard; and
- Identify the scope of responsibilities and compliance required for adherence to this Policy.

1.2.Scope

The Policy applies across all PHSA programs and services to all Staff, which includes all unionized and non-contract employees (including management and leadership), medical staff members (including physicians, midwives and dentists), nurse practitioners, residents, fellows and trainees, health care professionals, students, volunteers, [Contractors](#), researchers and other service providers engaged by PHSA.

2. Policy

2.1 Guiding Principles

The following principles shall guide PHSA's efforts to create and enhance Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace:

- The organization promotes the Psychological Health and Safety of Staff through fostering conditions that promote the delivery of high quality health care services by a healthy and sustainable workforce;
- Organizational decision making considers potential impacts to Psychological Health and Safety and incorporates mitigation strategies;

- Input from a cross-section of Staff, including [Worker Representatives](#), is needed to monitor and improve systems, processes, and programs that affect Psychological Health and Safety;
- Continual improvement and assessment of efforts is necessary;
- Initiatives are guided by Best Practices, Wise Practices, and [Trauma-Informed Practices \(TIP\)](#);
- Actions are in alignment with principles that foster a [Just Culture](#), [Cultural Safety](#), Indigenous Cultural Safety, and [Cultural Humility](#); and
- Individuals are responsible for their own behavior.

2.2 Focal Areas

PHSA shall focus on the:

- Promotion of Psychological Health and Safety;
- Prevention of psychological harm; and
- Response to Psychological Safety incidents and concerns.

2.3 Psychological Health and Safety Management System (PHSMS)

PHSA shall advance a PHSMS that:

- Is aligned with PHSA's organizational values and ethics, and respects the principles of mutual respect, confidentiality, and cooperation;
- Is communicated to Staff, maintained, and continually improved;
- Is consistent with integration into existing and future organizational policies and processes, including occupational health and safety, across the organizational structure;
- Includes incident and reporting mechanisms that are communicated to all Staff;
- Ensures a cross-section of diverse Staff, including Worker Representatives are involved in the development, implementation, and continual improvement of the PHSMS; and
- Establishes and implements processes to evaluate the effectiveness of the PHSMS and implement changes.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Staff

All Staff shall:

- Take reasonable care to protect their own and other's Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace;
- Model the behaviours and actions that are consistent with the guiding principles of a Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplace and align with the [Fostering a Culture of Respect Policy](#), such as respect, inclusiveness, open communication, and non-judgmental behaviour;

- Report psychological injuries using the process outlined in [PHSA's Worker Injury and Incident Reporting Program](#); and
- Report anti-Indigenous racism, racism, disrespectful behaviour, discrimination, bullying, or harassment that occurs in the Workplace using the process outlined in the [Reporting process in progress].

3.2 Supervisors and Managers

Individuals in [Supervisory](#) or [Managerial](#) roles shall adhere to the Staff responsibilities above, and:

- Ensure Staff are provided with appropriate [Psychosocial](#) support resources and information;
- Ensure Staff are provided with information on processes for reporting psychological risks and incidents;
- Follow related processes and procedures for accommodation where a Mental Illness or Psychological Injury is identified;
- Follow procedures and protocols to support Staff as per site-specific Critical Incident Stress Management programs or services when a critical incident occurs;
- Respond to psychological health and safety incidents by conducting investigations, as required; and
- Foster and maintain a culture that promotes Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace through formal and informal processes.

3.3 Senior Leadership

Individuals in [Senior Leadership](#) roles shall adhere to the Staff responsibilities above, and:

- Promote a Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplace for all Staff;
- Ensure effective policies, programs, and resources that promote a Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplace are in place and updated accordingly;
- Incorporate Psychological Health and Safety measures within planning and decision-making processes;
- Support the structures and processes of a PHSMS; and
- Foster a culture that promotes Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.

3.4 Psychological Health and Safety Team

The Psychological Health and Safety team shall:

- Provide consultation, education, training, direct service, and subject matter expertise in Psychological Health and Safety to guide Staff;
- Support [Critical Incident Stress Management \(CISM\)](#) service delivery for Staff across PHSA's programs;

- Oversee PHSA's external [Employee and Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) while ensuring confidentiality of services;
- Collaborate with key partners within PHSA, the Ministry of Health, other health authorities, and union representatives to advance the implementation of the National Standard;
- Develop and coordinate the delivery of PHSA's health promotion and psychological health and safety programs and services;
- Communicates psychological health and safety programs and services to Staff; and
- Educate and promote awareness of this Policy and its associated resources and procedures.

3.5 Workplace Health and Safety Team

The Workplace Health and Safety Team shall:

- Collaborate with the Psychological Health and Safety Team to maintain and continuously improve an effective Psychological Health and Safety Management System;
- Ensure safety programs related to psychological risks and injuries in the workplace are updated, as required, and made available to Staff, including those in Supervisory, Managerial, and leadership roles;
- Oversee [PHSA's Worker Injury and Incident Reporting Program](#) where psychological health and safety incidences are reported; and
- Ensure processes and procedures for medical accommodations where a Mental Illness or Psychological Injury is identified are communicated to individuals in Supervisory roles as well as to Staff members requesting the accommodation.

3.6 Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees

[Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees \(JOHSCs\)](#) shall:

- Be notified of, review, and respond to reports of psychological incidences, in accordance with their mandate unless service areas have an alternative, formalized process and/or a committee to review and respond to psychological incidences; and
- Respect the [Confidentiality](#) of all persons where discussions of Psychological Health and Safety take place.

3.7 Human Resources Business Partners

The Human Resources (HR) Business Partners shall:

- Respond to respectful workplace complaints through conducting investigations in accordance with the [Fostering A Culture of Respect Policy](#) and the [Fostering a Culture of Respect Handbook](#);
- Be involved in assessing individual accommodation requests, where appropriate; and
- Support the resolution of complaints and concerns in a Confidential manner.

4. Compliance

All Staff, including those in Supervisory, Managerial, and Senior Leadership roles, are responsible for adhering to, and acting in accordance with, this Policy.

5. Supporting Documents

5.1 Related Policies

- [Fostering a Culture of Respect Policy](#)
- [Preventing Violence in the Workplace Policy](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure Policy](#)
- [Safe Reporting Policy](#)
- [Standards of Conduct](#)
- [Workplace Health and Safety Policy](#)

5.2 Related Guidelines/Procedures/Forms

- [Accreditation Canada Leadership Standards](#)
- [BC Human Rights Code and Tribunal](#)
- [BCEHS Violence Prevention Program](#)
- [CHS Violence Prevention Program](#)
- [PHSA Fostering A Culture of Respect Policy Handbook](#)
- [PHSA Incident Reporting and Investigation Program](#)
- [PHSA Psychological Health and Safety Program Handbook](#)
- [PHSA Respectful Workplace Investigation Process](#)
- [PHSA Violence Prevention Program](#)
- [PHSA Workplace Safety program](#)
- [Worker injury and incident reporting: steps to follow](#) (sensitive incident option)
- [Workers Compensation Act](#)
- [Working Alone or in Isolation Program](#)
- [WorkSafeBC: Bullying and Harassment Procedures for Employers](#)

6. Definitions

“Best Practices” means a practice that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption.

“Confidentiality” means the responsibility and obligation of an employee or agent of PHSA to ensure that Personal Information or Other Confidential Information is kept secure and is collected, accessed, used, disclosed, stored and disposed of only for purposes necessary and authorized by PHSA or a Collaboration Organization to conduct its business.”

“Contractor” means a person or company that undertakes a contract to provide materials or labor to perform a service or do a job.

“Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)” means a comprehensive approach to help manage stress and prevent Psychological Injury resulting from critical incidents that occur in the workplace. CISM responds to the needs of Staff who have been through a potentially traumatic event and may be experiencing strong emotional and physical reactions to the incident.

“Cultural Humility” means acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another’s experience and optimal care. Recognizing the power imbalances inherent in health care for Indigenous Peoples and the primacy of western medical knowledge, PHSA staff and health care providers practice cultural humility by respecting and supporting Indigenous wise practices.

“Cultural Safety” means an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care.

“Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)” means an employer-sponsored service designed for personal or family problems, including Mental Health, substance abuse, various addictions, marital problems, parenting problems, emotional problems, or financial or legal concerns. This is typically a service provided by an employer to the employees, designed to assist employees in getting help for these problems so that they may remain on the job and be effective.

“Equity” means creating environments where everyone can reach their full potential, even if it means treating people differently. Equity involves removing socially determined barriers such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, social class, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or other socially determined contexts that prevent all people from achieving the same access to health care and their desired health outcomes.

“Indigenous Cultural Safety” is the process of making spaces, services and organizations safer and more equitable for Indigenous people by considering colonial history and seeking to eliminate structural Racism and Discrimination. Indigenous Cultural Safety is also an ‘outcome’ based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the healthcare system; it is when Indigenous people feel safe when receiving care.

“Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC)” means an advisory committee made up of Staff and Employer representatives working together to improve occupational health and safety in the Workplace. This term is inclusive of both the District Occupational Health and Safety (DOSHS) and Provincial Occupational Health and Safety (POSH) committees at British Columbia Emergency Health Services.

“Just Culture” means a culture in which the patient and workplace safety is optimized through creation of an accountable review and response to processes or systems in the workplace that recognizes the duties of staff and that competent professionals make errors. A Just Culture effectively balances accountability with learning and improvement, so that individuals can be active participants in system improvement without fear of punitive consequences.

“Manager” means a person who instructs, directs and oversees Staff in the performance of their duties. This includes Staff in roles of operational leaders, Supervisors, and department heads.

“Mental Health” see “Psychological health”.

“Mental Illness” means conditions involving significant changes in thinking, emotion and/or behavior, distress and/or problems that interfere with an individual’s ability to function in day-to-day activities.

“National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (National Standard)” means a set of voluntary standards that specify requirements for a documented and systematic approach to develop and sustain a Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplace. The National Standard was published by the Canadian Standards Association and Bureau de Normalization du Quebec in 2013. The reference number is CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013. The National Standard can be retrieved [here](#). A separate standard for paramedic organizations has been developed and is available [here](#).

“Psychological Health” means a state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.

“Psychological Health and Safety Management System (PHSMS)” means a proactive and coordinated approach that outlines the processes and accountability mechanisms for ensuring a culture of Psychological Safety.

“Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplace” means a Workplace that actively promotes and supports Staff psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm.

“Psychological Injury” means a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural symptoms that can significantly affect how an individual feels, thinks, behaves, and interacts with others.

“Psychological Safety” means the absence of harm and/or threat of harm to mental health and well-being.

“Psychosocial” means describing the intersection and interaction of social, cultural, and environmental influences on the health and wellbeing of an individual.

“Psychosocial Factors” means descriptors that are included, but not limited to, the factors included in the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace. The thirteen factors for all organizations include: psychological support, organizational culture, clear leadership and expectations, civility and respect, psychological competencies and requirements, growth and development, recognition and reward, involvement and influence, workload management, engagement, balance, psychological protection, and protection of physical safety. Two additional factors have been identified for healthcare organizations: protection from moral distress, and support for psychological self-care. Two factors have been identified for paramedic service organizations: other chronic stressors as identified by Staff, and cumulative exposure to critical or stressful events.

“Senior Leadership” means positions of employment at PHSA that are responsible for planning and directing the work supporting PHSA’s program and services.

“Staff” means all employees (including management and leadership), medical staff members (including physicians, midwives and dentists), nurse practitioners, residents, fellows and trainees, health care professionals, students, volunteers, Contractors, researchers and other service providers engaged by PHSA.

“Supervisor” means a staff member whose role includes responsibility for direct reports.

“Trauma-Informed Practice” means the principles of safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment are embedded in the way we work and that create a healthy environment for patients and all staff. A trauma-informed organization realizes and recognizes the impact of trauma, and responds in ways that mitigate re-traumatization and create safe environments to work, learn, and receive care.

“Wise Practices” are Indigenous actions that contribute to sustainable and equitable conditions for Indigenous people.

“Worker Representative” means a non-Managerial Staff member who is: a) a member of the workplace health and safety committee; b) a representative of Staff in accordance with the requirements of law or collective agreements (i.e. union steward); or c) selected by non-Managerial Staff for representation under this or other referenced policies.

“Workplace” means the environment in which work takes place (e.g. one or more facilities, a group of departments at one facility, a home office).

7. References

Canadian Standards Association (2018). Psychological Health and Safety in the Paramedic Service Organization. National Standard of Canada. Z1003.1-18. Retrieved from:

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