GuardingMinds

@ WORK

How to Use Guarding Minds @ Work

Guarding Minds @ Work™ is a free, self-serve resource to help assess psychological health and safety in your workplace.

For more information visit: www.guardingmindsatwork.ca.

This guide can help you get buy-in and commitment from workplace stakeholders through thoughtful preparation and a plan for acting on the *Guarding Minds @ Work* survey results.

Six steps to using Guarding Minds @ Work:

1. **Get buy-in**
2. **Develop the plan**
3. **Communicate the plan**
4. **Use *Guarding Minds @ Work* assessment tools**
5. **Analyze results and engage the workforce**
6. **Plan for continual improvement**

1. Get buy-in

Each of the following points can help you be prepared to respond to questions and concerns from senior leaders in management or labour. This is important in order to get buy-in and commitment to proceed with a plan to address psychological health and safety in your workplace. Others have found that without this prior approval, the process can be halted by concerned leaders who are not clear on risks and benefits.

Consider the costs and benefits of addressing psychological health and safety in your workplace.

- The economic and social benefits of a psychologically healthy and safe workplace should include sustainability of an engaged workforce and a healthy bottom line.

- For help in establishing costs see the section Making the Business Case at *www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com* as well as The Business Case for Psychological Health and Safety at www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/docs/The_Business_Case.pdf which provides more information about benefits.

- A SWOT analysis (strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats) can be a useful tool for decision-making for all sorts of situations. Free information for conducting a SWOT analysis is provided courtesy of Businessballs Free Work and Life Learning at www.businessballs.com/swotanalysisfreetemplate.htm.

- Many organizations or departments will report that they are very busy, and may believe that they do not have enough time or resources to invest in this.
  Simply opening up dialogue about the *Guarding Minds @ Work* psychosocial factors may result in positive changes, even without a formal implementation process. Larger initiatives and programs are not always required. More information about the 13 psychosocial factors in *Guarding Minds @ Work* is available at www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/info/risk_factors.

Be prepared to respond to concerns that addressing psychological health and safety will open up a "can of worms" or invite unreasonable criticism of the workplace.

- Avoiding or denying issues related to psychological health and safety in the workplace may allow problems to get worse until they become a crisis.

- Proactively considering psychological health and safety issues can help prevent time-consuming and morale-dampening situations.

- The National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace provides an evidence-based framework to support taking action and help avoid risk to employee psychological safety. An overview and free download of the National Standard is available at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/node/5346.

Estimate the time and effort required to do the assessment, analyze results and implement change. The size and scope of your plan will be relative to the complexity of your organization and the initiatives you choose to implement. Some organizations have completed all tasks over a couple of weeks, while others have required several months.

Estimate the time your organization may need for the following tasks:

- Develop the business case, including baseline measurements.

- Secure senior leadership commitment, including labour and management.

- Create a communication plan addressing potential concerns.

- Set up the assessment process, choosing how and what will be measured.

- Conduct the assessment using *Guarding Minds @ Work*. (This is probably the easiest part).

- Analyze the results that are automatically provided by *Guarding Minds @ Work.*

- Communicate results. Celebrate successes as well as identifying areas for improvement.

- Engage the workforce in developing action plans. This participation is critical to success.

- Engage the workforce in implementing the plans. This needs to become part of day to day routine.

- Measure outcomes. Did the plans achieve the goals that were set?

- Take corrective action including additional plans or modifications.

- Establish a process of continual improvement. Consider re-administering the *Guarding Minds @ Work* survey every couple of years.

- Ongoing time allocation (e.g., even one hour every two weeks per team, should be considered to allow for an ongoing process of sustaining psychological health and safety in the workplace).

Consider competing demands and priorities.

Addressing psychological health and safety is always important. Like other health and safety approaches, it is an ongoing process, but if this is a new approach in your organization, you may wish to consider the following:

- Organizations may choose to begin with only looking at one of the factors identified in *Guarding Minds @ Work* and known to impact psychological health and safety. One example is workload management. Workload management is not about doing less work, but doing work with less stress. This can open up dialogue, identify solutions, reduce stress-related absenteeism, and help create an atmosphere for continued improvement. More information is available at www.guardingmindsatwork.ca.

- Leading-edge organizations that conscientiously choose best practices for continual improvement can add a Psychological Health and Safety Management System to existing policies and processes. See the Psychological Health and Safety Management System section at *www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com*.

- If you have a poisoned or toxic workplace, it is important to put safeguards in place to help ensure that no further harm is done to psychological health and safety. This could include immediately addressing issues of violence, harassment, bullying or discrimination as identified by the *Guarding Minds @ Work* survey or already known to the organization. Information for developing policies and prevention strategies related to these issues is available at *www.workplacestrategiesormentalhealth.com.*

- Be transparent about accepting responsibility for the current situation, and the need to make changes to reduce the likelihood of this happening again. By accepting responsibility, you can reduce the need for others to justify or defend their current behaviours or positions, and open the door to a new way of doing business.

- Employers of choice or those who have already won recognition for their healthy workplaces can use the heightened focus on psychological health and safety to continue to energize and motivate the workforce.

- If there has been a recent traumatic incident in the workplace, being open about the effects of the trauma and providing effective supports could be a first response. This also can be a window of opportunity to engage staff in building protective factors around psychological health and safety in the workplace.

  It will be necessary to be sensitive to the current ability of those who are affected by the trauma to engage in this process, but in many cases it could be helpful in the recovery process. See also the sections Addiction Response, Grief Response, Suicide Response and Mental Health First Aid at *www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com.*

- If there are current labour disputes this may not be the ideal time to begin a process where management and the union are expected to co-operate closely.

- If there are impending difficult business issues such as shutdowns, layoffs, terminations or deployments, the focus should be on limiting the risk related to the impact of these issues. In these situations, employees who are left in the workplace may face increased workplace demands that can make it more difficult for them to also become involved in the development of new processes.

- This should not prevent the workplace from zeroing in on how the particular psychological health and safety issues currently impact the workforce (e.g., change management, grief at the loss of co-workers or increased workload pressures).

Engage external experts, if appropriate. *Guarding Minds @ Work* is a free, self-serve resource, but some organizations prefer an external consultant to assist. Existing knowledge and expertise may reduce overall effort and time.

Obtain written commitment from senior leadership in the form of a directive or policy statement, in support of addressing psychological health and safety in your workplace.

2. Develop the plan

Identify one or more champions in the ranks of senior leadership who have the ability to influence and mobilize resources and commitment throughout the process.

Establish a psychological health and safety working group comprised of key stakeholders who will help drive the process.

- These stakeholders should come from all levels of management, and include employees and employee representatives.

- Where possible, involve a representative from each department, such as human resources, occupational health and safety or finance.

- Include someone with communication skills in the working group.

- Include someone with authority to access organizational data to help inform working group decisions.

- The mandate of the working group is to plan the assessment, analysis, and communication about the process. They would help steer the planning, implementation, evaluation and continual improvement stages.

- Finalize a timeframe and budget for the stages of planning, implementation and evaluation of your psychological health and safety initiative.

- Involve key stakeholders in discussion about the working group's approach, getting critical feedback from employees, union, and management before communicating the plan to the rest of the workforce.

3. Communicate the plan

Share the senior leadership commitment with all staff.

Clearly communicate your plan. Explicitly state potential concerns and explain how your approach will address these. For messaging ideas, see Commitment and Leadership in the Psychological Health and Management System section at *www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com.* Getting everyone on the same page in this way, has been known to begin the process of improving psychological health and safety, even before any other actions have been taken.

Determine who needs to receive the communication and how best to deliver it.

- Ensure you communicate with all workplace stakeholders including senior management, union representatives, line managers, occupational health and safety representatives, human resource professionals, your employees and any other individuals who play a role in the workplace.

- Provide written communication to employees without access to a computer..

- Consider holding meetings to discuss the process in person or instruct each department or team leader to hold a discussion after they have been thoroughly briefed.

- Consider any other challenges or limitations, which may include employees working offsite, vision or other impairments, as well as employees on vacations, leaves, etc.

4. Use Guarding Minds @ Work assessment tools

Conduct the survey and/or organizational review. See Guarding Minds @ Work: Assessment Resources at www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/eng/info/gmaw_resources/assessment_tools.

You have access to two major forms of assessment:

1. **GM@W Employee Survey.** It is a completely automated resource that allows you to register and send out a link to the survey to every employee. Employee identity is kept confidential and the aggregated results provide a snapshot of how the organization is rated by employees on measures that are known to impact psychological health and safety in the workplace. You can print a copy of the GM@W Survey Questions for review at www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/eng/info/gmaw_resources/assessment_tools.

2. **GM@W Organizational Review**, which is completed manually, usually by a leadership team. It walks the users through a series of questions about existing conditions, requires an analysis of data, and helps educate about the factors affecting psychological health and safety in the workplace. You can read more about How to Get Started or go directly to download the Organizational Review Worksheets at www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/info/gmaw_resources/assessment_tools. The results of this review can be useful to compare leadership perspectives with that of employees who complete the survey. The organizational review is also helpful for small business owners, team leaders or any organization where an employee survey is not possible or practical.

- There are generally two ways to conduct the GM@W Organizational Review:

   1. Assign the review process to department or division heads, and have multiple reviews done by respective management teams.

   2. Conduct one organization-wide review involving either just the business owner or other management personnel. This strategy is particularly well-suited to small organizations.

- Conducting the GM@W Organizational Review involves:

   - Collecting pertinent background and baseline information as outlined in Conducting a GM@W Organizational Review: Getting Started. See www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/docs/dashboard/assessment/GM@W_Organizational_Review_Getting_Started.pdf.

   - Describing attributes of each department/division.

- Answering questions that provide a score for each Psychosocial Factor, completing the review questions related to risks, strengths and areas for improvement.
- Completing the GM@W Organizational Review may only take a few hours once all relevant data has been compiled. The resulting scores can be entered into a Summary Score Sheet found when you have logged into the GM@W Dashboard at www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/dashboard/login.

Prepare for the GM@W Employee Survey.

- Begin by registering for the survey tools using the GM@W Dashboard Login. Once the online profile has been set up, many other resources become available.

- Before sending the link to the survey, you may want to provide an opportunity for staff to ask questions and clarify the process and intent.

- The form letter "Introducing GM@W" found after you login, can be used or modified to develop your own initial communication with staff about the survey. This communication advises staff that you will be sending them a link to the survey.

- Once the survey is activated, the individual who created the profile will be sent an email that has a link to the survey that can be forwarded to employees.

- To encourage participation in the survey, some organizations provide incentives. One organization offered a pizza party for the department that had the highest number of respondents, and provided time during working hours (usually less than 20 minutes) to complete the survey.

Address employee privacy concerns.

- Employees should understand that:
  - Participation in this data collection project is voluntary.
  - They may choose not to participate.
  - The choice to not participate will have no adverse effects on employment.
  - Each employee has anonymity when completing and returning his or her submission.
- If an employee chooses to participate and later changes his or her mind, he or she can stop completing the survey at any time and the responses will not be saved.

- Requests for information about the employee's rights as a participant in this data collection project, or about the responsibilities of the GM@W Project Team members, or if there are any questions, concerns or complaints about the manner in which an employee was treated in this data collection project, should be directed to Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director, SFU Office of Research Ethics by email at hweinber@sfu.ca or phone at 778-782-6593 (Application number 2012s0693).

- Any information that is obtained during this data collection project will be kept strictly confidential.

- No identifying information will be gathered.

- Only aggregate data (for demographic data - where 10 or more employee responses are available for aggregation) will be accessed and shared with employers; individual-level data will not be accessed.

- No personally identifiable information is stored.

Choosing how to segment the GM@W Employee Survey.

Once you have signed into the Dashboard, you will have the opportunity to choose whether segmenting your survey results will be useful to your organization.

- When choosing whether to segment survey results, there are pros and cons to including segmentation question options. Survey results will not be segmented for any category that has less than 10 respondents to protect the anonymity of employees.

- There may be value in separating out very unique groups or dynamics so that the results are not diluted by averages. For example, an organization that has an engineering department and a customer service department may find very different dynamics in those departments, and will want to have the results specific to each department.
- A guiding principle is to choose the *fewest* segmentation question options to provide valuable information for your workplace.

Segmentation Questions Options	Pros	Cons Note: Wherever there are less than 10 respondents the information will not be segmented.
Department or Branch	Different departments or branches may have significantly different issues, and this allows them to receive the results that are most relevant.	The survey should not become a competitive process, and differentiating among similar departments may increase discord.
Province or Region	Where the geographic factors (e.g., rural, urban or remote) impact psychological health or safety, this would provide differentiation.	Where the geographic factors are not relevant, this category may not be useful.
Sex	If your workplace is either male or female dominated or a traditional gender-specific sector, this may be of relevance.	Where the roles are similar and equitable between males and females, this category may create an unnecessary divide.
Union Membership	If your workplace is unionized, this category should be chosen to help the union understand the perspective of its members.	If your workplace is not unionized this category is not relevant.
Working Alone	If your workplace has employees who are working from home or in isolated locations without co-workers, this category can consider their unique experiences, as long as you have more than 10 respondents in this category.	Some employees may misinterpret the category of working alone as not being part of a team rather than working away from the office.

5. Analyze results and engage the workforce

Generate the online GM@W Overview Report when your employees have completed the online survey. You can do this by logging back in to the Dashboard on the *Guarding Minds @ Work* website.

Analyze the numbers in your Report. The GM@W Overview Report will identify areas of concern and strength ranging from Serious Concerns (red) to Relative Strengths (green). Due to the nature of the questions, the lower the number the higher the level of concern.

Following are some tips to help you gain a better understanding of the results:

- Psychosocial factors flagged as Significant Concerns (between 10 and 13 respondents) should be your top priority followed by factors identified as Serious Concerns (5 to 9 respondents).

- Psychosocial factors identified as Minimal Concerns (14 to 16 respondents) should be addressed, but in the interest of time and resources can be done so at a later date. Even with this more positive score, review the GM@W Organizational Review Results and the GM@W Survey Results for any concerns, which should also be addressed or potential opportunities for improvement.

- Psychosocial factors that are identified as Relative Strengths (17 to 20 respondents) should also be looked at (by comparing the Organizational Review Results with the Survey Results) to see if any concerns or potential opportunities for improvements were identified. These can be incorporated into your action plans at a later date, but should be flagged so they aren't missed or forgotten about.

- You can also compare your organization's results against those of a larger 2012 Ipsos Reid survey, which is also included in your Overview Report.

Analyze the results to consider which actions and responses your organization will take. There are several possible approaches:

- There are many considerations that can guide the decision as to where to start taking action. In reviewing the results of your existing data, the GM@W Organizational Review or GM@W Employee Survey, it is important to identify any safety concerns and issues such as bullying, harassment, violence or discrimination, that should be addressed first.

- The next step may be to identify whether there are any issues relating to human rights, health or safety.

- You could also start with psychosocial factors that have been identified as potential areas of strength. This can allow you to build on good work already done in those areas of strengths, understanding that many of the psychosocial factors can be protective even in the face of other unavoidable stressors.

- You may wish to address psychosocial factors where perceptions of management (as per the GM@W Organizational Review) differ significantly from employees' perspectives (as per the GM@W Employee Survey).

- Finally, you may wish to obtain employee input and guidance on the psychosocial factor that they perceive to be most important. This input can be obtained through focus groups, suggestion boxes or staff meetings.

Consider a range of appropriate actions. This can help guide teams who will engage in developing and implementing action plans. By choosing a range of appropriate actions that meet both the organization's needs and the employee's needs, you can ensure that the results will be mutually beneficial.

For example, when selecting appropriate actions and responses, consider the following (adapted from the Selection of Effective Actions: Applying a Quality Framework at www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/docs/dashboard/action/Selection_of_Effective_Actions_Applying_a_Quality_Framework.pdf):

- Appropriateness: Is the action or response appropriate given the needs and resources of your particular organization?

- Acceptability: Is the action or response acceptable to all relevant workplace stakeholders, including management, employees, union and clients?

- Accessibility: Is the action or response available and accessible to all relevant workplace stakeholders (e.g. language or geographic location)?

- Effectiveness: Is the action or response consistent with evidence that indicates that the intended consequence is what your organization requires?

- Efficiency: Can the action or response be implemented in a cost-effective and timely fashion?

- Safety: Could the action or response present an unintended health or safety risk?

Consider a policy review. Your analysis of the results may indicate the necessity to develop or refine policies within the organization. This relates to organizational practices and processes that are part of the day-to-day experience in the workplace. Elements and Priorities Towards a Psychologically Safer Workplace can help you to do this and is available at *www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com.*

Create a high level strategy for what is practical for your organization to focus on in the near future. Examples:

- "To address psychological health and safety we will begin by focusing on management training."

- "To address psychological health and safety we will begin by raising mental health awareness."

- "To address psychological health and safety we will begin with a policy review."

- "To address psychological health and safety we will begin by holding focus groups."

Develop communication to share results, your high level strategy and celebrate successes. Many organizations will find that they have survey results indicating potential areas of strength. Celebrating these areas helps reinforce employee contributions to a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.

It is important to show organizational commitment by sharing some plan of action with all staff soon after the results are in.

The communication should also include intended outcomes and improvements for the future. Clearly communicate that the workplace will not become ideal overnight but will continue to focus on improving psychological health and safety and requires the contribution of all employees.

- Engage all staff and stakeholders in helping to determine how to make your positive impacts on psychological health and safety in the workplace. Each employee has a responsibility to contribute since how they interact with others has a direct effect on psychological health and safety.

- Engage work teams in discussing and developing plans of action. Ensure that these plans include a method to evaluate results.

- Some level of communication and facilitation skills is useful for those who will be leading these discussions. Even those who do not feel competent in these areas can use the information and tools found in *On the Agenda* available at *www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com* to their advantage.

- For additional ideas on approaches to take, read Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers available at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/node/505.

- In each of the following pages under GM@W Suggested Responses, you will find actions and responses that can be implemented with minimal investment of resources or cost to the organization. Lack of budgetary funds does not have to prevent you from moving forward with meaningful actions and responses.

  - **PF1: Psychological Support**
    A work environment where co-workers and supervisors are supportive of employees' psychological and mental health concerns, and respond appropriately as needed.

  - **PF2: Organizational Culture**
    A work environment characterized by trust, honesty and fairness.

  - **PF3: 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.

  - **PF4: 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.

  - **PF5: Psychological Competencies & Requirements**
    A work environment where there is a good fit between employees' interpersonal and emotional competencies and the requirements of the positions they hold.

  - **PF6: Growth & Development**
    A work environment where employees receive encouragement and support in the development of their interpersonal, emotional and job skills.

  - **PF7: Recognition & Reward**
    A work environment where there is appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' efforts in a fair and timely manner.

  - **PF8: Involvement and Influence**
    A work environment where employees are included in discussions about how their work is done and how important decisions are made.

  - **PF9: Workload Management**
    A work environment where tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available.

  - **PF10: Engagement**
    A work environment where employees feel connected to their work and are motivated to do their job well.

  - **PF11: Balance**
    A work environment where there is recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family and personal life.

  - **PF12: Psychological Protection**
    A work environment where employees' psychological safety is ensured.

  - **PF13: Protection of Physical Safety**
    A work environment where management takes appropriate action to protect the physical safety of employees.

6. Plan for continual improvement

Consider including the following question in all business discussions about new or revised policies, procedures, programs and interactions: *"How might this impact psychological health and safety?"*

This may allow you to permanently embed psychological health and safety considerations into your workplace without devoting a lot of time to an add-on program.

Execute the plans developed by work teams.

Measure results and look for opportunities for corrective action or improvement. See Evaluation and Corrective Action in the Psychological Health and Safety Management System available at *www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com.*

Continue the cycle for a method of continual improvement. See Continual Improvement in the Psychological Health and Safety Management System available at *www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com.*