

Workplace Mental Health

Addressing Psychosocial Risk Factors

Addressing mental health in the workplace can improve worker well-being, enhance retention, reduce health care costs, and improve productivity.

Recommendations for Addressing Mental Health at Work

- prevent work-related mental health conditions by eliminating the **risks** to mental health at **work**
- protect and promote mental health at work
- support workers with mental health conditions to participate and thrive in work
- create an enabling environment for change

Psychosocial Hazard

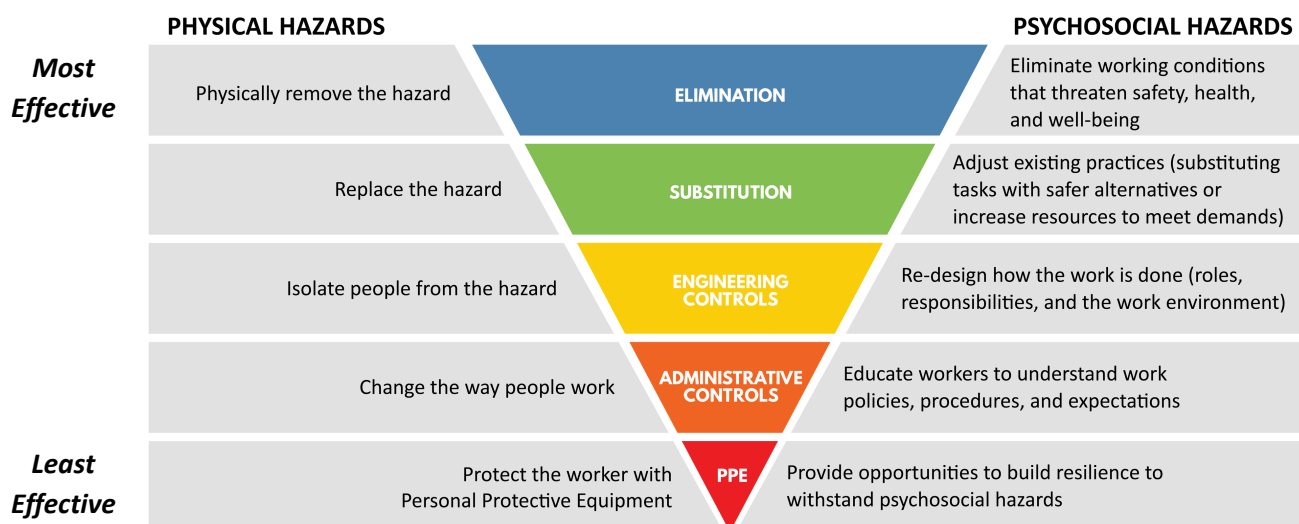
Hazards at work that can lead to stress, strain, or relationship problems for the worker.

Psychosocial Risks to Mental Health at Work

- **Work Schedule:** Shift work, inflexible work schedules, unpredictable hours
- **Lack of Control:** Decision making, workload, pace
- **Poor Work Environment:** Noise, lighting, lack of maintenance
- **Organizational Culture and Function:** Poor communication, lack of support, competition for scarce resources
- **Understaffing:** High workload, mandatory overtime
- **Interpersonal Relationships:** Isolation, poor relationships with supervisors or coworkers, interpersonal conflict, microaggressions
- **Workplace Violence:** physical or emotional abuse
- **Role Ambiguity:** Lack of career path, poor pay, job insecurity, job satisfaction
- **Home-Work Interface:** Conflicting demands, time away from home, living at same site work is done

Hierarchy of Controls

The hierarchy of controls can be applied to both physical and psychosocial hazards in the workplace. Solutions that change the work environment are more effective than those that rely on worker behaviors.



Adapted from Healthandsafety.govt.nz and World Health Organization. Developed through an OSHA Alliance Agreement between the Healthier Workforce Center of the Midwest, Iowa OSHA, and OSHA Federal Region VII. www.HealthierWorkforceCenter.org

FOCUS ON PRIMARY PREVENTION

Organizational policies and programs should focus on prevention of workplace/psychosocial hazards, creating a culture of safety, and raise awareness and knowledge about mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention.

Make mental health part of the safety conversation.

Organizational Interventions

- Create a workplace culture that promotes mental health from the top down: Model and promote mental health practices, communicate resources, include mental health in safety conversations
- Flexible Work Arrangements: Time, place
- Participatory Intervention: Engaging workers in job design and hazard control
- Changes to workloads or breaks
- Prioritize strategies targeting organizational level changes vs. individual level (Hierarchy of Controls)
- Performance Feedback/Reward: Promotion opportunities, mentoring
- Provide Reasonable Wages and Benefits: Health care, Employee Assistance Program, paid sick leave
- Promote Mental Health Resources: During onboarding, at benefits renewal, monthly communications
- Remove barriers to seeking treatment
- Address work conditions that impact mental health
- Consider mental health when performance issues develop

Reasonable Work Accommodations

- Flexible Schedule: Offering options for telecommuting or working from home allows employees to manage their work in a way that aligns with their mental health needs.
- Modified Break Schedule: Adjusting break times to better suit individual requirements can be immensely helpful (more frequent breaks, flexibility in scheduling breaks).
- Rest Area/Private Space: Providing a quiet and private space where employees can take a break or regroup can significantly contribute to their mental well-being.

- Support Person: Having a designated support person (such as a mentor or counselor) who can assist the employee during challenging times can be beneficial.
- Identify and Reduce Triggers: Collaborating with the employee to identify potential triggers and finding ways to minimize their impact is crucial. This might involve adjusting work processes or environments.

Remember that the process of implementing accommodations is individualized and should begin with input from the employee. Accommodations can vary based on an individual's strengths, work environment, and specific job duties. Organizations that prioritize these accommodations not only support their employees but also contribute to overall productivity and well-being in the workplace.

Recovery-Ready Workplace Toolkit



Substance use disorder is a treatable health condition from which one can recover. This toolkit provides resources for employers to prevent & respond to substance misuse, employ people in recovery, and build a recovery-supportive culture.

dol.gov/agencies/eta/RRW-hub/Toolkit

Training & Education

- Senior leadership commitment
- Select evidence-based training
- Assess application of training (how knowledge and skills have been applied in the workplace)
- Offer training during working hours
- Peer support programs
- Provide anti-bullying and harassment training
- Train staff members as gate keepers/introduce a peer support program
- Educate workers on EAP programs and mental health benefits
- Promote local mental health and addiction treatment resources
- Build protective factors for individuals (financial planning, conflict resolution, communication skills, parenting)