

Changing How We See Mental Illness: What You and Your Leaders Can Do to Support Employees

Presented by Micheal Pietrus, Director, Opening Minds and Mental Health First Aid Canada, MHCC

Key insights for employers on supporting employee mental health

- **Cultural change is paramount:** Emphasize the importance of cultural shifts within organizations to foster environments where mental health is prioritized alongside physical health.
- **Mental health literacy:** Increase mental health literacy among employees, debunking myths about mental health and emphasizing its equal importance to physical health.
- **Adopt evidence-based approaches:** Ensure any mental health training or programs implemented are based on evidence, demonstrating proven outcomes and effectiveness.
- **Recognize warning signs:** Out-of-character behaviours such as increased absenteeism and interpersonal conflicts are items to watch for.
- **Stigma:** Stigma is one of the major barriers preventing people from seeking help for psychological injuries.

Best practices for employers in supporting employee mental health

- **Be observant:** Recognize early warning signs of mental distress, understanding that not everyone will communicate their struggles openly.
- **Promote open communication:** Develop a workplace culture that minimizes stigma and encourages open discussions about mental health challenges.
- **Address interpersonal issues:** Be proactive in managing interpersonal conflicts to prevent potential bullying and harassment issues.
- **Resource accessibility:** Ensure employees are aware of and can easily access mental health resources available through the workplace.
- **Preventative measures:** Engage in practices that prevent psychological distress and promote mental wellness, highlighting the role of a supportive workplace environment in facilitating recovery and return to work.