



Building a Mentally Healthy and Safe Workplace

THE FOUNDATION: LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Successfully implementing a robust mental wellness strategy within any organization hinges on the unwavering commitment of its leadership team. A tangible demonstration of this commitment involves allocating essential resources, including dedicated personnel, time, and financial investment.

FORMING YOUR TEAM: COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Some organizations opt to establish a dedicated Mental Wellness Committee (MWC). Alternatively, the mandate can be integrated into an existing committee, such as Health and Safety, Diversity and Inclusion, or Employee Well-being. The core responsibilities of committee members include:

- **Active Participation:** Attending meetings prepared and contributing meaningfully to discussions with relevant insights and feedback.
- **Program Development Input:** Providing valuable input for program planning and promotional strategies.
- **Employee Representation:** Advocating for the needs and interests of various departments and employee groups.
- **Resource and Champion:** Serving as a knowledgeable resource for colleagues and actively championing mental wellness initiatives across the workplace.
- **Promotional Support:** Assisting in the deployment of program promotions and communications.

To form your MWC or action team, identify and engage employees who are deeply invested in fostering a positive workplace culture. Involving employees directly in this process significantly enhances their buy-in and connection to the outcomes. Consider integrating their participation into their professional goals, rather than viewing it as an extracurricular activity.

Below are examples of key roles within an MWC, along with considerations for its formation.

KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



The Sponsor(s)

Sponsors should be senior leaders within the organization, possessing the authority to make high-level decisions. Their role encompasses:

- **Leadership Voice:** Articulating the perspective and priorities of senior leadership.
- **Strategic Advocacy:** Championing the mental wellness strategy at an organizational level.
- **Strategic Guidance:** Offering direction on strategic objectives and ensuring alignment with the organization's overarching goals.
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensuring adequate resources are available to support the committee's work.
- **Liaison:** Collaborating with the champion(s) to facilitate progress.
- **Meeting Engagement:** Attending committee meetings as required.
- **Barrier Removal:** Proactively addressing obstacles to help the champion(s) achieve their objectives.
- **Responsive Action:** Promptly responding to and acting upon committee recommendations.



The Champion(s) (One to Two Individuals)

These individuals will serve as the public face of the committee and should demonstrate a strong passion for workplace mental wellness. Often, individuals in roles such as employee benefits, health and well-being, or health and safety are well-suited for this position. Their responsibilities include:

- **Foundational Understanding:** Ensuring all committee members comprehend the fundamental elements of a workplace mental wellness strategy.
- **Strategy Implementation:** Designing, developing, and overseeing the execution of the strategy.
- **Team Leadership:** Providing leadership and direction to committee members.
- **Meeting Facilitation:** Scheduling, setting agendas for, and leading committee meetings.
- **Reporting:** Being accountable for reporting on results and recommendations.
- **Senior Leadership Liaison:** Maintaining communication with the sponsor(s) and senior leadership team.
- **Employee Engagement:** Actively engaging all workers in the organization's mental wellness journey.
- **Stakeholder Communication:** Regularly communicating with all relevant workplace stakeholders.



Mental Wellness Committee or Action Team (Four to Ten Individuals)

Members of this team will be catalysts for change, ensuring that the action plan effectively addresses the diverse needs of employees. A committee that accurately reflects the employee population will ensure the strategy remains relevant and engaging.



Employee Representation

Committee members should represent key groups across the organization, including:

- Management
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Various employee units, groups, and branches
- Multiple organizational levels
- Health & Safety
- Human Resources
- Marketing & Communications
- Unions (where applicable)



Important Considerations

- **External Expertise:** Consider inviting an external partner, such as an Organizational Health Consultant, to serve as an advisor to the team. This individual should possess expertise in developing health strategies and have access to resources that can support the organization's mental wellness journey.
- **Time Allocation:** Provide managers and employees with dedicated time away from their regular duties to attend meetings. Integrating committee work into annual objectives and performance reviews can be beneficial.
- **Incentives:** Explore offering incentives to committee members, potentially through the organization's formal recognition program.



Best Practices for Effective Mental Wellness Committees

- **Focused Teams:** Create small, focused teams, as they often prove more productive than larger groups.
- **Clear Roles:** Clearly define roles and responsibilities to maintain member focus, engagement, and productivity.
- **Goal Setting:** Establish specific, measurable goals for the committee, and regularly re-evaluate and adjust them as needed.
- **Resource Provision:** Ensure committee members have the necessary time and resources, including training, to succeed. This will enhance their understanding of needs, processes, and ultimate objectives.
- **Regular Meetings:** Facilitate regular committee meetings:
 - Invite only essential participants to meetings; not every individual needs to be involved at every stage.
 - Ensure members prepare agendas and set clear objectives for each meeting.
 - Foster open discussions during each meeting.
 - Create a safe environment for members to share their perspectives.
 - Acknowledge and recognize contributions.
 - Share meeting minutes with all relevant stakeholders.
 - Periodically evaluate meeting effectiveness.
 - Hold members accountable for their roles in executing the action plan.



Tips for Recruiting Committee Members

- **Recruitment Approach:** Decide between an open recruitment process (inviting all employees to apply) or a targeted approach (inviting specific employees from different work locations or groups).
- **Clarity of Expectations:** Clearly articulate the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for committee members.
- **Term Definition:** Define the expected length of commitment for employee participation.
- **Managerial Support:** Assist employees in securing the necessary support from their managers for their involvement.



Sample Terms of Reference and Roles and Responsibilities

Purpose: The Mental Wellness Committee will play a pivotal role in guiding any organization towards becoming a mentally healthy and safe workplace. The team will be responsible for establishing, promoting, maintaining, and continuously evaluating and improving the workplace mental wellness strategy.

Team Mandate:

- Promote and enhance awareness of mental wellness supports, resources, and programs available within the organization.
- Identify and assess potential risks to workplace mental wellness, developing strategies to eliminate and mitigate these risks.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive action plan to foster mental wellness within the workplace.
- Contribute to the monitoring, evaluation, and evolution of the strategy.

Team Composition:

- [Name, Title], will serve as the senior leadership sponsor.
- [Name, Title], will serve as the committee champion.
- Membership is open to any employee of the organization.
- [Describe the breakdown of member groups: e.g., unions, managers, employees, Communications, Human Resources (HR), etc.]



Roles and Responsibilities:

The Senior Leadership Sponsor will be responsible for:

- Championing the mental wellness strategy.
- Providing feedback and strategic direction to guide the strategy.

The Champion will be responsible for:

- Leading the initiative and offering ongoing consultation.
- Chairing the action team meetings.
- Setting meeting agendas.
- Guiding and keeping meetings on track.
- Liaising with senior leadership.

The Members will be responsible for:

- Advocating for positive change.
- Sharing their knowledge and experience.
- Making meaningful contributions to the team.
- Completing individual action items.

Meeting Frequency:

- The team will meet monthly.

Reporting:

- The champion will report on the team's progress to the senior leadership sponsor once a quarter.
- The team will provide a report to staff on a monthly basis.