

About PF1: Psychological Support

What are Psychosocial Factors?

Psychosocial factors are elements that impact employees' psychological responses to work and work conditions, potentially causing psychological health problems. Psychosocial factors include the way work is carried out (deadlines, workload, work methods) and the context in which work occurs (including relationships and interactions with managers and supervisors, colleagues and coworkers, and clients or customers).

What is PF1: Psychological Support?

GM@W defines PF1: Psychological Support as present in a work environment where coworkers and supervisors are supportive of employees' psychological and mental health concerns, and respond appropriately as needed. Equally important are the employees' perceptions and awareness of organizational support. When employees perceive organizational support, it means they believe their organization values their contributions, is committed to ensuring their psychological well-being and provides meaningful supports if this well-being is compromised.

Why is Psychological Support important?

The more employees feel they have psychological support, the greater their job attachment, job commitment, job satisfaction, job involvement, work mood positivity, desire to remain with the organization, organizational citizenship behaviours (discretionary behaviours that are beneficial to the organization and are a matter of personal choice), and job performance. For some organizations, the most important aspect of psychological support may be that it is especially helpful in protecting against traumatic stressors at work. When adequate psychological support is present, employees experiencing psychological distress in the workplace will be more likely to seek, and receive, appropriate help. They will be better equipped to stay safe and productive at work while they recover, and, if work absence is required, will be more likely to have a quicker and more sustainable work return.

What happens when employees lack psychological support?

Employee perceptions of a lack of psychological support from their organization can lead to increases in absenteeism, withdrawal behaviours, strain, conflict and turnover. Strain can then lead to greater issues such as fatigue, headaches, burnout and anxiety. Lack of psychological support can also result in loss of productivity, increased costs and greater risk of accidents, incidents and injuries.

How can Psychological Support be improved?

Start by conducting the GM@W Organizational Review and/or the GM@W Survey and reviewing the results. If **Psychological Support** is identified as an area of concern or relative strength, refer to the GM@W Action Resources for a practical strategy and evidence-based and effective suggested actions that can improve **Psychological Support**. It is also important to discuss the findings with employees to gain a further understanding of the results and to obtain input into possible interventions. Furthermore, it is important to evaluate the undertaken interventions over time to ensure they are effective and to take corrective action where needed. Consider reviewing the resources below. Finally, refer back to the GM@W website on occasion for new ideas about how **Psychological Support** can be enhanced.

Further information about Psychological Support:

- American Psychiatric Foundation. (2012). *Partnership for workplace mental health*. Retrieved from <http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/>
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario. (2012). *Mental health works*. Retrieved from <http://mentalhealthworks.ca>
- Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation. (2007). When Something's Wrong: Strategies for the Workplace. In *Education & Awareness*. Retrieved from <http://cprf.ca/education/workplace.html>
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 500-507. Retrieved from http://eisenberger.psych.udel.edu/files/22_Perceived_Organizational_Support.pdf
- Gilbert, M. & Bilsker, D. (2012). *Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers*. Retrieved from http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Workforce/Workforce_Employers_Guide_ENG.pdf
- Health and Safety Executive. (2012). Work related stress – together we can tackle it. In *Guidance*. Retrieved from <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>
- International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies. (2001). Psychological support. In *World Disaster Report 2001*. Retrieved from http://www.toolkitsportdevelopment.org/html/resources/2C/2C4783F0-083B-4382-8DED-D99AEC37B0F2/pspmanual_module1.pdf
- Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(4), 698-714. Retrieved from http://eisenberger.psych.udel.edu/files/01_Perceived_Organizational_Support.pdf
- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2012). PF1: Psychological Support. In *Centre Resources by GM@W Factor and On the Agenda*. Retrieved from <http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com>

www.guardingmindsatwork.ca