

About PSR1: Psychological Support

What is Guarding Minds @ Work?

Guarding Minds @ Work (GM@W) is an evidence-based strategy that assists employers in protecting and promoting psychological safety and health in the workplace. GM@W provides a comprehensive set of resources employers can use to effectively address the impact of 12 psychosocial risk (PSR) factors known to have a powerful impact on organizational health, the health of individual employees, and the financial bottom line. The PSRs were identified by researchers from the Consortium for Organizational Mental Healthcare (COMH) in the SFU Faculty of Health Sciences on the basis of extensive research and a comprehensive review of empirical data related to national and international best practices. The determination of the factors also reflects existing and emerging Canadian case law and legislation.

Why is PSR1 – Psychological Support important?

Guarding Minds @ Work defines PSR1, psychological support, as present in a work environment in which 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 PSR1 – 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 the workforce lacks psychological support?

Employee perceptions of a lack of psychological support from their organization can lead to increases in absenteeism², 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 having the organization or work team conduct the Guarding Minds @ Work Assessment (Organizational Audit, Initial Scan and/or PSR-12 Employee Survey) and reviewing the resulting reports. If psychological support is identified as an area of concern, refer to the relevant Action Tools for a practical strategy and evidence-based and effective suggestions that can improve psychological support. It is also important to discuss the findings with concerned employees within the organization to gain a further understanding of the results and to obtain input and participation in determining useful corrective actions. Also, consider the information in the readings and resources identified 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 can be found at:

- International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies. (2001). Psychological support. In World Disaster Report 2001. http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_pubs.pl?health/psycholog/pspmanual_module1.pdf
- Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(4), 698-714. http://eisenberger.psych.udel.edu/files/01_Perceived_Organizational_Support.pdf
- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2009). PSR1: Psychological support. In Centre resources by risk factor. <http://www.gwlcentreformentalhealth.com/english/slides.asp?l1=3&l2=157&l3=159&d=159>
- Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation.(n.d.). Education & awareness. <http://cprf.ca/education/workplace.html>
- Mental health works. (n.d.). <http://mentalhealthworks.ca>
- Health and Safety Executive. (n.d.). Work related stress: Health and safety in the workplace. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>
- American Psychiatric Foundation. (2009). Partnership for workplace mental health. <http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/>
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 500-507. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=6&hid=105&sid=26afcc42-b418-43fc-b732-e76556cafe00%40sessionmgr10>

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