

Leading with Mental Health in Mind:

A TOOLKIT FOR KGH LEADERS

Within this guide you will find information on:

- Identifying Crisis Situations
- Responding to Crisis
- Crisis Support/Critical Incident Debriefing
- 10 Steps for Leading with Mental Health in Mind
- Leader's Quick Tips for Managing Absence and Return to Work (RTW)

Crisis Situations

Signs of Distress

- Change in appearance (hygiene, clothing, appears unkempt)
- Changes in behaviour/personality
- Sadness, feeling on edge, guilt, restlessness, mood swings
- Reduced energy, increased fatigue, difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Isolating self from others, disinterest in usual social interactions @ work/home
- Easily frustrated/ angered, irritable, less cooperative
- Unusual or unexplained behaviour (crying, outbursts, suspicious, aggressive)
- Confused thought, poor judgment, risky behaviour
- Easily distracted, difficulty concentrating, poor memory
- Abuse of alcohol, drugs; excessive gambling
- Physical symptoms (weight gain/loss, nausea, headaches)
- Other co-workers, family, friends expressing concern
- Changes in job performance, increased absence from work

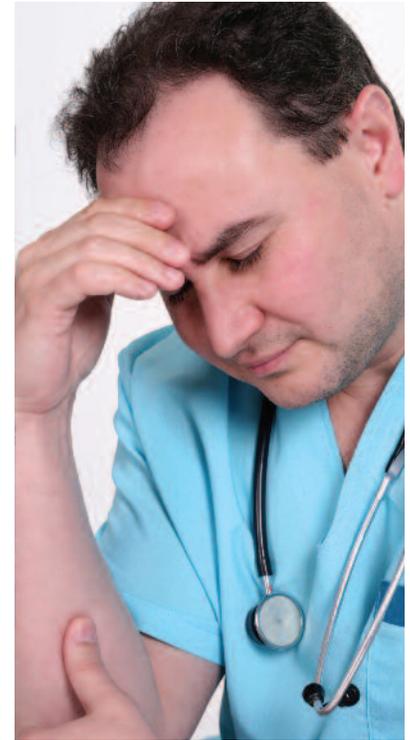
Identifying a Crisis Situation

- Any reference to wanting to die/suicide (eg. “My family would be better off without me” or “I won’t be around much longer.”)
- Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, despair
- Incoherent or unable to be calmed
- Drug overdose or alcohol poisoning

Should a staff member speak of suicide, be in crisis, or is believed to be at risk of harming him/herself or others, take immediate action. Do NOT leave the staff member unattended.

Responding to Crisis

- Take the staff member to the Emergency Dept. Call ahead to let them know you are coming
- Escort them to Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness
- Call a Code White (x4444) if situation of imminent danger exists
- Call 911 if staff member is outside of the hospital or at home



Crisis Support/Critical Incident Debriefing

For situations that have the potential to negatively impact staff, crisis response through our EFAP is recommended.

When to consider Crisis Support:

- Sudden or unexpected death of an employee or patient;
- An act of violence;
- An unexpected event that results in significant emotional reactions in staff

Immediate deployment of EFAP Crisis Support services is available if needed, otherwise response is available within 48-72 hours, 24/7.

**For Crisis Support call KGH EFAP
Homewood Human Solutions
1-800-663-1142**

10 Steps for Leading with Mental Health in Mind

1 INVITE THE CONVERSATION where you see a change in behaviour or performance. Such conversations are part of every leader's role at KGH. Be prepared and clear about the specific behaviour and/or changes you have noticed. Address proactively in an empathetic manner. Be mindful of body language and always reinforce the contribution/worth of the employee.

It seems like you are not yourself lately. I would like to talk about the impact on your work and what we can do to get things back on track.

My intention in calling this meeting is to offer support as your Manager.

I have noticed some things that I would like to talk to you about...

2 BE RESPECTFUL in managing employee behaviour and performance. Discuss your concern(s) at the appropriate time in a private location. Be sensitive, supportive, and actively listen. Avoid labeling, anger, and personal advice. Should the employee deny the need for help at this time, respect their decision. Ensure the employee is clear on behaviour/performance standards and convey your continued availability to discuss and assist.

I respect your decision. I hope you will keep in mind what we talked about and know that my door is always open.

Where a behaviour or performance issue is identified, it is key to discuss desired outcomes and be solution focused, rather than focusing solely on the problem itself.

10 Steps for Leading with Mental Health in Mind (continued)

A psychologically safe workplace depends on effective leadership.

Use these resources to help increase your effectiveness.

3 BE PREPARED to refer the employee to available resources where a personal problem is identified. Available resources include:

- **KGH Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)** – Homewood Human Solutions 1-800-663-1142 or www.homewoodhumansolutions.com
- **KGH Occupational Health Nurse** x4389; on-call weekends/holidays via switchboard
- **KGH Wellness website:** www.KGHwellness.ca
- **KGH Peer Partner** – for a private, secure, and confidential sounding board. For a list of Peer Partners, check out www.kghwellness.ca or send an email to peerpartner@kgh.kari.net
- **Feeling Better Now** – a web-based mental health tool available to KGH employees and their families. See the KGH wellness website to access www.kghwellness.ca

4 BE CONSISTENT in how you manage performance on your team. Seek guidance if you are unclear on how to appropriately address a workplace behaviour or a sensitive situation by contacting:

- **KGH HR Advisor** hradvisor@kgh.kari.net
- **Key Person Advice Line** is available to KGH Leaders through our EFAP 1-800-663-1142

5 BECOME INFORMED as a Leader. Learn more about how mental illness can affect an individual's performance and how to manage performance in those who may be emotionally distressed.

- **Mental Health Works (training, resources)** www.mentalhealthworks.ca
- **Workplace Strategies for Mental Health-** For managers/unions/employees/HR professionals www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com
- **Managing Mental Health Matters** (video modules, quizzes, quick tips) www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/mmhm



10 Steps for Leading with Mental Health in Mind (continued)

6 CONSIDER INITIATING AN EFAP FORMAL REFERRAL where an employee is experiencing significant difficulties that are interfering with work performance. The formal referral process is a mechanism available in the performance management process that requires employees to attend counselling via the EFAP so that underlying personal issues or needs that may be contributing to the performance deficiency can be addressed. Content of the counselling sessions is confidential however the Manager receives confirmation of attendance. Consult with your HR Advisor to discuss the suitability of a formal referral.

7 PROMOTE MENTAL WELLNESS IN YOUR TEAM. While there are factors external to the workplace that impact mental health, the workplace plays a key role. As a leader you can positively influence the psychosocial work environment and have a responsibility to foster an environment that supports not only productivity, but physical and mental well-being as well. Learn more about factors supporting positive mental wellness in the *CSA Standard for Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace*. www.csa.ca

I would like to get your thoughts on how we can better address this issue.

Thanks for the extra effort this week. I know it was difficult and I want you to know that was appreciated.

8 CONFRONT STIGMA Despite the fact that 20% of Canadians are affected by mental health illness, negative stereotyping persists. Stigma can delay the decision to seek treatment and delay and/or complicate re-entry into the workplace. Be thoughtful about your own choice of words, use non-discriminatory language when discussing accommodations and apply consistent approaches in the way you manage/communicate employee absence and return to work, regardless of whether the illness is physical or mental. Educate your team about their role in the RTW process, encourage respect, request cooperation where changes in job or hours are required and always be mindful of privacy.

WORKPLACE FACTORS AFFECTING PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Psychological and social support
- Workload management
- Protection of Physical Safety
- Growth and Development
- Clear leadership and expectations
- Engagement
- Civility, Respect and Balance
- Involvement and Influence
- Psychological demands
- Recognition and Appreciation
- Organizational Culture
- Psychological protection

10 Steps for Leading with Mental Health in Mind (continued)

9 SUPPORT ACCOMMODATION Accommodating those who are struggling with mental health issues is not only a legal obligation under Human Rights, but can prevent absence and maximize productivity. Although workplace accommodation must be individualized, some common strategies for accommodating mental health problems can include:

- changes to work hours due to medication side effects, sleep impairment, or appointments
- modification to how instructions and/or feedback are given
- regular touch points between supervisor and employee to proactively address potential issues
- extra time to learn tasks; more frequent breaks from work requiring intense concentration
- modification to job duties (e.g. exchanging minor tasks with other employees)
- modification to work space or relocation to a quieter area free from distractions.

A supportive work environment is key in reducing the onset, severity, impact and duration of mental health disorders leading to better outcomes for affected individuals.

10 MANAGE ABSENCE AND RETURN TO WORK (RTW) The Supervisor plays a critical role in managing day to day absenteeism as well as the RTW process. Early and regular contact between the leader and their employee throughout their period of absence, with active involvement in RTW planning to overcome barriers, can significantly reduce the duration of the absence. For more information see ***Leader's Quick Tips for Managing Absence and Return to Work.***



Leader's Quick Tips for Managing Absence and Return to Work (RTW)



Initiate early contact with the employee who calls in sick and maintain regular communication throughout the period of absence. The intent is not to be intrusive, but to be supportive. It is important to establish with your employee the parameters of this contact including:

- the frequency of contact and their preferred method of contact (phone, email)
- whether they wish to be informed of unit/department activities, news, celebrations
- whether their co-workers can contact them from time to time



Discuss with your employee any physical and/or psychosocial factors about the work or the work environment that are affecting their ability to return and determine whether there are options for you to make adjustments to accommodate the employee's needs to facilitate a more timely RTW. Return to work planning is an important component of rehabilitation/recovery and should begin early.



Prior to RTW it is important for the Leader to meet with the employee to discuss the return to find out how they best can support the employee. Things to ask as their Leader include:

- How does the employee feel about RTW – do they feel ready, excited, anxious, fearful?
- What is the employee looking forward to? What parts of their job do they feel may present a challenge?
- What has changed since they've been off work- is buddying, training, or re-training needed?
- What support do they need to be successful in their job- from you their supervisor? from their co-workers?
 - are there different communication needs related to how information/instructions or feedback is given?
 - does the employee require additional time to learn new job tasks
- How would the employee like to be welcomed back- email, team meeting, more informally?
- Have they thought about what they might say to others about their absence?
- Are there strategies that can be used to support the employee's reintegration?
- How does the employee want future issues to be addressed should they occur, where you are concerned about their well-being?

MANAGERS HAVE TWO KEY RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN IT COMES TO MENTAL WELLNESS AT WORK:

- Providing a psychologically safe work environment; and
- Providing management support for employees who may be experiencing mental health concerns.

Leader's Quick Tips for Managing Absence and Return to Work (RTW)

(continued)

- Collaborate with Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness to develop the RTW plan. The RTW plan will outline the work hours/shifts and how they will be graduated (if applicable) as well as any work restrictions. It is important to engage the employee in developing the RTW plan to allow for his or her commitment to its success.
- Monitor the RTW. Meet regularly with the employee during their RTW to provide feedback and to provide the employee with an opportunity to voice any concerns. Work with the employee to develop solutions to any issues that present.
- Respond in a timely and supportive manner where physical, mental, personal or behavioural changes are observed as these changes can be indicative of illness recurrence; those with mental illness tend to have a higher rate of recurrence/ relapse of disability episodes in comparison to those with physical disabilities.
- Stigma, together with misinformation about mental health disorders, can make it difficult for the employee who is returning to work from a mental health related illness. Take every opportunity at the team level to reduce stigma and promote an accurate understanding of mental illness. Educate coworkers about their role in the return to work process and set the expectations for respect and support.

