COVID-19 Managing Mental Health in the Workplace procedure

# Background

1. The way in which <Organisation name> manages mental health in the workplace can play a significant part in the wellbeing of an employee who may be suffering from a mental health condition.

# Our Commitment

1. <Organisation name> is committed to implementing the strategies in this procedure to identify and provide support to employees who may be struggling with a mental health condition. These strategies also support the reduction of absenteeism, productivity and employee turnover.

# Mental Health Conditions

**Anxiety**

1. There are six main types of anxiety conditions:
2. Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)
3. Specific phobias
4. Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
5. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
6. Panic disorder
7. Social phobia
8. Symptoms may differ from person to person and may include some of the following:
9. Appearing restless, tense and on edge
10. Avoiding certain workplace activities such as staff meetings
11. Becoming overwhelmed or easily upset
12. Finding it hard to make decisions
13. Having difficulty meeting reasonable deadlines
14. Referring to being constantly worried and appearing apprehensive

**Depression**

1. A person may be depressed if they have displayed a persistently low mood (over a period of two or more weeks) and a loss of interest in their usual activities.
2. Depression can also affect concentration, memory, sleep patterns, motivation and activity levels, appetite, social behaviour, and thinking patterns and feelings.
3. The following changes in behaviour in the workplace may be a sign of depression:
4. Being late for work
5. Feeling tired and fatigued
6. Being unusually tearful or emotional
7. Getting angry or frustrated with tasks or people easily
8. Avoiding being around colleagues
9. Finding it difficult to meet reasonable deadlines or manage multiple tasks
10. Finding it hard to accept constructive and well-delivered feedback
11. Having a loss of confidence and negative thought patterns
12. Finding it difficult to concentrate on tasks

**Work Related Stress**

1. The World Health Organization defines work-related stress as “the reaction people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities, and which challenge their ability to cope”.
2. When work-related stress is prolonged or excessive, it can be a risk factor for anxiety or depression.
3. Potential causes of work-related stress include:
4. Working long hours, working through breaks or taking work home
5. Physically, mentally or emotionally demanding work
6. Work that is monotonous and dull and does not utilise an employee’s range of skills
7. Inadequate time and resources to complete jobs satisfactorily
8. Poor support from supervisors and/or co-workers
9. Lack of role clarity
10. Bullying, harassment and discrimination
11. Poor communication
12. Job insecurity
13. Low levels of recognition and reward
14. Poorly managed workplace change

# Responsibilities

1. Provide general education to all employees around mental health conditions and employee and manager workshops to raise awareness.
2. Speak openly about mental health conditions in the workplace and encourage employees to do the same.
3. Train managers to identify signs of mental health conditions so they are picked up early and the appropriate support is provided.
4. Encourage employees to seek support and share their concerns with their manager.
5. Help an employee who is suffering from a mental health condition to feel more comfortable by including them in meetings and work social events to support their recovery.
6. Keep in touch with an employee who has taken time off to recover. This will make their return to the workplace smoother and easier for everyone involved. It also provides an opportunity for them to give their opinion on decisions or changes in the workplace, even if they are not there.
7. Make reasonable temporary, or permanent, adjustments to an employee’s workload, schedule or working environment to enable then to perform their duties more effectively, in collaboration with the employee.
8. Ensure personal information about an employee’s mental health is not disclosed to anyone without the employee’s consent. The details of the employee’s condition and treatment must remain confidential unless they give consent for it to be shared.
9. Ensure adverse action is not taken against an employee because of their mental health condition.
10. Ensure professional advice is sought from the insurer and/or relevant regulatory body in the case of a Workers’ Compensation Claim.
11. Encourage an employee who may be struggling to seek professional advice.
12. Concerns about colleagues’ reactions, or a lack of support, can exacerbate an employee’s mental health condition. Develop a flexible stay at work plan, or a return to work plan, which includes the nature of duties and the hours of work, sets clear expectations for all involved. The following should be considered in developing the plan:
13. Prepare the plan in consultation with the employee, their treating practitioner(s), and the occupational rehabilitation provider (if one is involved).
14. Review the plan regularly, taking into consideration any changes to the employee’s condition or challenges they may be experiencing.
15. In collaboration with the employee, set realistic goals and outline a process to monitor their progress.
16. Seek the employee’s written permission to contact their treating health practitioner(s).
17. Contact the treating health practitioner(s) to seek advice on specific issues that should be considered, as well as strategies to support the employee to remain at or return to work.

# Employee Responsibilities

1. Take reasonable care of your own mental health and safety, and that of your team members.
2. Educate yourself about mental health.
3. Cooperate with workplace policies and procedures.
4. Support initiatives aimed at improving mental health in the workplace.