



## How to build your mental health committee or action team

The key to putting a successful workplace mental health strategy into action is a commitment from your leadership team. An effective way to demonstrate their commitment is by investing in resources, including people, time and money.

Some organizations establish a specific mental health committee (MHC). Others opt to give the mandate to an existing committee, such as Health and Safety, Diversity and Inclusion or Health and Wellness. The role of committee members is to:

- prepare to attend meetings
- actively contribute to discussions with relevant input and feedback
- give input into program planning and promotional strategies
- represent the needs and interests of department/employee groups
- be a well-informed resource for department and employee groups
- champion the program and initiatives within your workplace
- help deploy program promotions

To create a MHC or action team, tap into employees who are invested in your workplace culture. Engaging employees in the process will increase their level of buy-in and connection to the outcomes. Consider making their participation part of their goals, rather than something they do in their free time.

Below are examples of MHC roles, as well as tips and considerations for forming a MHC committee.



### **The sponsor(s)**

Sponsors should be senior leaders. They need to have the power and authority to make decisions at the highest level. Their role is to:

- be the voice of senior leadership
- advocate for the strategy
- give guidance on strategic objectives
- align your mental health strategy with your business goals
- make sure there're enough resources to support the work
- liaise with champion(s)
- attend committee meetings as needed
- remove barriers to help the champion(s) meet their targets
- be responsive and take action on committee recommendations



### **The champion(s) (one to two people)**

These members will be the 'face' of the committee, so they should be passionate about workplace mental health. Members who are in this role often work in employee benefits, health and wellness, or health and safety positions. Their job is to:

- Ensure all committee members understand the basic elements of a workplace mental health strategy;
- Design, develop and implement the strategy;
- Lead and give direction to committee members;
- Schedule, set agenda and lead committee meetings;
- Be responsible for reporting on results and recommendations;
- Liaise with sponsor/senior leadership team;
- Actively work with and engage all workers in the organization;
- Communicate with workplace stakeholders often.



### **Mental health committee or action team (four to 10 people)**

Members of this team will be champions for change. They'll make sure the action plan meets your employees' needs. Having a committee that represents your employee population will ensure your strategy is relevant and engaging.



### **Employee members**

Members should represent key groups within your organization. This includes:

- Management
- Diversity & inclusion
- Different employee units, groups, branches
- Multiple levels
- Health & safety
- Human resources
- Marketing & communications
- Unions (where applicable)



## Considerations

- Think about adding an external partner (e.g. an Organizational Health Consultant) to act as Advisor to the team. This should be someone with knowledge and expertise in creating health strategies. They should also have access to resources that will help support your journey.
- Give managers and employees time away from their job to go to meetings. Some organizations integrate their Health Committee work into yearly objectives and performance.
- Consider offering incentives to committee members. This could include being part of your organization's formal recognition program.



## Tips for leading effective mental health committees

- Create small, focused teams. Small groups are often more productive than large groups.
- Carefully define roles and responsibilities. Doing so will help keep members focused, engaged and productive.
- Set specific goals for the committee, and continually re-evaluate and adjust those goals.
- Give committee members the time and resources they need to be successful. For example, they may need time for training. This will help them to understand the needs, process and end goals.
- Make sure committee members meet regularly:
  - Invite people to meetings only if they really need to be there. Not everyone needs to be involved at every stage.
  - Ensure committee members create an agenda and set objectives for each meeting.
  - Be sure members come prepared to give input.
  - Encourage open discussions at each meeting.
  - Ensure members feel safe to share their views at meetings.
  - Recognize contributions.
  - Share minutes of the meetings with all stakeholders.
  - Have members evaluate whether the meetings are effective.
  - Hold members accountable for their role in executing the action plan.



## Tips for recruiting committee members

- Decide if you want an open recruitment (invite all employees to apply) or a targeted recruitment (invite one employee from each work location or employee group).
- Be clear about the roles and responsibilities, and what you expect of committee members.
- Define the length of the terms you expect employees to commit to their role.
- Help employees in getting the support of their manager – if needed.



## Sample terms of reference and roles and responsibilities

**Purpose:** The Mental Health Committee will assist with leading <name of organization> towards being a mentally healthy and safe workplace. The team will work to establish, promote, maintain and continually evaluate and improve the workplace mental health strategy.

### Team mandate:

- Promote and increase awareness of mental health supports, resources and programs.
- Identify and assess potential risks to workplace mental health. Build strategies to eliminate and mitigate the risks.
- Develop and implement an action plan to promote mental health in our workplace.
- Help monitor, evaluate and evolve the strategy.

**Team composition:**

- <Name, title>, is the senior leadership sponsor
- <Name, title>, is the committee champion
- Membership is open to any employee of <name of organization>
- <Describe the breakdown of member groups: i.e. unions, managers, employees, Communications, Human Resources (HR), etc.>

**Roles and responsibilities:**

The senior leadership sponsor will be responsible for:

- championing the strategy
- giving feedback and direction to guide the strategy

**The Champion will be responsible for:**

- leading the initiative and providing ongoing consultation
- chairing the action team meetings
- setting meeting agendas
- leading and keeping meetings on track
- liaising with senior leadership

**The members will be responsible for:**

- advocating for 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 progress of the team to the senior leadership sponsor once a quarter.
- The team will provide a report to staff on a monthly basis.

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