



Leadership commitment: fostering a mentally healthy and safe workplace

You play a key role in changing workplace culture and reducing stigma. You set the standards and tone for your organization. Leaders who champion the values of mentally healthy workplaces are likely to act in ways that support positive employee mental health.



Key elements:

1. Senior leader sponsor & champion
2. Allocating resources
3. Stated commitment/value statement

1. Sponsor & champion¹

As with any effort to change workplace culture, it's critical for the owner, President or CEO to champion workplace mental health. They also need to hold the leadership team accountable. Leaders can play an important role in tackling stigma, especially when sharing their own personal journeys with mental health.

The senior leadership sponsor(s) and champion(s) are responsible for the strategy.

The sponsor(s) They need to have the power and authority to make decisions at the highest level. This usually happens at the senior leadership level.

The champion(s) is passionate about workplace mental health. They'll be the 'face' of the strategy.

In some organizations, the sponsor and the champion may be the same person. In other organizations there may be many champions and sponsors.

If your organization's workplace is unionized, consider having champions from both management and the union.

2. Allocating resources

For a successful strategy, you need to invest resources – both human and financial.

Mental health task force/committee:

Create a multi-discipline mental health committee or task force to plan and implement initiatives.

They should represent key groups within your organization. Consider using your current Health & Safety Committee – or create a specific task force.

Members of the task force will be champions for change. They'll make sure the action plan meets the needs of your culture. Having a task force that represents all employees also helps increase employee buy-in. They'll be more engaged in the process and committed to the success.

3. Commitment/Value statement

Your mental health strategy needs to align with your workplace vision and values. Leaders play a key role in making that happen by creating a charter or statement about employee mental health. They could add the statement to a current charter or create a stand-alone.

Sun Life's Mental Health Vision:

Sun Life empowers and supports employees to achieve optimal mental well-being. We foster a culture that values diversity, where every employee feels Sun Life is a psychologically safe place to work.

- Employees practice good self-care and proactively access the resources they need
- Employees are resilient to the pressures of a changing work environment
- Employees returning to work feel safe and accommodated
- Disability and engagement trends reflect Sun Life's leadership in mental health
- Sun Life aligns with Canada's National Standard for Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace

Resources:

- [How to build a mental health committee](#)
- [CAMH's Mental Health Playbook for Business Leaders](#)
- [Navigating the New Normal: A COVID-19 Supplement to CAMH's Mental Health Playbook for Business Leaders](#)

¹Mental Health Commission of Canada (2013). Assembling the pieces. An implementation guide to the national standard for psychological health & safety in the workplace

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