List of Potential Actions by Psychosocial Factor

Introduction

The following actions are suggested to help your organization address the 15 psychosocial factors identified by the Psychosocial Survey for Healthcare. Employee survey findings should be compared with the results from the Organizational Review for Healthcare.

These actions have been selected on the basis of consultation with a range of healthcare organizations and the finding from Implementing the National Standard in the Canadian Health Sector: A cross-case analysis.. Additional actions are available from the Mental Health Commission of Canada and HealthcareCAN websites.

It is likely that your organization is planning or has already implemented some of these actions; discussion with your staff will provide feedback on their utility and may lead to suggestions for further action. Consulting with other healthcare organizations and monitoring relevant professional and academic publications will likely provide additional ideas.

Whatever actions you select, remember the importance of evaluation. This will enable you to demonstrate that it made an important difference. The basic question is: "How will we know whether these actions have made a difference for our healthcare organization?" Or, to put it another way, "How will we know whether our investment (in time, effort and money) paid off?" Answering questions like these provides a basis for continued investment of time and energy in programs.

1. Psychological Support

- Provide education and training to all staff to heighten psychological health awareness

- Provide training to help managers deal appropriately and supportively with employees who seem emotionally distressed while at work

- Provide comprehensive benefits that support employee psychological health, such as psychologists or other regulated mental health professionals; Employee and Family Assistance Programs.

- Create "stay-at-work" policies and programs to assist those who remain at work while dealing with mental health concerns (including formal and informal accommodations)

2. Organizational Culture

- Provide opportunities for teams to learn and develop together in order to strengthen relationships (e.g., team-building exercises)

- Identify role models or mentors for new/junior employees to strengthen and ensure the continuity of organizational culture

- Provide training to all staff on effective communication and conflict management

3. Clear Leadership and Expectations

- Implement a mentoring/job-shadowing program for leaders who are new to their position

- Provide training in leadership skills to those in supervisory/management roles

- Train supervisors/managers on effective communication, emotional intelligence and problem solving skills

4. Civility and Respect

- Provide training and resources on civil and respectful workplace behaviour (e.g., interpersonal conflict resolution, anger management)

- Provide support and training for staff who are most likely to experience difficult behaviour or complaints during the course of their work (e.g., from difficult customers/clients)

- Implement diversity training throughout the organization (e.g., on mental disability issues)

- Ensure formal investigation, documentation and resolution of incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including inappropriate client/customer behaviour

5. Psychological Job Fit

- Ensure that hiring and promotion decisions consider interpersonal/emotional competencies in addition to technical skills and knowledge (Note: "interpersonal/emotional competencies" refer to abilities and capacities to manage emotions and relationships, and to effectively solve challenging interpersonal problems at work)

- Provide training in interpersonal/emotional skills, particularly those required for highly-demanding positions

- Conduct regular and collaborative performance evaluations that include constructive feedback about interpersonal/emotional behaviour

- Perform job analyses to evaluate the interpersonal/psychological competency requirements of a job and create job descriptions accordingly

6. Growth and Development

- Obtain staff input regarding the training they need to enhance their interpersonal/emotional growth and development

- Provide opportunities for job-shadowing, job-sharing or mentoring that facilitate interpersonal/ emotional skill development

- Provide dedicated time and funds for training that include a focus on developing employees' interpersonal/ emotional skills

7. Recognition and Reward

- Train managers/supervisors on the importance of providing regular and appropriate recognition to their employees

- Openly acknowledge individual or team successes and accomplishments (e.g., at staff meetings, on posters or plaques, in newsletters)
- Create individual and group-level recognition and incentives for accomplishment of particular tasks/milestones

8. Involvement and Influence

- Provide staff control, as appropriate, over job design, how work tasks are organized, and how responsibilities evolve
- Provide training to help staff maintain a sense of control over work (e.g., priority setting and time management)
- Encourage employee participation and involvement during times of organizational change/transition

9. Workload Management

- Orient new staff comprehensively, providing accurate and realistic information about job demands and expectations
- Assign tasks based on the particular strengths and abilities of individuals, ensuring equity throughout the process
- Actively involve employees in the development of strategies to better manage workload (e.g., reduction or elimination of redundant or unnecessary tasks)

10. Engagement

- Provide opportunities for staff to socialize and/or participate in community events (e.g., staff BBQs, holiday parties, fundraising efforts)
- Recognize and appreciate staff willingness to "go the extra mile" at work (e.g., helping others during illness/ absence, participating in optional job-related activities or special committees)
- Create a pleasant and welcoming work environment (e.g., plants, artwork, natural lighting), including a common staff room where employees can gather
- Train and support staff to be organizational representatives ("ambassadors") to enhance recruitment and help build/sustain a positive public profile
- Solicit input from employees (e.g., via focus groups) on things that can be done to build their engagement at work

11. Balance

- Have management support and model positive work/life balance behaviour (i.e., ensure that messaging is consistent with demonstrated behaviour/expectations)
- Facilitate balance by providing opportunities that promote health and balance (e.g., on-site gym/ fitness facilities, provision of "personal time" off, options for unpaid leaves)
- Provide flexible work arrangements, where possible (e.g., compressed work schedules, work from home, virtual conferencing, part-time work, contract opportunities, job sharing)

12. Psychological Protection

- Provide ongoing orientation and training on organizational/union policies and programs on harassment, discrimination, violence at work and conflict management

- Orient and train managers/supervisors, human resources providers, and union personnel to be knowledgeable and accountable for ensuring a psychologically healthy and safe workplace

- Provide training in identifying and dealing with psychosocial stressors in the workplace (e.g., training in assertiveness, problem solving and stress management)

13. Protection of Physical Safety

- Review work-scheduling practices to ensure they do not impose undue risk of psychological harm and ensure staff have sufficient opportunities and facilities for rest

- Ensure that staff have the equipment they need to do their jobs safely

- Ensure that timely and effective supports are available following a critical incident (e.g. violence in the workplace)

- Support staff in identifying and reporting physical hazards

14. Protection from Moral Distress

- Provide staff with psychological support following critical incidents

- Provide staff with self-compassion training, particularly when errors occur in the course of their work

- Solicit input from workers to identify and resolve conflicts between their personal/professional standards and jobs

15. Support for Psychological Self-Care

- Provide staff with access to tools which enhance their capacity for psychological self-care, such as the Antidepressant Skills@Work, available online at no cost https://psychhealthandsafety.org/asaw/

- Provide workshops in psychological self-care and resilience

- Communicate to the workforce that the organization supports psychological self-care

- Establish a peer network to support employees in psychological self-care