

## Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplaces

One in five Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime and estimates suggest that one in 10 Canadians will experience a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year<sup>1</sup>.

The focus on workplace health has broadened from primarily physical health to include mental health, as a result of an emerging legal duty of care. The responsibility to provide a psychologically safe workplace requires a culture of strong support for respectfulness, equity and fairness while ensuring there is little tolerance for conduct that causes mental injury.

Such an environment fosters innovation, creativity and ingenuity, which are the sparks of growth for a University. These strategies also improve or increase employee engagement, sustainability, recruitment, retention, health, and safety.

The focus on a psychologically healthy and safe work and learning environment fits within the University's strategic plan and Healthy University Strategic Plan, and the Human Resource Services Strategic Plan.

Psychologically healthy and safe workplaces are proactive in nature, and are focused on:

- supporting individuals, departments and faculties in creating a respectful, healthy and engaging work and learning environment,
- the acknowledgement of psychological risk factors where they exist, and
- providing the tools to positively, effectively and efficiently address any identified issues.

The goal of this framework is to support departments, faculties and work units in achieving a psychologically safe workplace. A workplace with good psychological health is one in which a state of well-being exists, where the individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to the University community.

Psychological safety is the absence of harm and/or threat of harm to mental well-being that a worker might experience.

A psychologically healthy and safe workplace is one that promotes workers' psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm to workers' psychological health, including in negligent, reckless or intentional ways.

---

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Association for Mental Health (CAMH), Mental Illness and Addiction: Facts and Statistics, retrieved from [www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics](http://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics)

The University's psychologically healthy and safe workplace material is designed to assist in raising awareness of the importance of workplace factors that contribute to psychological safety, increase the understanding of why these factors are important, and to direct campus members to resources, services, processes and policies that can help maintain or increase their level of proficiency in these concepts. Due to the broad nature of the workplace and the variety of areas who provide support and services, creating and sustaining a psychologically healthy and safe campus will take the effort of the entire university community. The national standard for *Psychological health and safety in the workplace* was released in January 2013 as a voluntary guideline for workplaces. In June 2018, Alberta's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* changed to include harassment and violence.