



Mentally Healthy Workplaces

Checklist



Instructions

The Mentally Healthy Workplace Checklist (the checklist) has been designed for agencies to self-assess their systems and practices against the Northern Territory Public Sector Mentally Healthy Workplace Framework to recognise what they already have in place, identify gaps and inform plans and actions to make improvements.

This checklist should be completed by a group with representatives from both management and employees, such as those with responsibilities relating to Work, Health and Safety. Start with the Critical Success Factors section of the checklist to identify if the agency has the foundations for a mentally health workplace.

This is a chance for agencies to honestly assess what is working well and what may be hindering employees' mental health. The most important outcome from completing the checklist is the development of a well thought through plan which prioritises the gaps identified in this checklist and addresses the biggest risks to the mental health of employees in the agency. This doesn't need to be a separate plan, it may be embedded into existing agency plans.

**See the full Mentally Healthy
Workplace Toolkit on NTG Central.**

The NTPS has safe and inclusive workplaces where all employees are welcomed and supported, can thrive, and fulfil their potential.

Adapted from the SA Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit

The Checklist

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS



Checklist	Status	Comments
1. The leadership team have made a visible commitment to creating a mentally healthy workplace in writing and face to face with employees		
2. Ongoing communication and consultation occur with employees at all levels during the creation, implementation and evaluation of the agency's work to improve workplace mental health		
3. It is clearly identified who is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring the agency's approach to improving workplace mental health. This group includes a sponsor from the agency's leadership team and an appropriate range of expertise from within the agency		
4. An agency approach to creating a more mentally healthy workplace has been developed and endorsed by the leadership team. The approach identifies shared priorities and objectives based on analysis of existing data and consultation with employees		
5. A clear plan to support mental health in the workplace exists which provides the details on objectives, priority areas and actions at multiple levels of the agency (e.g. agency, team and individual). Plans may be embedded into existing agency planning		
6. The agency has committed sufficient resources to implement the plan		
7. The agency has a plan to measure success and monitor improvement over time		
TOTAL FOR CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS		/14

* Status Code: 0 = Not Implemented, 1 = Developing, 2 = Implemented

The Checklist

RAISE AWARENESS



Checklist	Status	Comments
1. Mental health awareness training programs are evidence based, promote recovery, encourage supportive conversations and include prevention of suicide		
2. The number of employees trained to respond to mental health disclosures and emergencies represents the size and risk factors of the agency		
3. Senior leaders have participated in training and understand the link between workplace factors and positive mental health		
4. Managers have developed skills in talking to employees about mental health and understand available workplace responses (e.g. referral pathways and workplace adjustments)		
5. All employees have the opportunity to learn about common mental illnesses to reduce the stigma and improve empathy around mental illness		
6. Information about warning signs for suicide, how to get help and what to do in the event of a suicide to support others (postvention strategies) is available for employees		
7. Employees in key roles defined by the agency (e.g., Health and Safety Representatives, first aid, peer support officers, contact officers) have developed skills in responding to mental health emergencies using an appropriate model e.g., Mental Health First Aid training		
8. Employees in key roles defined by the agency (e.g., Health and Safety Representatives, first aid, peer support officers, contact officers) have developed skills in responding to mental health emergencies using an appropriate model e.g., Mental Health First Aid training		
TOTAL FOR CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS		/16

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The Checklist

BUILD THE POSITIVES



Checklist	Status	Comments
1. Leadership identify areas of workplace culture that need to be improved and plans are implemented to address these areas		
2. Leadership and management training are available and build leadership capabilities to support mental health and wellbeing in the workplace		
3. Leaders and managers practice supportive leadership with their employees		
4. Managers have regular day to day interactions with employees to provide ongoing feedback, as well as formal performance discussions		
5. Teams are supported and encouraged to build positive co-worker relationships, to understand each other's strengths and skills, to work collaboratively and to support one another		
6. Respectful behaviours that are consistent with the NTPS Code of Conduct and Values are understood by all employees and regularly discussed amongst the team		
7. Role descriptions or job and person specifications are regularly reviewed to ensure the job demands are reasonable and following the principles of good work design (e.g. before recruitment and through the performance review process)		
8. Recruitment methods are used to assess personal competencies relevant to the position to ensure job-person fit		
9. Flexible working arrangements are actively promoted and uptake is monitored		
10. The impact of planned changes on employees is identified prior to the implementation of change and appropriate actions to support employees are embedded in the change plan		
11. Extra psychological support is made available to employees during organisational change and the impact on groups and individuals is considered		
12. A process is used to identify and implement workplace actions that can support and encourage employees to improve their physical health and wellbeing (such as healthy eating, physical activity and social connections)		
13. Evidence-based wellbeing programs are available to support employees to navigate challenges, build skills for resilience and work more effectively		
TOTAL FOR CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS		/26

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The Checklist

PREVENT HARM AND MANAGE RISK



Checklist	Status	Comments
1. The agency recognises psychosocial hazards and risks as part of their approach to work, health and safety and injury management		
2. The agency is clear about who will coordinate information on identifying psychosocial hazards (e.g. a committee or specific individuals)		
3. Psychosocial hazards are identified using multiple sources of data and prioritised for action		
4. Employees and teams are involved in identifying psychosocial hazards, assessing mental health risks, possible solutions, and the effectiveness of actions taken		
5. Controls for risks to mental health are implemented considering the hierarchy of controls		
6. Processes are available to report hazards to mental health early and confidentially		
7. Workforce demographics within the agency and their likely challenges based on factors such as gender, age and cultural background		
8. Responses to psychosocial hazards identify that a positive workplace culture and resources that support employees to perform their roles significantly reduce the risk of harm		
9. Responses to psychosocial hazards consider factors at the agency, team and individual levels		
10. The agency has an approach to building cultural safety and growing		
TOTAL FOR CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS		/20

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The Checklist

ACT EARLY AND SUPPORT RECOVERY



Checklist	Status	Comments
1. Agency policies support disclosure of mental illness and enable employees experiencing a mental illness or mental health issue to make workplace adjustments that support their ability to be at work		
2. Support to employees with a mental illness considers the coordinated involvement of Work Health and Safety, Human Resources, Injury Management and other relevant areas.		
3. Teams showing signs of distress are recognised and provided with support		
4. An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) service is provided, its full range of services are widely advertised and employees are encouraged to and can access it when needed		
5. Managers understand their responsibility to respond to claims of harassment and bullying and take action		
6. The agency has clearly defined roles for supporting employees internally (e.g. peer support officers, Human Resources, Return to Work) and clear pathways for referral to external parties		
7. The agency recognises the demands on people in these support roles and provides support and training for them to fulfil these roles		
8. Managers are aware of how to make appropriate referrals to healthcare practitioners		
9. Employees understand the options available to them if they believe they are being harassed or bullied and feel supported to take action		
TOTAL FOR CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS		/18

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Mentally Healthy Workplaces

Statement of commitment

As leaders in this workplace, we commit to collectively building a culture of care

1. We will support and promote our people's mental health so they can give their best selves to the service of the NT community through their work in this agency and the NT Public Sector.
2. We will educate ourselves on mental health in the workplace and support the education of our people so that we can reduce stigma and support our people's mental health.
3. We will create a positive organisational culture for our people.
4. We will recognise and respond to mental health risks with the aim of preventing harm to our people.
5. We will encourage and support our people to seek help for mental illness early, so we can support their recovery and enable our people to stay at or return to work.

Signed:

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Workplace Toolkit on NTG Central.

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Adapted from the SA Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit





Mentally Healthy Workplaces

What can you do?

Raise awareness

Build a common understanding of mental health. Help to reduce stigma, increase awareness of the signs of poor mental health and how to respond.

Employees

Learn more about mental health and related topics so you can support your own and others' wellbeing at work.

Managers

Lead a team that can talk openly and learn more about mental health and mental illness in the workplace

Executive Leaders

Make talking about and supporting mental health part of workplace culture so that it's 'how we do things around here'.

Build the positives

Create a culture of care where people feel supported at work, to enhance mental health and reduce the impact of stressors in the workplace.

Employees

Behave respectfully towards others and make connections with others in the team. Participate in physical and mental wellness programs that promote good health.

Managers

Be clear about what the team needs to achieve, get to know the individuals in your team and lead by example with care and respect for all.

Executive Leaders

Develop a positive organisational culture with well-designed jobs and supportive relationships that promote good mental health.

Prevent harm and manage risk

Identify and manage the things that could harm mental health at work. Take proactive steps to create a mentally healthy workplace.

Employees

Recognise hazards to mental health in the work environment. Take steps to control risks by discussing options with colleagues and managers and contributing to change.

Managers

Identify psychosocial hazards and control risks to reduce stress for you and your team.

Executive Leaders

Understand psychosocial hazards to mental health, assess the risks in the agency and ensure there is a plan to protect mental health by systematically reducing the risks.

Act early and support recovery

Encourage people to seek support for mental health concerns by addressing stigma relating to mental illness and increasing people's capability to respond supportively.

Employees

Seek help early to support your mental health and encourage others to do the same.

Managers

Know how to recognise the signs of mental illness and offer support to employees who you are concerned about.

Executive Leaders

Ensure everyone understands that mental illness is common, treatable and can be discussed openly. Support employees to seek help and stay at work whenever possible.

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Adapted from the SA Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit



Critical success factors for implementing the NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit

Agency guide

Document title	Critical success factors for implementing the NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit
Contact details	Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment
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Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1.0	09/07/23	Principal Advisor SWPD	First version

Acronyms	Full form
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
NT	Northern Territory
NTPS	Northern Territory Public Service
OCPE	Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment
WHS	Work, Health and Safety

Acknowledgement of country

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and gather and their continuing connection to land and waters. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We pay tribute to the diversity of First Nations peoples of Australia and their ongoing culture.

Recognition

The Northern Territory Government gratefully acknowledges and thanks the South Australian Government for permission to adapt the NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit from the South Australian Public Sector equivalent resource.

Contents

Introduction	4
Critical success factors	4
1. Demonstrate leadership commitment.....	4
Where to start	5
Visible actions leadership teams can take.....	6
2. Take a collaborative approach to positive mental health	7
3. Establish a central group.....	7
4. Determine and work towards achieving shared mental health objectives	8
5. Create a plan for action at multiple levels of the agency	9
6. Commit resources	9
7. Measure improvement.....	10
Contact information.....	12

Introduction

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) is committed to creating a mentally healthy Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS). The [NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace Framework](#)¹ (the framework) and associated [toolkit](#)² have been developed to support agencies to take collective action towards this aim.

The Agency Guide (the guide) provides information on critical success factors for implementing the framework and its four areas of focus:

- Build the positives
- Raise awareness
- Prevent harm and manage risk
- Act early and support recovery.

It recognises that agencies will be at different stages of taking action for a mentally healthy workplace. Agencies should consider what will work best for their context.

Critical success factors

Seven critical success factors are identified as essential for agencies to consider when implementing change for a more mentally healthy NTPS. These include:

1. demonstrate leadership commitment
2. take a collaborative approach
3. establish a central group to guide strategy development and monitor implementation
4. determine and work towards shared mental health objectives
5. create a plan for action at multiple levels
6. commitment of resources
7. measure improvement.

Each of these factors and considerations for how they can be applied are outlined below.

1. Demonstrate leadership commitment

An agency's leadership team has an essential role in creating and maintaining an organisational culture that expects, promotes and supports mentally healthy workplaces.

The leadership team's role includes championing the mental health of its people and modelling the behaviours of care for self and others. Making a visible commitment to supporting the mental health of employees is important.

¹ https://ocpe.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1057654/ntps-mentally-healthy-workplace-framework.pdf

² <https://ntgcentral.nt.gov.au/mentally-healthy>

Where to start

There are a range of ways to make a visible commitment to workplace mental health.

For agencies that have already made a visible commitment to improving workplace mental health – it is about ensuring leadership commitment remains visible and active.

Your employees may benefit from information about how existing agency initiatives and the NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace and Toolkit connect.

For agencies yet to share their commitment, a sample [statement of commitment](#)³ has been developed as a guide. Agencies may choose to create their statement of commitment with employees.

When creating a statement of commitment remember that language matters. Using informed language helps to reduce stigma. [Everymind Australia](#)⁴ provides information on contemporary language and [Life in Mind](#)⁵ offers a useful language guide when communicating about mental health.

For agencies looking to grow the leadership team's level of commitment, there are a few strategies that may assist. For example:

- Demonstrating the link between creating a mentally healthy workplace and the NTPS Capability Framework, Code of Conduct, and agency values
- Raising leader awareness of their legal obligations under the [Work Health and Safety \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2011](#)⁶ (the WHS Act), to manage psychosocial hazards in the workplace
- Developing a business case focusing on the specific priorities for the agency (e.g., costs associated with psychological injury claims or sick leave, or positioning as an employer of choice)
- Demonstrating the return on investment of a mentally healthy workplace
- Using the NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace Framework and Toolkit
- Providing examples of how other workplaces have developed mentally healthy workplaces in the NTPS and beyond

Remember that leadership commitment is often the most important factor for the success of any agency-wide action, particularly when it relates to workplace culture, employee wellbeing and safety.

Rather than being a one-time commitment statement, leadership needs to be visible, genuine and ongoing.

³ <https://ntgcentral.nt.gov.au/resources/documents/my-job/health-and-wellbeing/mentally-healthy-toolkit/implementation-sample-statement-of-commitment.docx>

⁴ <https://everymind.org.au/understanding-mental-health/mental-health/language-and-stigma>

⁵ <https://lifeinmind.org.au/the-charter/national-communications-charter-language-guide>

⁶ <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>

Visible actions leadership teams can take

Demonstrating commitment is different to saying you are committed to mental health at work. Actions can often speak louder than words.

Below are some practical examples of how leadership teams might show their commitment to employee mental health:

Write it down	Add caring for the mental health of employees into the strategic plan or make a public commitment in writing e.g., signed statement of commitment.
Include indicators	Include indicators on the wellbeing of employees in leadership performance agreements.
Assign specific actions	Assign specific actions to develop a mentally healthy workplace to members of the leadership team.
Talk often about mental health	Talk often about mental health at presentations, meetings and other opportunities. If you or someone close to you has experienced a mental illness, learn about safe ways to share lived experience and normalise discussing mental health at work.
Communicate zero tolerance	Communicate zero tolerance for discriminatory or disrespectful behaviour and actively call out negative behaviour when witnessed.
Ask employees how they are	Leaders often ask about how specific work or projects are going, try asking “How is your day going?” or “How are you today?”
Use regular discussions	Use regular discussions to proactively ensure employees are receiving adequate feedback and recognition, clarification about their roles and appropriate support.
Attend meetings	Attend meetings where the agency’s plan to improve mental health at work is being discussed.
Encourage and participate in learning	Consider your agency approach to mental health awareness raising. Provide a range of evidence based training and acknowledge days of significance such as World Mental Health Day.
Support and participate	Join in activities that promote wellness and mental health through increasing physical exercise, nutrition and social connections.
Protect employee psychological health	Be aware of your obligations to manage psychosocial risks and take informed action to remove, reduce and manage harm.
Look after yourself	Practice self-care and be proactive about your own health and wellbeing. Share what works for you and encouraging others to do the same.

2. Take a collaborative approach to positive mental health

Achieving a mentally healthy workplace is a shared responsibility. It requires consultation and collaboration between a range of people with different skills and perspectives.

The participation of employees from all levels and functions in the agency is particularly important in:

- developing a shared vision for a more mentally healthy workplace
- confirming the focus and priorities of agency level actions
- determining local team actions
- reviewing success and impacts
- creating a sense of belonging, connection and shared purpose.

Participation ensures increased ownership of the actions taken and increases the likelihood actions reflect the range of needs and opportunities.

When planning consultation, collaboration and co-design with employees be mindful to make participation voluntary, acknowledge that discussing mental health and wellbeing can be challenging and provide information about supports.

Where the topic relates to reducing harm and managing risk to employee psychological health this [Safe Work Australia infographic⁷](#) provides information about work, health and safety consultation with employees.

Consider how your employees will contribute, have a voice and participate in your agency's approach to building positive mental health.

3. Establish a central group

A clear corporate governance is essential for the development, implementation, and review of your agency's approach to workplace mental health. An existing central group or committee may already be in place in your agency to lead this work.

Governance should enable cooperation between functions (for example, leadership, health and safety, organisational development and human resources) as well as invite input from employees.

Ideally a member of your agency's leadership team will lead the central group to oversee the implementation of the framework (or agency equivalent).

To improve chances of success, consider how your agency might harness all the available expertise and perspectives. Expertise might reside in a range of areas across the agency, or it may need to be developed in individuals through professional development.

⁷ https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-12/consult_workers_dec22.pdf

Some areas of expertise to consider include:

- mental health, mental ill-health, suicide prevention and trauma
- leadership
- organisational development
- work health and safety
- injury management
- health promotion
- cultural responsiveness
- equity, diversity and inclusion
- training and development.

Agencies may choose to source expertise through recruitment, by contracting-in specific expertise or connecting with other NTPS agencies that have undertaken similar initiatives to assist with establishing a central group.

4. Determine and work towards achieving shared mental health objectives

Having clear agency objectives relating to the mental health of employees that are supported by leadership and embraced by employees is key to ensuring that the actions taken are appropriate and worthwhile.

Mental health objectives can relate to both:

- reducing costs associated with mental illness or harm to mental health in the workplace from fewer worker's compensation claims, less sick leave and poor performance.
- realising benefits of having employees who experience improved mental health at work from higher engagement, improved performance, and increased retention.

Preventing harm and managing risks to employees' mental health in the workplace is a critical priority. Agencies need to understand factors negatively impacting their employees, start to address these and meet their legal and ethical responsibilities to provide a safe workplace.

The [prevent harm and manage risk section](#)⁸ of the toolkit has more information on how to identify and manage psychosocial hazards and risks in the workplace.

The [build the positives section](#)⁹ of the toolkit has more information on ways to realise the benefits of promoting better mental health at work.

⁸ <https://ntgcentral.nt.gov.au/my-job/health-safety-and-wellbeing/mentally-healthy-workplace/prevent>

⁹ <https://ntgcentral.nt.gov.au/my-job/health-safety-and-wellbeing/mentally-healthy-workplace/build>

5. Create a plan for action at multiple levels of the agency

To create a mentally healthy workplace, each agency need to consider priorities and associated actions, timeframes and responsibilities. Actions may align with or may form part of other agency plans such as a strategic plan, WHS plan, diversity and inclusion or workplace culture plan.

There are a range of ways to consider action for workplace wellbeing. This could include actions at three distinct levels:

- the agency or system level
- the team or group level
- the individual level.

Research has shown that interventions at the system level usually have the greatest impact on mental health in the workplace and are therefore essential to creating a mentally healthy workplace.

For example targeted professional development to build manager's understanding and capabilities to assist employees can have a far reaching impact.

6. Commit resources

The evidence is clear that committing to improving mental health at work makes financial sense.

For every dollar invested in evidence informed initiatives towards creating a mentally healthy workplace, the average return is \$2.30 in benefits to the organisation¹⁰.

These benefits typically take the form of improved employee health and workplace culture. This means improved productivity through reduced absenteeism and presenteeism (reduced productivity at work as a result of coming to work unwell), and lower numbers of compensation claims.

This return on investment can be significantly higher in large public sector organisations and where multiple actions to support the mental health of employees are implemented.

It is useful to seek advice and guidance from subject matter experts in the fields of psychology, health promotion and work, health and safety when planning initiatives and committing resources. Examples of initiatives include:

- awareness and capability building relating to mental health, suicide prevention and stigma reduction
- improving policy and procedures to reduce risk to employee wellbeing, streamline pathways to support and improve safety culture
- early intervention programs to support employees to stay and return to work.

¹⁰ Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PWC) (2014) *Creating a mentally healthy workplace: Return on investment analysis*. Melbourne: Beyond Blue.

It is expected that agencies commit resources to improve mental health at work commensurate with their risk profile.

7. Measure improvement

Agencies are encouraged to evaluate work towards creating a mentally healthy workplace to inform continuous improvement.

The [Mentally Healthy Workplace Checklist](#)¹¹ provided in the toolkit offer the opportunity to consider agency progress across the four areas of the framework and critical success factors.

To complete a comprehensive stocktake of the activities already underway consider consulting with key stakeholders with responsibilities in the following work areas:

- work health and safety (e.g., return to work, early intervention supports like EAP, other early intervention policies, workplace adjustments etc.)
- enabling policies (e.g., bullying and harassment, family and domestic violence)
- learning and development (e.g., mental health literacy training, training for supervisors that promotes skills development like emotional intelligence training, if applicable)
- diversity and inclusion (e.g., relevant diversity policies, significant days e.g., NAIDOC week activities, health promotion e.g., RUOK Day), and
- organisational values/culture (e.g., bespoke organisational values, cultural reform initiatives etc.)¹².

Consultation with a full range of employees can also provide important insights into the needs, opportunities and impact of existing initiatives.

Agencies may consider accessing a range of other data sources to inform planning and evaluation.

Such data could include:

People Matter Survey data	The People Matter Survey ¹³ is a whole of NTPS employee perception survey conducted biannually. People Matter data provides useful information about how employees within a workgroup or agency perceive aspect or work and the workplace. Items in the “Inclusion and Wellbeing”, “Bullying and Harassment”, and “Burnout” indices relate to inclusion, mental health and associated risks at work. These can be examined alongside the other relevant data at the agency and divisional/work group level.
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¹¹ <https://ntgcentral.nt.gov.au/resources/documents/my-job/health-and-wellbeing/mentally-healthy-toolkit/implementation-mentally-healthy-workplaces-checklists.docx>

¹² © (2022) MSA Tip Sheet – Stocktake: Gathering information through consultation. APS Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Unit, Australian Public Service Commission, Commonwealth of Australia.

¹³ <https://ocpe.nt.gov.au/people-and-planning/employee-survey-and-workforce-statistics/people-matter-survey>

Psychosocial risk assessment surveys or climate surveys	Psychosocial risk assessments can be used to inform WHS risk management processes. For example, People at Work¹⁴ is a free and validated Australian psychosocial risk assessment survey. The survey assesses a number of the most common psychosocial hazards and factors. It is part of a five step process to identify, assess and control risks to psychological health at work. Agencies should seek WHS advice.
Workplace injury and incident reports	The number of workplace incidents causing work related stress may be used as a baseline indicator. Be aware though that people may decide not to report work related stress. Improving awareness about mental health at work, reducing stigma and having clear reporting pathways can improve reporting and data accuracy.
Workers' compensation data	Workers' compensation data provides useful information on frequency of injury, causes and costs of injuries that result in workers' compensation claims. Note that only injuries where work is the major contributing factor will result in an accepted claim and therefore be reported.
Sick leave data	Trends in use of leave can provide information on how individuals and work groups are coping. Whilst this information needs to be interpreted cautiously (e.g., a bad flu season can cause an overall increase in sick leave) it can be an additional source of data to examine.
Employee Assistance Program data	<p>Agencies receive deidentified Employee Assistance Program reports that include high-level data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the uptake of support services by employees and their families • if the support was for a work-related and non-work-related issue • the high-level category of the support theme e.g., workplace bullying • data trends for agencies to note e.g., increase in support theme relating to family and domestic violence <p>Agencies may consider using EAP report data to inform their actions and initiatives for employee wellbeing. Where there is a low service utilisation, agencies may consider and address barriers to engagement.</p>
Individual wellbeing data	Measures of individual wellbeing such as measures of resilience or health need to be considered carefully. Agencies seeking to use or collect data on individual wellbeing should seek expert advice and have a clear understanding about data use, privacy, confidentiality, and support for employees.

¹⁴ <https://www.peopleatwork.gov.au/>

Contact information

For further information contact:

Strategic Workforce Planning and Development (SWPD)

Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment

Phone: 08 8999 3708

Email: swpd.ocpe@nt.gov.au

Common questions and answers

NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit

Agency guide - July 2023

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1.0	04/07/23	Principal Advisor SWPD	First version

Acronyms	Full form
CPE	The Commissioner for Public Employment
DCDD	Department of Corporate and Digital Development
HSR	Health and Safety Representatives
NTG	Northern Territory Government
NTPS	Northern Territory Public Sector
OCPE	Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment
PCBU	Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking
SWPD	Strategic Workforce Performance and Development
WHS	Work health and safety

Acknowledgement of country

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Contents

Overview	4
About the framework and toolkit	4
Questions about the framework and toolkit	4
Who is the toolkit for?	4
Do agencies have to use the framework and toolkit?	5
How will the toolkit be launched?	5
How will agencies use the toolkit?	6
What reporting is required?	6
Questions about work health and safety	6
What are the recent changes relating to psychological health?	6
Will the toolkit help agencies address these WHS changes?	7
What guidance is available to agencies?	7
Where should agencies start to respond to WHS changes?	8
Who needs to be aware of the WHS amendment change?	8
Questions about data sources	8
How do agencies use data to inform and measure their action for a mentally healthy workplace?	8
What is the relevance of data to psychosocial risks?	9
How can agencies use People Matter Survey data?	9
What's new in the 2023 People Matter reports?	10
Should a Psychosocial Risk Assessment Survey be conducted?	10
Further information and contacts	11

Common questions and answers

NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit

Overview

This guide provides information for Chief Executive Officers and key stakeholders about the launch of the NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit in August 2023. It includes information about psychosocial hazards and the People Matters Survey results, which can be used as a source of information to help identify workplace hazards.

This guide has been developed with input from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, the Department of Corporate and Digital Development and NT WorkSafe.

About the framework and toolkit

In late 2021, the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) launched the [NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplaces Framework¹](#) (the framework).

The framework outlines the areas all agencies should consider to create mentally healthy workplaces by focusing our efforts on:

- Raising awareness
- Building the positives
- Preventing harm and managing risk
- Intervening early and supporting recovery

In August 2023, the OCPE will launch a NTPS Mentally Healthy Workplace Toolkit (the toolkit) to support implementation of the framework. The toolkit will include practical information, tools and example actions for employees, managers and executive leaders.

The toolkit is being developed in collaboration with a cross-agency working group and draws on evidence informed information and resources. It will be located on NTG Central and added to over time.

Questions about the framework and toolkit

Who is the toolkit for?

The framework and toolkit are applicable to all people employed by the NTPS. The toolkit provides information and resources suited to three audiences:

- all employees
- managers (people leaders)
- executive leaders

These audiences span across the diversity of our people, the nature of the work they undertake and their workplace environments.

¹ <https://ocpe.nt.gov.au/inclusion-and-diversity/creating-mentally-healthy-workplaces>

Toolkit content is written in a way that recognises all of us as employees will have our own unique experience of mental health and wellbeing at work. And that some of us will have additional roles, responsibilities and influence in creating a mentally healthy workplace.

People with specific responsibilities relating to workplace mental health may find the toolkit useful to meet some of their objectives, for example:

- work health and safety
- injury management
- human resources, learning and development
- leadership and people management
- change management
- organisational development

However, the toolkit is general in nature and those with specific responsibilities are encouraged to access appropriate information from relevant sources.

Do agencies have to use the framework and toolkit?

The framework is evidence-based and has been developed in collaboration with a cross sector working group. It provides a comprehensive view of the key elements in creating mentally healthy workplaces.

The framework presents a minimum standard expected of a mentally healthy workplace. NTPS agencies may need to consider additional actions to address their specific needs.

Some agencies may already have a strategy or framework in place to support the mental health of their people. It is recommended that these agencies assess to ensure their approach covers the same areas as the framework and is aligned with its messages.

Once launched, the toolkit will provide a useful suite of resources for agencies regardless of whether they are using the framework or their own agency alternative.

How will the toolkit be launched?

The Commissioner for Public Employment (CPE) will launch the toolkit in August 2023. The launch will include:

- CPE email to all CEOs
- CPE email to all NTPS employees
- Online mental health awareness sessions open to all NTPS employees
- Launch gathering for working group members and collaborators

A toolkit communications pack will be provided to agency Communications Directors to support agency level information sharing and promotion.

Agencies will be encouraged to promote the framework and toolkit in ways that recognise their context, narrative and stage in the journey to create a mentally healthy workplace.

How will agencies use the toolkit?

The way that agencies will use the toolkit will depend on their unique context and circumstances. For example, agencies already well along their workplace mental health journey will take different action when compared to an agency commencing a targeted approach.

It is recommended that agencies start with the Critical Success Factors information to inform the successful implementation of the framework.

Completing the *Mentally Healthy Workplace Checklist* relating to this section will identify any gaps in this section as an early priority. Strong agency support and planning is essential to addressing gaps identified in the rest of the framework.

Beyond the Critical Success Factors, there are a range of ways to prioritise implementation, including:

- raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing across the agency
- starting with an achievable evidence-informed action to help build momentum
- identifying actions that will have the largest impact or greatest reach
- identifying the areas of highest risk and applying risk management processes

It is also important to recognise what the agency is doing well and to reinforce and monitor these activities to maintain their ongoing effectiveness.

What reporting is required?

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment does not require agencies to report on their use of the framework or toolkit (once launched).

Agencies may include information about action taken towards workplace mental health through regular NTPS reporting requirements, such as the State of the Service or Work Health and Safety Action Plans.

Questions about work health and safety

What are the recent changes relating to psychological health?

Under the [Work Health and Safety \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2011](https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011)² (the WHS Act), employers must ensure the health and safety of their workers and other people in the workplace. Health is defined in the WHS Act as including psychological health.

The [Work Health and Safety \(National Uniform Legislation\) Regulations 2011](https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-REGULATIONS-2011)³ (the WHS Regulations) has been amended to include psychosocial hazards in the workplace and this came into effect 1 July 2023 in the Northern Territory.

² <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>

³ <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-REGULATIONS-2011>

Division 11 of the Regulations defines a **psychosocial hazard** and what needs to be considered when controlling risks, including the frequency and severity of exposure, and how psychosocial hazards may interact or combine.

The new regulations clarify existing employer duties to manage psychosocial risks.

Will the toolkit help agencies address these WHS changes?

Once launched in August 2023, the toolkit will provide general information for executive leaders, managers and employees about creating a mentally healthy workplace.

As part of this, the toolkit will include sector-wide information about preventing harm and managing risks. Agencies promoting the toolkit may raise the baseline awareness of common psychosocial hazards, recommended risk management processes, reporting pathways, and roles and responsibilities.

Rather than providing deep dive information it points to NTPS WHS information and trusted external websites. For this reason, the toolkit is not the sole resource or solution to meeting duty holder obligations under the *WHS Act*.

What guidance is available to agencies?

NT WorkSafe have delivered presentations to employers in the Territory about changes to WHS legislation relating to psychosocial risk management. Slides have been distributed to NTG agency staff who attended these sessions. Specific queries about WHS legislation can be directed to NT WorkSafe.

The NTPS Work Health and Safety (WHS) Framework which explains how WHS arrangements operate including explanation of agency responsibilities to manage WHS. To support agencies to meet their WHS responsibilities a suite of templates and tools and is available at on [NTG Central](#)⁴.

Tools to assist in managing psychosocial hazards are being developed using material from other jurisdictions including:

- Safe Work Australia’s [Model Code of Practice for managing psychosocial hazards at work](#)⁵ provides practical guidance to assist duty holders understand their obligations.
- QLD Government’s - [Workplace health, safety, and wellbeing, Queensland Government](#)⁶ provides a range of tools including psychosocial risk assessment tool.

⁴ <https://ntgcentral.nt.gov.au/safety/ntps-work-health-and-safety>

⁵ <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-code-practice-managing-psychosocial-hazards-work>

⁶ <https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/employment-policy-career-and-wellbeing/health-safety-and-wellbeing/workplace-health-safety-and-wellbeing>

Where should agencies start to respond to WHS changes?

Agencies may have their own approach to responding to the changes. Example steps are included below:

- Connect with your agency WHS officer/s and head to [Work health and safety in government](#)⁷ website on NTG Central to start your journey through the information available
- Familiarise yourself with the Safe Work Australia [Model Code of Practice for Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#)⁸ which provides helpful explanations and information about hazards, controls, and other guidance
- Plan your approach to psychosocial risk management as part of the WHS management system, this may include establishing governance, investing in immediate capability uplift of the governance group members, establishing a timeline for communication/ engagement and/or seeking advice
- Commence the risk management process

Who needs to be aware of the WHS amendment change?

All duty holders under the [Work Health and Safety \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2011](#)⁹ (the WHS Act), must comply with the regulations – including Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU), officers, managers and supervisors, and workers (employees).

Agencies should make employees aware of the new WHS Regulations through available internal communications functions, including via appointed Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) and Health and Safety Committees.

Questions about data sources

How do agencies use data to inform and measure their action for a mentally healthy workplace?

The framework outlines five key performance indicators relating to creating a mentally healthy workplace:

- Increased wellbeing and employee engagement
- Improved workplace culture
- Reduced injury / illness and severity
- Improved recovery and return to work
- Increased organisational maturity

Agencies will use a combination of data sources to understand the current environment and employee experience to inform continuous improvement across all four of the framework's focus areas.

The Prevent harm and manage risk action area of the framework and the WHS changes require agencies to consider data to identify **psychosocial hazards** and manage **psychosocial risks**.

⁷ <https://ntgcentral.nt.gov.au/safety/ntps-work-health-and-safety>

⁸ <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-code-practice-managing-psychosocial-hazards-work>

⁹ <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>

What is the relevance of data to psychosocial risks?

WHS obligations require employers to manage the risks to the health and safety of their employees.

This risk management approach involves the following:

1. Identify all hazards
2. Assess any risks
3. Implement measures to control risks
4. Review the effectiveness of control measures.

The first step of identifying hazards involves using various sources of information to help determine what risks might exist in your workplace.

Consulting employees and asking their views is central to the effective management of work health and safety. Results from the recently completed 2023 People Matters Survey provides a useful source of data to help agencies identify if any psychosocial hazards exist in their organisation.



It is important to note that survey results are not the only source of information about psychosocial hazards. Other sources include direct observation of workplace behaviours, analysis of leave data, WHS incidents, employee grievances and complaints or matters by staff in the workplace. These sources of information form part of a psychosocial risk assessment process.¹⁰

More information is available at [Safe Work Australia](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au).

How can agencies use People Matter Survey data?

People Matter data can inform and measure agency progress towards creating mentally healthy workplaces.

Relevant survey data includes:

- Employee engagement and wellbeing indices
- Rates of experienced and witnessed bullying and harassment
- Perceptions of inclusion, stress and burnout

It is important to review the data at the agency as well as divisional/team levels, to understand and compare differences across the agency, and determine if hotspots exist. This can help to direct action to where it is most needed.

¹⁰ [Psychosocial risk assessment tool \(worksafe.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/psychosocial-risk-assessment-tool)

What's new in the 2023 People Matter reports?

This year, Agency People Matter reports include new indices that relate to **workplace wellbeing and climate**.

Informed by external subject matter expertise, these indices group existing People Matter questions seen as key contributing factors to employee psychological health and safety at work, into two areas:

Workplace wellbeing

The workplace wellbeing questions are grouped together as workplace factors that relate to some of the common psychosocial hazards at work. These results provide insight into the wellbeing of a workplace, however agencies should note that the results do not cover all psychosocial hazards, e.g., bullying and harassment and exposure to emotionally impactful events/content.

For this reason, results should be used alongside other data and employee consultation when identifying and addressing psychosocial hazards at work.

Workplace climate

Workplace climate refers to the overall atmosphere, environment, and conditions within a workplace. It encompasses the prevailing attitudes, behaviours, and interactions among employees and their perception of the organisational culture.

The workplace climate questions have been grouped as items that could relate to psychosocial safety climate in the workplace. They provide some insight into perceptions about the management practices, policies, practices and procedures for the protection of employee psychological health and safety.

Whilst this should not be considered as a complete data set for predicting psychological hazards in the workplace, it may be useful to consider alongside other data to identify improvement opportunities. For example improving employee safety to speak up may address the underlying causes of other psychosocial hazards.

Agencies are encouraged to consider this data as indicative only and to use this alongside all People Matter data and other data sources.

For more information refer to the Responding to your People Matter Survey Results – 2023 Guide for Agencies.

Should a Psychosocial Risk Assessment Survey be conducted?

Some agencies may decide to seek additional data to inform actions about creating a mentally healthy workplace, and/or inform WHS risk management processes.

An example is the [People at Work](#) survey which is a free and validated Australian psychosocial risk assessment survey. The survey assesses a number of the most common psychosocial hazards and factors. It is part of a five step process to identify, assess and control risks to psychological health at work.

The decision to conduct a survey on psychosocial hazards is a matter for agencies. There are a number of perspectives to consider by Agency WHS Committees or People and Culture Committees or similar.

Further information and contacts

Mentally Healthy Workplaces Framework and People Matters Survey

For assistance regarding the framework and the People Matters Survey email [Strategic Workforce Planning and Development \(SWPD\)](#), OCPE.

Work Health and Safety

For assistance on Work Health and Safety matters email:

- [Agency WHS Officers \(various contacts\)](#)
- [DCDD Reform Office](#)
- [NT Worksafe](#)