

POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Challenges | Resources | Support

Why have a mental health policy?

Having a mental health policy at your organization provides a place for your supports to be identified. Giving it to your team ensures transparency, clarity, and consistency, and also gives reassurance that there is a process for handling situations when they arise.

It will help bring people onto the same page when you share it with the parents of the kids you work with. They'll know your team is a trusted support that both they and their kids can turn to if concerning behaviour starts to emerge.

Knowing there are agreed-upon procedures for dealing with mental health challenges will mean your team members will feel supported and never alone when they identify a mental health concern in one of the kids they work with.



WANT MORE HELP?

The Expert Talk has experts available for consultation as you work through policy-creation yourself, or to do the entire process for you. We're here to help you create the best possible policy for you and your team.

Items to help you create your own mental health policy

1

Who is the audience of the policy?

The document should define each person that is impacted by the policy. For example, the policy is for front-line staff, but is to be read by parents so they know what to expect in certain situations.

2

Who needs to be notified, how, and when?

For example, when someone engages in self-harming behaviour, or a mental health crisis situation arises the policy specifies who in your organization needs to become aware, and when.

3

Would a form be best suited to notify required parties of the situation?

Attaching an annex to the policy to standardize the method of notification may ensure those who need to know have all the information required to make decisions, or answer questions.

A top-down view of a group of people sitting around a wooden table. They are looking at a large white sheet of paper or a tablet in the center of the table. The people are wearing various casual clothing like plaid shirts and jeans. The table has a natural wood grain.

Environmental Scan

Reviewing the policies other organizations that work in your field may have about mental health could help you develop a more rigorous policy. Or prevent you from having to start from scratch. Doing some web searches, or asking your colleagues in your field may reduce the work you have to do to create your policy.

Items to help you create your own mental health policy

4 What resources will be offered to your organization's team for mental health?

When a crisis situation arises determine the referral sources to be used. Everyday situations have a mental health nexus too, not just crisis situations, so ensuring a mix of resources would be beneficial. Your reference guide from the Mental Health Commission of Canada includes a good list to get started, but be sure to look up local resources in your area as well. It's also a good idea to contact your local resources and get a clear picture of what they offer and how they can best be accessed.

5 What mental health training or awareness activities is your organization offering?

Having the signs and symptoms of possible mental health concerns recognized is essential for early intervention. Spelling out the annual mental health training plan will help readers know what to expect, and what is expected of them. This can also include commitments like reviewing the ALGEES method in monthly staff meetings with a case study discussion, for example.

6 What does your jurisdiction dictate for duty to report for a mental health situation involving minors?

For example, in some jurisdictions when there is a possible neglectful situation it has to be reported to a government authority. A Google search of "duty to report [your province]" is a good starting place and will pull up resources such as Children's Aid Society, Family & Children's Services, and your local and provincial police departments. Check as well with any associations or organizations you're a part of to ensure you're compliant with their guidelines.

7 Who is responsible for approving the document?

If your organization interacts with a health district perhaps they need to be consulted on the document before final approval by your organization's director.

Items to help you create your own mental health policy

8 How often will the policy be reviewed and updated?

Determining this at the outset will ensure up-to-date mental health terminology and research can be integrated to the policy. The Mental Health Commission of Canada recommends recertifying in MHFA every two years. This could be an opportune time to update your policy upon completion.

9 Where does this document reside, and who is responsible for managing updates?

The storage cabinet in the back of the office that only one person has a key to may not be the best option. Finding a digital, and physical location, for the most current document that is well publicized will make sure everyone is on the same page.

10 Define key concepts in the document.

Does everyone know what constitutes a mental health crisis? Perhaps not, so defining more specific situations that would fall in this category would help to have everyone on the same page.

Other Items

You may also want to include language that expresses your vision for the mental health of your team and the kids you work with; commitments to inclusivity; and expectations for non-judgement of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities.

