

Managing Through COVID-19

Protecting the mental health of employees returning to school

The reopening of schools can be exciting and hopeful for many. However, there may also be a level of worry and concern that comes with the reopening. As a leader in your workplace there are things that you can do to reduce your employee's anxiousness or concern and help to protect their mental health.

- 1 | Set up your workplace following public health safety measures** – Be clear and direct about the steps you are taking to keep students and employees safe.
- 2 | Follow recommendations from trusted sources such as Ottawa Public Health to ensure that your workplace is taking appropriate precautions** – Ottawa Public Health has developed a website that provides up-to-date information to **workplaces** and **schools during the pandemic**.
- 3 | Acknowledge the efforts made by your employees to adapt** – In order to protect everyone's health and safety, changes to the work environment must occur. However, it is important to recognize and appreciate the flexibility and resilience of your employees.
- 4 | Acknowledge the work and dedication that your employees demonstrate** – School employees of all kinds are showing everyone just how much we rely on them. It is important now, and every day to let them know that they are appreciated, and we are all grateful.
- 5 | Designate a 'safe room' where employees can go** – In this time, more than ever, people need to take a step away from this current reality. A quiet space to collect themselves and to take time for themselves can give them the opportunity to decompress and to be able to continue working.
- 6 | Encourage employees to take their breaks** – Ensure that employees are able to take a break from during their workday. This is critical to both their mental and physical health.



- 7** Foster an environment of trust and respect to ensure that employees can voice their concerns – Ask your employees to report any concerns they may have about their current working conditions and act on those concerns.
- 8** Discuss the possibility of flexible work arrangements – Your employees may be balancing demands in their personal lives that they did not have to before the COVID-19 pandemic. Discuss ways to help balance these demands with the needs of reopening schools.
- 9** Ensure your employees know how to access mental health support – Let your employees know about existing EAP or EFAP programs that your workplace provides.



For additional supports they can call **Distress Centre of Ottawa** at **613-238-3311** in English or **Tel-Aide Outaouais** at **613-741-6433** in French.

For more information and resources visit OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVIDMentalHealth.

For more information on supporting employees' mental health, visit our **Managing Through COVID-19: An Employer's Guide**.

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