Managing Through COVID-19: How to protect your employees' mental health throughout the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to provide employers and business owners with many challenges. However, there are actions that you can take to support the well-being of your employees, the most important part of your organization.

1. **Provide your employees with the flexibility they need to do their jobs and balance added responsibilities -** With the different measures in place during the pandemic, employees may have added responsibilities with childcare and eldercare as an example. Work with your employees to help them to balance their different needs. This could involve changing their regular shifts at work or working different hours when working from home.

2. **Encourage your employees to take their allotted breaks and vacation time** - While this is always a good suggestion, it is especially important now. We all need to take time to relax, reflect and rejuvenate, but it is even more necessary during this time of uncertainty and worry for so many. Even if we are unable to travel or do the things we would normally do on vacation, it is still important to take time to rest and be away from work.

3. **Ensure that COVID-19 public health measures are being followed in your workplace –** Protecting the physical health and safety of those in your organization also protects their mental health. Following these guidelines will help people feel safer during this time and will also show that you care about your employee's safety and well-being.

4. **Review your existing sick leave polices and benefits -** It is always important for people to stay home when they are sick and especially during this time of COVID-19. However, this can be difficult if employees do not have enough sick days to cover the time off that they need to take.
   This is also an important time to review Employee and Family Assistance Plans and mental health coverage to ensure that your employees get the supports they need.
   For additional supports they can call the **Distress Centre of Ottawa** at 613-238-3311 in English and French or **Tel-Aide Outaouais** at 613-741-6433 in French. **Counselling Connect** provides quick access to free phone or video counselling session. This service is for children, youth, adults and families in Ottawa and the surrounding area.
   For more information and resources visit **OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVIDMentalHealth**.

5. **Inform your employees about the assistance available to them from the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments** – People will feel supported when they know that there are resources available to them to help them get through this difficult time.

OttawaPublicHealth.ca
SantePubliqueOttawa.ca

613-580-6744
TTY/ATS : 613-580-9656

/Ottawa Health
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6. **Access and review trusted mental health resources to support employee mental health during COVID-19 –** It can be challenging to know what to do right now to support your employees. There are many resources available to help. Below are some examples.

   ➤ Ottawa Public Health – [Managing Through COVID-19: an Employer's Guide](#) and our webpage, [Mental Health resources for Workplaces](#)
   ➤ Centre for Addiction and Mental Health – [Workplace Mental Health Playbook for Business Leaders](#) and the accompanying supplemental [COVID-19 Playbook](#)
   ➤ Mental Health Commission of Canada – [Mini Guide to Help Employees' Mental Health Through Winter](#)
   ➤ Workplace Safety and Prevention Services – [COVID-19 Mental Health Related Articles](#)
   ➤ Workplace Strategies for Mental Health – [Videos to Support Mental Health Through COVID-19](#)