

Mentally HEALTHY WORKPLACES



Government
of South Australia

Ways employees with Mental Health First Aid Training can support wellbeing

- ▶ With many employees across the SA Public Sector recently trained in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), agencies are identifying ways that these capabilities can be best used to support their employees during the COVID-19 crisis.

Mental Health First Aid is a training program that helps participants to develop skills in how to support a friend, family or colleague who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.

The mental health challenges and possible consequences associated with the fear, uncertainty and often loss during a pandemic, as well as the effects of social distancing and isolation, are widely recognised by mental health professionals. There has been growing attention on supporting people's mental health during this time in workplaces and in the wider community.

So how can our MHFA-trained employees (MHF Aiders) help us during this time?

Following are some ideas:

1. Advertise the contact details and availability of MHFA-trained employees

If your workplaces have not done so already, publish and distribute a list of MHF Aiders who are willing to be contacted for a supportive conversation about wellbeing by your employees. Check first with your MHF Aiders that they are willing to have their details distributed for this purpose and that the details are accurate. Ensure your MHF Aiders know what is expected of them in dealing with confidentiality issues (and any limits on this) and are up to date with their knowledge of referral options such as the workplace's EAP and the South Australian COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line - **1800 632 753**.

2. Ask your MHF Aiders to proactively contact your employees

At the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (OCPSE), the MHF Aiders are proactively contacting each employee to check-in on their wellbeing. Each MHF Aider has been allocated a list of people to contact over a week and employees were advised in advance that this would be occurring. The check-ins can be via a video call or phone call and may be scheduled ahead of time or not. The conversation is likely to cover questions such as:

“ How is everything going? How are you?

Do you have any stresses or concerns you'd like to talk about?

What are you doing to support your mental health and wellbeing?

“ How is your physical health?

If working from home, is your workstation set up comfortable? What could make it more comfortable?

If working with the community, are you feeling safe and supported? What could help you to feel safer or more supported?

Are you making time to exercise? Get outside? (if not required to socially isolate)

Do you have any concerns about your health right now?

“ Do you have anyone else at home with you?

How are you going sharing the space at home? Juggling responsibilities for caring for others including children?

If alone, are you connecting with other people regularly?

Do you have someone you can talk to regularly?

“ Do you have anyone you are caring for outside the house or someone you are concerned about?

“ Have you had contact with your manager?

“ Do you know where to find the details of our EAP?

“ Would you like me to call you again?

Perhaps we could make a time to check in at (agree a suitable time either weeks or days depending on the need)? Alternatively, please feel free to call me.

3. Seek ideas from MHF Aiders

Engage your MHF Aiders in a discussion about how the workplace could be better supporting employees during the COVID 19 crisis

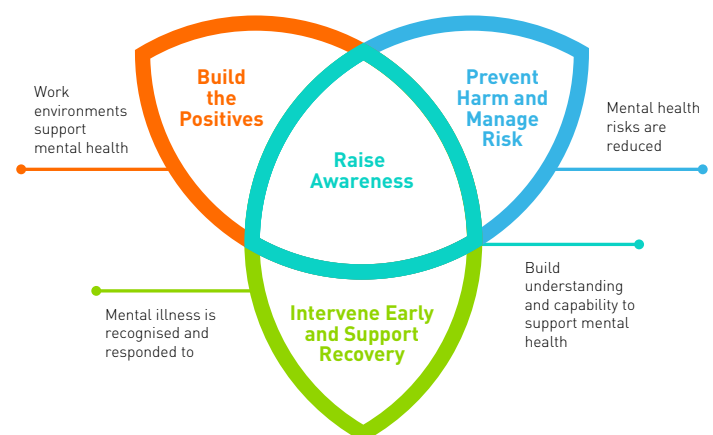
Enable MHF Aiders to report trends in any issues and challenges identified amongst employees through a reporting mechanism that maintains confidentiality of employees.

4. Ensure your MHF Aiders are supported

Recognise that providing support to other people requires MHF Aiders to be well themselves and therefore ensure that they are also being supported through wellbeing check-ups, support from their managers to undertake the role and the up to date knowledge, skills and information they need in order to perform their role.

Allow MHF Aiders to opt out of their role if they do not feel able to perform it due to their own mental health challenges.

Mentally HEALTHY WORKPLACES FRAMEWORK



Stay safe. Stay well. Stay connected. Look after each other. We will get through this.