Mentally **HEALTHY** WORKPLACES

Government of South Australia

Applying the Mentally Healthy Workplaces Framework

▶ Protecting the mental health of employees is even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whilst there are many new resources, webinars and support numbers available, the principles of protecting the mental health of employees remain the same and we encourage you to use the Mentally Healthy Workplaces (MHW) Framework and Toolkit for guidance on positive actions to take.

What may have changed are the type of psychosocial hazards employees are exposed to and a manager's ability to control these hazards. It is also important to recognise that during the COVID-19 pandemic it can be harder to continue many of the habits that help maintain mental health, such as exercise, socialising and nutrition.

The Critical Success Factors within the MHW Framework remain important, in particular, leaders demonstrating their commitment to the wellbeing of all employees through taking visible actions that support this commitment. This includes the allocation of resources and having regular, meaningful communication about the importance of mental health.

Using the **MHW Framework** areas below, consider how you can support employees' mental health during this time and check the **MHW Toolkit** for details on resources you can access.

Raising awareness

1. Encourage employees to communicate with their immediate managers if they believe their mental health is suffering during the COVID 19 pandemic.

2. Ensure webinars and online training on mental health, wellbeing and self-care are available to all employees, particularly programs that include information on signs that you or someone else needs further support (**www.beyondblue.org.au**).

3. Raise awareness across the workplace of who has been trained in Mental Health First Aid and how they can be contacted for support.

Preventing Harm and Managing Risk

1. Continue to identify psychosocial hazards and take actions to reduce the risks, recognising that the risks to employees' mental health may change during the COVID 19 pandemic.

2. Consider the impact of new psychosocial hazards in frontline workplaces including anxiety from exposure to life threatening situations, exposure to trauma, overwork and fatigue.

3. Consider the impact of new psychosocial hazards for those working at home including isolation, overwork, role clarity (where business as usual may have ceased or changed significantly), managing work and family responsibilities, increased exposure to **family violence**, and financial and job insecurity (particularly for contract and casual workers). If you have an employee or colleague you are concerned about. It's ok to ask:

66 Is home a safe place for you to work at the moment?

4. Identify high risk groups who may need extra support. In addition to our health care and emergency services workers consider frontline employees whose roles do not usually involve risk to life.

5. Communicate with employees about what can be done to reduce the risks (a team brainstorm is a good place to start).

Promoting the positive

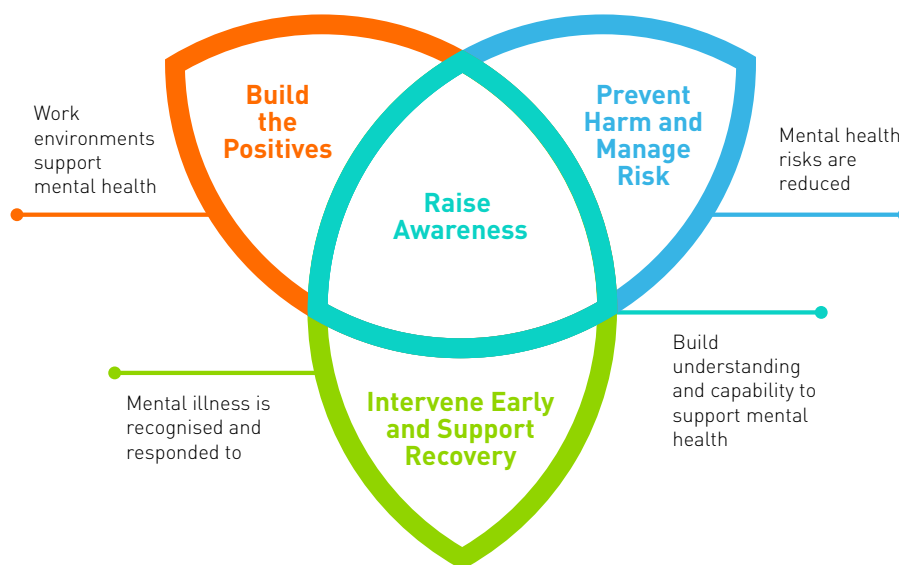1. Continue to practice supportive leadership ensuring regular one on one discussions as well as group meetings. Practising empathy for employees relating to their concerns, fears and challenges during this time is important.

2. Continue **performance management** to ensure all employees know what is expected of them, have a sense of how they are contributing to the work of the organisation and are being recognised for their achievements.

3. Encourage employees to take actions to support their own mental health through provision of information or resources on healthy eating, exercise and building personal resilience e.g. SAHMRI's **www.bewellplan.com**

Intervening early and supporting recovery

1. Ensure managers check in regularly with employees who have a known mental illness.

2. Recognise that changes during the COVID 19 pandemic are particularly unsettling for employees who have a workers' compensation claim.

3. Promote the use of mental health support lines and the Employee Assistance Program.

4. Remind employees of any other internal supports for their mental health e.g. a peer support officer program.

Mentally HEALTHY WORKPLACES FRAMEWORK

Work environments support mental health

Build the Positives

Prevent Harm and Manage Risk

Mental health risks are reduced

Raise Awareness

Build understanding and capability to support mental health

Mental illness is recognised and responded to

Intervene Early and Support Recovery

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