



**Introduction to
National Standard of Canada for Psychological
Health and Safety (PHS) in the Workplace
(the Standard)
and its 13 Psychological Factors**

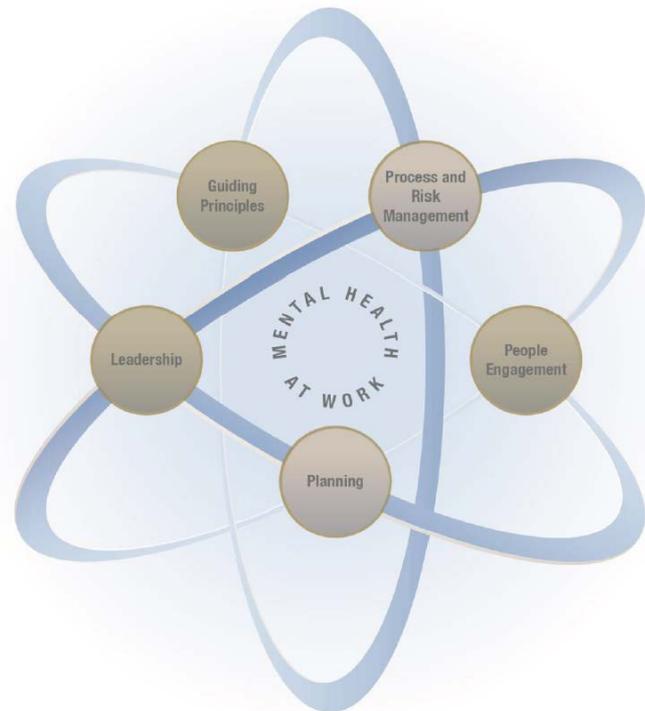
National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety (PHS) in the Workplace (the Standard)

The Standard is a voluntary guide for Canadian employers to ensure that their workplaces are psychologically safe and healthy.

This document provides an overview of things to consider for implementing the standard.

“The requirements for an employee’s physical health and safety in the workplace are a longstanding concern for Canadian employers. Now it’s time to consider the mental wellbeing of the workforce the same way.”

Louise Bradley, Mental Health Commission of Canada



..... Another Block for Organizations to Align



While the *National Standard for Psychologically Safe Workplaces** is voluntary, it now offers a standard of reference for employer due diligence in protecting employees.

Howatt HR is positioned to support organizations to successfully implement the 13 PHS Factors (the Standard).

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..... Psychological Health & Safety

13 PHS Factors represent an evolution of Occupational Health: with the additional focus now on the promotion and protection of employees' psychological health and safety.

- **Psychological Health** – this goes beyond mere safety to describe a workplace environment that supports and promotes resilience by mitigating sources of stress and empowering employees to improve their coping skills.
- **Psychological Safety** – a workplace environment that does not directly cause psychological injury or harm to employee psychological well-being. The goal is to prevent risk for injuries that can impact one's psychology mind (e.g., PTSD, bullying, etc.).

PHS Factor 1: Psychological Support

Definition: Management is committed to supporting and promoting the psychological health of all employees through strengthening and supporting programs when required. Employees believe senior management and all persons with authority (e.g., union leaders) care about employee well-being. Employees believe their function contribution is valued. Management's actions show support for employees' psychological well-being, including engaging employees in conversations about psychological well-being to seek to understand employee needs.

Benefits: Employees who report high levels of psychological support are more likely to report higher levels of organizational commitment, pride, and satisfaction, and lower levels of presenteeism, and are more likely to give the organization maximum levels of discretionary effort (i.e., individual productivity) on a regular basis.

Risks: Employees who perceive low levels of psychological support and who have under-developed coping skills are likely to experience more strain and be at risk for health issues such as burnout, addictive disorders, anxiety, and depression.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Employees perceiving low levels of psychological support are at greater risk for decreased levels of productivity. In addition to decreased productivity, there is also an increased risk for costs (e.g., medications, lost time, disability), as well as increased risk for safety violations, accidents, and injury in the workplace. The tangible and intangible costs can be significant with employees who do not perceive their workplace provides them with psychological support.

Examples of Measurable Variables: EAFP usage, coping skills score, return to work success rates, safety near-misses reported, disability claims attributed to psychological distress, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study evidence based benchmark, TalOp® Function Mapping and Howatt HR Strategic Consulting.

..... Psychological Factor 2: Organizational Culture

Definition: The collective perceptions of the workforce regarding the degree of fairness, caring, honesty, and trust. This is a reflection of the collective assumptions, expectations, and beliefs. Organizational culture influences employee trust in management's intentions and motivations.

Benefits: Trust positively influences social interactions. It is the foundation on which workplace communities are built. When employees perceive trust between employees and management as well as among peers there is a greater willingness to collaborate and co-operate to achieve operational and strategic goals.

Risks: Gaps in trust put strain on organizational ability to successfully execute rules, procedures, and safety expectations. Employees who do not trust are more likely to think management cares only about results regardless of the cost to employee well-being.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Employees with lower levels of trust and who have gaps in coping skills are at greater risk for experiencing the full effects of the stress-strain relationship. This may result in not following through on rules, lost productivity, and safety costs associated with accidents.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Number of rule infractions, coping skills score, safety shortcuts and violations, breaches in standing operating procedures and policies, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study evidence-based benchmark, Howatt HR Strategic Consulting, and Howatt HR Engagement Focus Groups.

Psychological Factor 3: Clear Leadership and Expectations

..... **Definition:** Proven leadership effectiveness provides employees with clarity on their specific core functions, their contributions to the organization, what they need to do to be successful, how their work is measured, and what they can expect with respect to change.

Benefits: Clear and effective leaders consistently display humility and integrity and embrace creativity. Employees who believe their leaders are interested in their success and well-being on average will be more willing to want to help their leaders achieve their desired goals. As a result, leaders are able to influence change in direction with less resistance.

Risks: Leaders who adopt a command and control approach are less likely to influence employees to do their best work. Leaders who are more directive and confrontational can create more stress for employees, particularly those who do not have strong coping skills. As a result, all the health concerns associated with stress can follow.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Research shows that a significant cause of stress in the workplace is the relationship between manager and employees. Intangible costs such as gossip, complaining, and passive aggressive behaviours can be significant, in addition to the costs associated with stress.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Number of conflicts between manager and employees, coping skills score, bullying complaints against managers, and productivity metrics, leadership 360s, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study evidence-based benchmark, Howatt HR Leadership Audit, Howatt HR Executive Coaching, Howatt HR Structured Mentoring, Howatt HR Strategic HR Consulting, UNB Management Essentials Certification (in partnership with Howatt HR)

..... Psychological Factor 4: Civility and Respect

Definition: Workplaces with stronger elements of civility and respect will be perceived by employees as being positive and less judgmental. This culture is more supportive for staff, management, and customers' interactions. This culture encourages and acknowledges listening and tolerating differences in opinion.

Benefits: Employees that perceive greater levels of fairness are more likely to be better team players, and have higher levels of job satisfaction, improved employee-manager relationships, higher levels of morale, and happiness in the workplace.

Risks: Organizations with weaker elements of civility and respect have higher levels of dysfunction, which can permit harassment, bullying, negativity, and presenteeism. Employees under chronic stress can develop serious psychological health concerns.

Cost of Doing Nothing: The tangible and intangible costs of conflict are measurable. They take away productivity and can increase health costs such as psychological disability claims.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Number of customer complaints, grievances, harassment investigations, bullying complaints, coping skills score, discipline, sick time, and disability claims due to psychological duress/injury, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study evidence-based benchmark, Howatt HR Structured Mentoring, Howatt HR Engagement Focus Groups, and Howatt HR Strategic HR Consulting.

Psychological Factor 5: Psychological Competencies & Requirements

Definition: Refers to the degree to which the employee's psychological competency profile fits the actual needs of the job. Each job defines the competency demands required. For example, self-directiveness, emotional regulation, and other intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies. Job fit is focused not only on technical aspects and experience but also on core trainable and non-trainable psychological skills: stress tolerance, persistence, empathy, social intelligence, and resiliency.

Benefits: The better the alignment between the employee's psychological competency profile and their job competency profile, the greater the opportunity for job success and well-being over their career (and the less risk for somatic complaints, stress, rust out, and burnout).

Risks: Poor job fit increases the employee's risk for job strain and health-related illness over their career. Employees with under-developed coping skills are more at risk for experiencing stress-related symptoms that attack their sense of well-being, self-esteem, and mental health such as depression.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Employee fit will negatively impact productivity, retention, quality of work, problem solving, conflict, and job satisfaction.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Turnover rate, coping skills score, engagement scores, terminations, performance management scores, selection success rates, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study, evidence-based benchmark, Howatt HR Veri-Hire, Howatt HR Core Competencies Validation Studies, and Howatt HR Strategic HR Consulting.

..... Psychological Factor 6: Growth & Development

Definition: The degree to which employees perceive that leaders are providing authentic and meaningful feedback and support for their personal and professional development.

Benefits: Employees that believe their organization cares about development and provides them with an opportunity to develop skills and enrich their careers (vertically or horizontally) are more likely to support organizational objectives and goals.

Risks: Employees with an unsatisfied need for learning and growth are at greater risk for job stagnation and boredom. This can result in rust out (the opposite end of burnout) and long-term risk to the employee's psychological and physical health.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Employees who are bored will have less motivation to come to work or to work to their full productivity, waste time in gossip, take longer breaks, and experience absenteeism. Increased levels of frustration can result in more conflict.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Engagement scores, absenteeism, coping skills score, supervisor's time correcting behaviour and/or dealing with conflict, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study, evidence-based benchmark, Howatt HR Leadership Audit, Howatt HR Employee Life Cycle Consulting, Howatt HR Executive Coaching, Howatt HR Structured Mentoring, Howatt HR Strategic HR Consulting, and UNB Management Essentials Certification (in partnership with Howatt HR).

..... Psychological Factor 7: Recognition and Reward

Definition: The degree to which management facilitates meaningful and consistent recognition and acknowledgement of employees' efforts in a caring, timely, and reasonable manner. Employees believe the financial compensation is fair, and service and professional milestones are respectfully honoured.

Benefits: When employees believe management feedback and recognition are authentic they are more likely to do their best work. Employees who feel respected and celebrated often will tap into more energy, productivity, and results for the organization.

Risks: Employees that believe management does not celebrate or acknowledge their work and who have under-developed coping skills can become discouraged, with increased levels of strain that can put them on the road to developing burnout or other stress-related psychological and physical disorders.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Employees that do not feel valued are more at risk for being discouraged, frustrated, and less helpful supporting their peers, customers, or managers. This can damage reputation, attraction of top talent, and retaining clients, which can be tangible and expensive.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Customer satisfaction scores, employee satisfaction scores, coping skills score, turnover, number of suggestions from workforce, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study, evidence-based benchmark, Howatt HR Structured Mentoring, and Howatt HR Why They Stay and Why They Go Discovery Focus Groups.

..... Psychological Factor 8: Involvement & Influence

Definition: The level to which management actively engages employees in discussions about how their work is being done. This provides employees an opportunity to influence management decision making on how work will be completed.

Benefits: When employees believe their point of view is valued and they have had meaningful input into how work is being done they are more likely to feel empowered to take more pride and ownership in the quality of their work. This will also maximize opportunities for employee creativity and ideas that can increase productivity and profitability.

Risks: When employees perceive their point of view does not matter they are more at risk of operating on automatic pilot, not speaking up when they notice productivity or safety risks, and feel less pride and sense of responsibility for their productivity. Employees with under-developed coping skills are at risk for developing a sense of helplessness and becoming more negative and critical about the employer.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Employees who feel disengaged can cost organizations current and future productivity opportunities that in a large organization can be a significant amount of money.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Turnover, engagement scores, coping skills score, number of conflicts between employees and supervisors, number of complaints and suggestions, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study, evidence-based benchmark, TalOp® Function Mapping, Howatt HR 12-Week Tele-Coaching Program focus on coping skills, and Howatt HR Strategic Consulting.

..... Psychological Factor 9: Workload Management

Definition: The degree to which employees perceive that they have the capacity to do the work expected within a defined period of time will determine their perception whether work demand expectations are reasonable.

Benefits: Employees who perceive that their workload is responsible and fair are better able to manage the intellectual and emotional demands of their roles. As a result, they are in a better position to experience job satisfaction and fulfillment.

Risks: Excessive work demand cannot only break machines but can also break people, leading to physical, psychological, and emotional fatigue that increase employees' risk for developing strain.

Cost of Doing Nothing: There are three types of work employees are asked to do: planned work, project work, and ad hoc work. One common variable many employers are not aware of is the amount of ad hoc work employees are given and the percentage of time this takes. Employees who are spending 30% of their time doing ad hoc work are more at risk of feeling overloaded because they are trying to get this work done as well as their core functions.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Retention, accidents, short-term disability due to psychological strain, percentage of time employees report doing ad hoc work, coping skills score, number of emotional breakdowns in the workplace, number of safety incidents, productivity levels, number of mistakes, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study, evidence-based benchmark, TalOp® Function Mapping, and Howatt HR Strategic Consulting.

..... Psychological Factor 10: Engagement

Definition: Employee engagement levels are reflected in: 1) Physical engagement – the amount of energy and effort put into functions; 2) Emotional engagement – the degree to which employees feel positive about their functions; 3) Cognitive engagement – the level of focus and attention employees put into completing their functions.

Benefits: Engaged employees are more likely to have lower health risks and are able to contribute to the organization's long-term success. Being fully engaged means employees look forward to their functions and get a sense of pride from doing their work.

Risks: Employees who are disengaged are more likely not motivated to do their best work. As a result, they may not have consistent productivity levels and are more at risk for making cognitive mistakes that can result in more accidents, or experience stress and strain.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Disengaged employees do not tend to optimize their productivity. They do not see there is a benefit to do more than the minimal requirements to get a paycheque.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Customer satisfaction scores, employee engagement scores, turnover, numbers of applications, disability claims, coping skills scores, sick time, number of conflicts, period of time to fill a role, safety incidents, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study, evidence-based benchmark, Howatt HR Structured Mentoring, and Howatt HR Why They Stay and Why They Go Discovery Focus Groups.

..... Psychological Factor 11: Balance

Definition: The degree to which employees perceive that they are supported by their employer to balance the demands and expectations of work and home.

Benefits: Employees who perceive their employers are supportive of balance report more sense of control and confidence to cope with multiple demands and pressures. As a result, they develop more loyalty and commitment to the organization, and experience less life stress and strain.

Risks: Howatt HR's national study with *The Globe and Mail Your Life at Work* found that employee stress continues to be a challenge. But employees who reported the highest levels of job flexibility also reported the lowest levels of psychological and physical health risks.

Cost of Doing Nothing: When employees are making up excuses as to why they are late on assignments, or being late for work or absent when they do not believe their employer is supportive and therefore are experiencing more stress, the organization is at risk for decreased readiness (e.g., unprepared to replace a key employee who calls in sick). Whereas if employees are confident that their manager would support them they could make an alternative plan.

Examples of Measurable Variables: Absenteeism, engagement scores, coping skills scores, lateness, missed assignments, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study, evidence-based benchmark, Howatt HR Structured Mentoring, TalOp® Function Mapping, and Howatt HR 12-Week Tele-coaching Program focus on coping skills.

..... Psychological Factor 12: Psychological Protection

Definition: The degree to which employees feel confident and safe to ask questions and report mistakes without fearing they will be judged negatively or put their current or future career at risk.

Benefits: Employees who feel safe and confident to speak their minds are more likely to have higher job satisfaction and less risk for negative effects of stress such as burnout or other related mental illness.

Risks: Employees who live in fear where they cannot predict what will be accepted and who have under-developed coping skills are at risk for developing stress-related illness. When employees believe they are not psychologically safe they are at risk for feelings of helplessness, depression, anxiety, disengagement, and strain.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Employees who perceive potential legal and ethical violations but do not feel safe to speak up because of fear of unwarranted persecution may not do what they can do reduce an organization's liability risks (e.g., employee sees a serious ethical breach but does not have the confidence to whistle-blow, so the organization gets caught six months later and a lawsuit shuts down the business).

Examples of Measurable Variables: Number of grievances, coping skills scores, number of conflicts, absenteeism, number of legal actions, attrition levels, length of time to fill a position, number applications for a position, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study, evidence-based benchmark, Howatt HR Structured Mentoring, TalOp® Function Mapping, Howatt HR 12-Week Tele-coaching Program focus on coping skills, and Howatt HR Strategic Consulting.

..... Psychological Factor 13: Protection of Physical Safety

Definition: The degree to which employees perceive that management has taken both strategic and operational actions to protect the physical safety of all employees. This is done through consistent and appropriate safety education, safety policies and training, building and implementing the capacity to provide quick responses to physical accidents, commitment to measuring safety, and safety audits.

Benefits: Employees who believe that work is physically safe are more likely to believe they can carry out their functions in safety and with less stress. A positive bridge between the traditional Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) and this new factor helps to build and promote the psychological role and importance of creating a psychologically safe climate.

Risks: Managers that do not promote and manage safety are at risk for being more dangerous. Employees who believe that their employer is putting them in danger are more at risk for developing psychological strain.

Cost of Doing Nothing: Employees who do not feel safe may be slower performing tasks as they take time getting up the courage to do a function, are distracted, worried, and experience stress. This can be measured both in tangible costs (lost time due to sickness, disability) and intangible costs (time to motivate one's self to do a task).

Examples of Measurable Variables: Reported near-miss accidents, coping skills scores, number of safety policies started and completed, number of safety audits, safety surveys, number employees trained in safety, etc.

Solutions for Strengthening Factor: Quality of Work Life (QWL™) Study, evidence-based benchmark, TalOp® Function Mapping, and Howatt HR Strategic Consulting.

Howatt HR 13 Psychological Factors (PF) Strategic Groupings & Considerations

1

Safety – this group of factors success is depended upon employers facilitating policies, training, and close monitoring:

- PF 1 - Psychological Support
- PF12 – Psychological Protection
- PF 13 – Protection of Physical Safely

2

Employees – this group of factors’ success is highly influenced by employees’ coping skills, personal decision making, persistence, self-advocacy, and confidence in their ability to communicate with their managers:

- PF 8 – Involvement & Influence
- PF 9 – Workload Management
- PF 10 – Engagement

3

Management – this group of factors’ success is dependent and will be influenced by the organization’s management approach as well as the skills of each individual manager at all levels:

- PF 3- Clear Leadership and Expectations
- PF 7 – Recognitions and Rewards
- PF 11 – Balance of Work & Life (Flexibility)

4

Culture – this group of factors’ success will be impacted by senior leadership follow-through and commitment to promoting and monitoring core values and principles that define the expectations as to how the organization’s community will behave:

- PF 2 – Organizational Culture
- PF 4 – Civility and Respect

5

Strategic HR – this group of factors will be influenced by talent management initiatives that are influenced by core competencies, job selections process, evaluation of job fit, learning and development, and performance management:

- PF 5 – Psychological Competencies and Requirements
- PF 6 – Growth & Development

PHS Recommended Actions for Facilitating Culture Change

The PHS Standard design is aligned to the traditional OHS model requiring employers to implement policies and procedures, train workers, conduct risk assessments, and take steps to mitigate identified risks. Howatt HR provides organizations with tools and strategies for facilitating each for the following action steps.

Employer Actions:

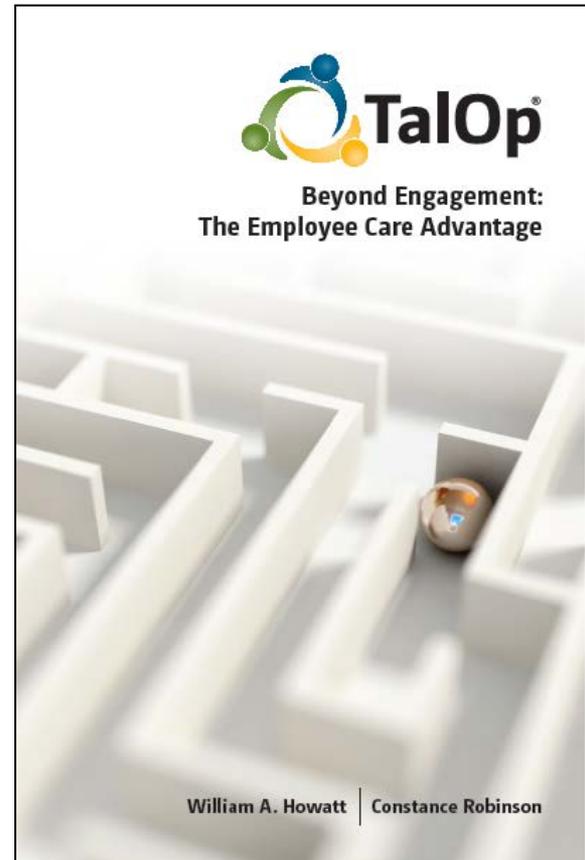
- 1.A Policy on Psychological Health and Safety and the Roles of Workplace Parties. The draft Standard requires, among other things, that organizations draft a policy committing to the development, implementation, funding, continuous improvement, and review of a systematic approach to managing psychological health and safety.
- 2.Leaders with key responsibility for the organization’s performance must facilitate a psychologically healthy and safe workplace that “promotes workers’ psychological well-being and allows no harm to worker mental health in negligent, reckless, or intentional ways.
- 3.Identify and Investigate PHS Incidents. Organizations must identify events where psychological illness or injury has occurred or may occur to individuals and develop a process to respond to those events and to provide support, training, and debriefing opportunities to responding personnel.
- 4.Policy. The employers set the stage for action on PHS issues by promulgating a PHS policy.
- 5.Plan. The employers select, plan, and set objectives for PHS initiatives.
- 6.Promotion. Employers are encouraged to provide information and education resources through training programs to build employee resiliency.
- 7.Process: Evaluating the PHS System. Employers evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve and protect PHS by planning for and conducting an evaluation of the implementation of PHS measures, and measuring the short- and long-term outcomes of those measures.
- 8.Persistence. The employer will seek to sustain PHS improvements by supporting individuals and groups who champion PHS issues in the workplace, creating a culture of PHS and by continually evaluating and modifying PHS measures to ensure their effectiveness

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..... **When You Are Ready to Go Beyond Engagement...**

Contact Dr. Bill Howatt for more information on our Beyond Engagement Quality of Work Life study, 13 PHS Factor consulting and our Strategic HR /TalOp ® OD consulting.

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