

How HR Professionals can Foster Mental health in the Workplace: A Guide for the Public

Mental illness, addiction, and poor mental health continue to be pervasive in Canadian workplaces. Despite this, many people fear speaking out about their mental health and addictions in the workplace due to perceived stigma of doing so and how it could impact future promotions and success in their employment.

HR professionals registered with the HRPA now have a Practice Guideline to follow to help foster mental health in the workplace, given that HR initiatives can strongly help in this area. Additionally, HR professionals registered with HRPA are accountable to the [Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct](#), which contains expectations that all registered members, students and firms are expected to comply with in relation to mental health in the workplace.

We have developed the FAQs below to answer important questions you may have about how a registered HRPA member, student or firm can help to foster mental health in the workplace.

DISCLAIMER: The information provided in this resource is in respect of the law of the Province of Ontario and is intended for general information only. This resource is not provided for the purpose of providing legal advice or a complete statement of the law on the particular topics. Every situation is unique and involves specific legal issues. Please seek legal advice, as applicable, if needed on the topic of mental health in the workplace. Further, this resource to be read in conjunction with the applicable employment standards, occupational health and safety, and human rights legislation and does not supersede or replace the legal requirements set out in the legislation.

What are the expectations of registered HRPA members, students and firms related to mental health in the workplace?

All registered HRPA professionals, students and firms must comply with HRPA's [Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct](#), which includes exhibiting **respect** and **best interests of others** by:

- Promoting and maintaining a healthy, safe and inclusive workplace.
- Not engaging in or condoning any acts of harassment, intimidation, discrimination, physical or psychological violence.
- Being alert to and making appropriate accommodations for those who are vulnerable, who have suffered trauma or who are entitled to accommodations under the law.

- As within the registered HRPAs professionals' authority, separating or providing a safe space in the workplace for impacted individuals of harassment or physical or psychological violence, where required and as appropriate.
- In all professional activities, bearing in mind the central role that work, and the work environment plays in employees' lives, and doing everything reasonably possible to ensure that the environment adheres to all policies and legal requirements to support individual wellbeing.

In addition to the [Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct](#), HRPAs Practice Guideline on *Fostering Mental Health in the Workplace* is to be followed by HRPAs members, students, and firms, where applicable to their roles. This Practice Guideline contains guidance about:

- Defining and recognizing symptoms of poor mental health, mental illnesses and addictions in the workplace.
- Understanding the prevalence of mental illnesses and addictions, and the importance of helping to foster mental health in the workplace.
- Recognizing the risks to mental health from certain workplace practices and policies.
- Implementing or advocating for the implementation of specific practices and policies that help foster mental health in the workplace.
- Understanding how individual actions and behaviours can help to foster mental health.
- Free mental health, illness and addictions resources/supports in Ontario.

What are ways that registered HRPAs professionals and organizations can foster mental health in the workplace?

As detailed in the [Practice Guideline on Fostering Mental Health in the Workplace](#), organizations and registered HRPAs professionals, where applicable to their roles, can help to foster mental health in the workplace by:

- Fostering work environments where employees feel comfortable expressing their opinions or feelings and asking for help when needed.
- Rewarding employees with recognition, praise and/or credit when there is reasonable reason to do so.
- Promoting equity in the workplace and recognizing/accommodating reasonable needs, rights and claims of employees.
- Supporting employees in areas such as employee benefits for mental health services, referrals to helpful resources, etc.
- Promoting a fair workplace, where employees are given an appropriate, fair work-life balance that could help to alleviate burnout.
- Respect in the workplace, where it is expected that each employee treat one another with respect and fairness, and breaches of such policy are addressed appropriately.

- Offering reasonable opportunities for growth and development to employees.
- Providing accessible and mandatory mental health training, coaching and/or education programs.
- Developing a long-term workplace mental health strategy that addresses human rights obligations and focuses on prevention, risk mitigation and supporting employees with or recovering from mental illness(es) and addiction(s), including an accommodation policy.

Where can I access resources on mental health and addiction in Ontario?

Sometimes it can be hard to know what supports are available for mental health, addiction, or mental illness concerns. The Ontario branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association provides a helpful webpage on accessible supports available province-wide which can be accessed [here](#).

How can I submit a complaint if a registered HRP member, student or firm is acting unethically?

We understand that potential professional misconduct by an HR professional can be extremely challenging. If you believe that an HR professional has acted in an unethical or unprofessional manner, then we would strongly encourage you to consider filing a complaint with HRP.

First, check the [public register](#) to confirm the HR professional is registered with HRP. Unfortunately, HRP can only accept and investigate complaints against a registered member, student or firm.

Second, review the [Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct](#) and note any sections that you believe may have been breached by the registered HR professional's actions.

Third, complete the professional complaints form to share your experience – what happened, when it happened, who may have witnessed the situation and what supplementary documents you have that may support your statements. You can find a copy of the professional complaints form [here](#).

Once you've written out your experience, link your allegations and any supporting documents or witness statements to the sections of the [Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct](#) you had previously identified as having been breached.

Finally, submit your assembled complaints package to registrar@hrp.ca.