Mental health and COVID-19

COVID-19 Information for workplaces

Preparing workplaces for COVID-19   ▾

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Working from home

▸ **Mental health and COVID-19**

Workers' compensation and COVID-19

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National Statement of Regulatory Intent - COVID-19

Other WHS and workers' compensation resources

Staying informed about COVID-19

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⬇ How do WHS duties apply to risks to psychological health?

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> Australia is continuing to closely monitor the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).
>
> Cases of the COVID-19 virus are increasing in Australia and the situation is changing rapidly. You can access the latest information from australia.gov.au.

How do WHS duties apply to risks to psychological health?

The duty of employers under the model WHS laws apply to psychological health too. This is a stressful time for all Australians, and employers must do what they can to reduce the psychological risks to workers and others at the workplace.

A psychosocial hazard is anything in the design or management of work that causes stress. Stress is the reaction a person has when we perceive the demands of their work exceed their ability or resources to cope. Work-related stress if prolonged and/or severe can cause both psychological and physical injury. Stress itself does not constitute an injury.

What are possible psychosocial hazards from COVID-19?

Psychosocial hazards arising form COVID-19 could include:

- **Exposure to customer violence or aggression** – for example in healthcare or supermarkets.
- **Increased work demand** – for example supermarket home delivery drivers.
- **Isolated work** – for example where workers are working from home.
- **Low support** – for example workers working in isolation may feel they don't have the normal support they receive to do their jobs or where work demands have dramatically increased supervisors may not be able to offer the same level of support.
- **Poor environmental conditions** – for example where temporary workplaces may be hot, cold or noisy.
- **Poor organisational change management** – for example if businesses are restructuring to address the effects of COVID-19 but are not providing information or support to workers.

Working from home risks

Many workers are now working from home to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As well as work-related hazards discussed above, risks can arise from other factors such as stress associated with caring for children, relationship strain or domestic violence.

WI   stigating working from home arrangements, PCBUs should consider and consult workers on all rel   risks and offer support to manage these.

Fo   eral WHS information on working from home see Safe Work Australia's Working from Home page.

What steps can employers take to minimise workplace stress?

You can manage psychosocial risks in the same way as physical risks. The Infographic: Four steps to preventing psychological injury at work shows how the risk management process can applied to psychosocial risks and detailed guidance is available in Safe Work Australia Guide: Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties.

Tips for managing stress from COVID-19

- regularly ask your workers how they are going and if there is anything stressing them
- be well informed with information from official sources, regularly communicate with workers and share relevant information as it comes to hand
- consult your workers on any risks to their psychological health and how these can be managed
- provide workers with a point of contact to discuss their concerns and to find workplace information in a central place
- inform workers about their entitlements if they become unfit for work or have caring responsibilities
- proactively support workers who you identify may be more at risk of workplace psychological injury (e.g. frontline workers or those working from home), and
- refer workers to appropriate channels to support workplace mental health and wellbeing, such as employee assistance programs.

More information about work-related psychological health and safety and how to meet your duties can be found in the Safe Work Australia Guide: Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties.

Visit the following sites for information on caring for mental health:

- Head to Health – COVID-19 Support
- Beyond Blue – Looking after your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak
- Australian Psychological Society – Tips for coping with coronavirus anxiety
- Headspace – How to cope with stress related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Related information

Workplace checklist - COVID-19

How to keep workers safe - COVID-19

What to do if a worker has COVID-19 - Infographic

5 things to do in your workplace: COVID-19 - Infographic

Workers: WHS advice for COVID-19

      ıess resource kit

stry fact sheets

This site is undergoing constant refinement. If you have noticed something that needs attention or have ideas for the site please let us know.

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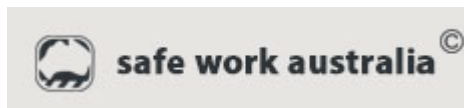
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