

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

Implementation Process (S. McKeen)

Recommendation

That the March 22, 2021, Employee Services report ES00210, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 16, 2020, City Council meeting, Councillor S. McKeen made the following inquiry:

Can Administration bring a report on the process for implementing the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace for employees of the City of Edmonton.

Executive Summary

Administration is committed to making the City of Edmonton a psychologically safe and healthy work environment for all City employees. Prioritizing psychological health and safety supports the City to meet its cultural commitment of Safe through valuing, respecting and protecting the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of City employees and Edmontonians served. A City work environment that is psychologically healthy also contributes to fulfillment of ConnectEdmonton's *Healthy City* strategic goal. As stated in this strategic plan, "When Edmontonians feel safe, empowered and supported as individuals, they are better able to connect with and enrich the community."

The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace provides an in depth framework which guides Administration in support of psychological health and safety for City employees. 13 factors of psychological health and safety in the workplace, along with detailed descriptions of what each factor entails, are outlined in the Standard. This report will provide a high level summary of how the City of Edmonton is aligning with the 13 Factors in the Standard. A summary of upcoming priorities for the City in 2021 and the years to come is also provided.

Report

Background

The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (the “Standard”), commissioned by the Mental Health Commission of Canada is the first of its kind in the world. It is a set of voluntary guidelines, tools and resources intended to guide organizations in promoting mental health and preventing psychological harm at work. Implementation and application of the Standard assists organizations to support their employees’ psychological health and safety needs in a thorough manner, while also meeting legislative requirements to provide employees with a psychologically safe work environment.

Since it was launched in January 2013, it has been utilized in Canada and internationally, with organizations of all sectors and sizes.

The 13 factors of psychological health and safety (PH&S) in the workplace are:

1. Organizational Culture
2. Psychological and Social Support
3. Clear Leadership & Expectations
4. Civility & Respect
5. Psychological Demands
6. Growth & Development
7. Recognition & Reward
8. Involvement & Influence
9. Workload Management
10. Engagement
11. Balance
12. Psychological Protection
13. Protection of Physical Safety

To view the full version of the National Standard, please see Attachment 1.

Creating a psychologically healthy and safe workplace requires a comprehensive, organization-wide response, which also promotes fulfillment of the City’s cultural commitment of Safe. When considering how the City aligns with the National Standard, it is evident no single area can address and implement all of the 13 factors on behalf of an organization on its own. A coordinated and intentional effort to promote psychological health and safety is achieved at the City through collaboration and the contributions of many areas, along with endorsement, support and prioritization of these actions by leaders City-wide.

The Standard is of tremendous value to organizations, whether or not it is formally implemented. Often, workplaces do not formally adopt the Standard, but use it to inform, frame and measure the work they do. The City has taken a similar approach to the Standard, as it works to align programs, policies and strategic planning (particularly within the Wellness/Mental Health Section of the Employee Services department) with the Standard's 13 factors. Even prior to the Standard's release in 2013, the City began work to establish a track record of recognizing and prioritizing psychological health and safety in the organization. It is important to note that in 2018 the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* in Alberta was revised and explicitly includes the requirements to reasonably protect not only the physical safety, but also the psychological safety of workers. The value the City of Edmonton places on creating and sustaining a psychologically healthy work environment for employees cannot be overstated and only continues to expand, as will be demonstrated throughout this report.

Process of Formally Adopting the Standard

Formal adoption of the Standard would require the City to build the 13 factors explicitly into the health and safety management system. Such a process involves revising the City's health and safety standards manual, training for employees, additional processes for monitoring of the implementation and ongoing assessment. Administration does not have an estimate of the cost of implementation at this time.

Current Status of the 13 Psychological Factors at the City

For further details on alignment with the 13 Psychological Factors at the City, please see Attachment 2. Administration is currently active in meeting the 13 factors of the Standard as follows. The summary of each factor is as set out in the Standard.

Factor 1 - Organizational Culture

"An organizational culture that enhances psychological safety is characterized by trust, honesty, respect, civility, fairness, psychological and social support, recognition, and reward."

- **The Cultural Commitments** of Safe, Helpful, Accountable, Integrated and Excellent highlight how the City approaches its work and defines how it builds relationships across the organization and with the public.
- **The Employee Experience** sets out what employees will experience working at the City in the following areas: Meaningful Work, Growth Opportunities, Supportive Environment, Wellness, Trust in Leadership, and Empowered Employees.

Factor 2 - Psychological and Social Support

"Psychological and social support involves all supportive social interactions available at work, either with co-workers or supervisors. It also includes the workers' perceptions and awareness of organizational support."

The Mental Health and Wellness Team at the City of Edmonton provides holistic and comprehensive workplace wellness programming, services, and policies aimed at fostering a work environment that supports the well being of employees and encourages employees to access resources when faced with challenges.

Mental health resources and programs currently offered to City employees by this team include:

- **Short Term Counselling/Crisis Response** through the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) with LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell and the City Chaplaincy Program, available to all employees and their family members.
- **Mental Health & Wellness Training** such as The Working Mind program, Mental Health Ambassador Program, wellness presentations and the Personal Resilience Employee Plan (PREP) Workbook.
- **Workplace Wellness Promotion** including Corporate Mindfulness Sessions, the Employee Wellness and Supports webpage and two annual Wellness Fairs.
- **Other Employee Supports** - Peer Support Program, workplace wellness consultations, Sacred Spaces, and the Alberta Blue Cross employee benefits program.
- **Trauma Response** - Domestic Violence in Our Workplace policies and support, Missing Employee Protocol, support for crises in the workplace, suicide prevention training and procedures.
- **Domestic Violence in Our Workplace working group** develops policies, procedures and provides direction on a trauma informed response to those experiencing domestic violence.

Factor 3 - Clear Leadership & Expectations

“Clear leadership and expectations is present in an environment in which leadership is effective and provides sufficient support that helps workers know what they need to do, explains how their work contributes to the organization and discusses the nature and expected outcomes of impending changes.”

Over the past two years, the City has worked at cultivating strong leadership at all levels across the City to support leaders in listening, learning and leading effectively in the following areas:

- **Leadership Competencies** (and engagement sessions) describe the successful behaviours of leaders in the City related to Self (Courageous and Inclusive), Team (Collaborative Networker and Values-based Influencer), and Results (Systems Thinker and Creative Innovator).
- **Training and Webinars** such as the Enabling Conversations Learning Series (revised leadership development program) and People Leader Webinars that provide leaders with information on topics of immediate relevance.

- **Leader Networks/Mentoring and Coaching** and **Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Webinars** held monthly with senior leaders.
- **Updated Employee Performance Processes** are shifting to emphasize that performance is a continuous process that is based on ongoing conversations.

Factor 4 - Civility & Respect

“Civility and respect is present in a work environment where workers are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients and the public.”

- **Initiatives and Policies that Promote Civility and Respect** including the Respectful Workplace Administrative Policy and Connected City Initiative.
- **Mandatory Training** for all employees including Introduction to Our Respectful Workplace e-learning, Contributing to Our Respectful and Inclusive Workplace course, The Behaviour Zones Poster and Indigenous Awareness Training.
- **Workplace Restoration** supports the building of healthy workplaces, strong teams and collaborative working relationships.
- **The Diversity and Inclusion Unit** implements The Art of Inclusion: Diversity & Inclusion Framework, embeds an equity lens (gender-based analysis plus) and supports employees to develop the mindset, heartset and skillset for inclusion.
- **Indigenous Framework** - a City-wide initiative intended to help guide staff on journeys of reconciliation, predicated on building and maintaining positive and respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

Factor 5 - Psychological Demands

“Psychological demands of any given job are documented and assessed in conjunction with the physical demands of the job.”

- **Job Demands Analysis (JDAs)** - JDAs are reports that describe and evaluate multiple categories of job demands for a given job position including 17 psychosocial/cognitive job demands. Similar to physical hazards, jobs with the potential to be psychologically demanding (eg: high workload, attention to detail) may require controls. Controls could include workload planning, 1:1s with supervisor, or creation of an environment that allows for concentration.

Factor 6 - Growth & Development

“Growth and development is present in a work environment where workers receive encouragement and support in the development of their interpersonal, emotional and job skills.”

- **The Learning Centre** offers a range of formal training, workshops and e-learning to all employees, including software training, required/mandatory training and process and skills based learning.
- Departments have budgets to support employee development related to their jobs.
- **Career and Development Conversations** - Supporting employees with ongoing learning and career conversations ensures they are well prepared for current and future roles.

Factor 7 - Recognition & Reward

“Recognition and reward is present in a work environment where there is appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of workers’ efforts in a fair and timely manner.”

- **Corporate Employee Recognition and Appreciation Framework (CERAF)** articulates how the City of Edmonton fosters a culture of recognition and appreciation, and demonstrates how recognition programs and services are aligned to the City’s Cultural Commitments and Leadership Competencies.
- **Enabling Conversations Learning Series How To Guide** - provides training for leaders related to coaching, and providing feedback and recognition.

Factor 8 - Involvement & Influence

“Involvement and influence is present in a work environment where workers are included in discussions about how their work is done and how important decisions are made.”

- **Reimagine A New Way Forward - Online Employee Idea Generation tool** gathers employees’ ideas on how to drive continuous improvement in the workplace and progress toward the vision of ConnectEdmonton and the City Plan.
- **The Enabling Conversations Learning Series** provides practical ideas to leaders on how to engage and listen to employees when setting direction.
- **Worker Rights** - all employees have a right to know about potential workplace hazards and participate in making the workplace safe, an example being involvement in Hazard Assessment and Controls.

Factor 9 - Workload Management

“Workload management is present in a work environment where assigned tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available.”

- **The Enabling Conversations Learning Series** provides practical ideas to leaders on how to engage and listen to employees when discussing priorities and workload.

- **Labour Relations and Workforce Restoration teams** support the building of healthy workplaces, strong teams, and collaborative working relationships.
- **Disability Management, Labour Relations and operational managers** work together in an integrated process to support employees and review concerns raised regarding workload.
- **Union Management meetings** facilitate discussions between union representatives, managers and Labour Relations.
- **Reimagine and Efficiency reviews** - City Auditor and Leaders have engaged in efficiency reviews of programs, services and resourcing to ensure workload for staff is manageable and results are achievable. Reimagine engages employees throughout the organization to share ideas and potential enhancements to service delivery.
- **Service, Innovation & Performance Branch** enables integration and collaboration on business planning.

Factor 10 - Engagement

“Engagement is present in a work environment where workers enjoy and feel connected to their work and where they feel motivated to do their job well.”

- **Employee Surveys:** Quarterly Employee Check-in Surveys and onboarding surveys for new employees.
 - **Action Planning:** Corporate, Department and Branch action planning follows each quarterly employee survey.
- **Lightbulb Initiative:** an employee innovation initiative that asks employees how they would improve their workplace.

Factor 11 - Balance

“Balance is present in a work environment where there is acceptance of the need for a sense of harmony between the demands of personal life, family, and work.”

- **The Remote Work Program** was launched October 2020 for Out of Scope and Management employees. Approximately 1,300 employees are currently eligible, and there is work occurring with the City’s union partners on a future program for in-scope employees.
- **Flexible Work Program** - continuation of this program, also known as a compressed work week or earned day off (EDO) program, was promoted to employees as an important aspect of maintaining mental health during the pandemic.
- **Leave of Absence** options include self-funded or annual funded leaves, leaves for reasons of compassionate care, illness, or disability, and maternity/parental leaves.

Factor 12 - Psychological Protection

“Psychological protection is present in a work environment where workers’ psychological safety is ensured. Workplace psychological safety is demonstrated when workers feel able to put themselves on the line, ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems or propose a new idea without fearing negative consequences.”

- **The Safe Disclosure Office (SDO)** - a place for employees to reach out and discuss workplace concerns related to harassment, discrimination and respectful behaviour if an employee is unable to bring forward the concern to their supervisor.
- **Incident Data Collection Form** (safety incident report) allows reporting of the impact of an incident on the employee's psychological health and safety when applicable.
- **The Working Mind program** - brings awareness to employees and supervisors about the importance of identifying mental health concerns and providing appropriate support.

Factor 13 - Protection of Physical Safety

“Protection of physical safety is present when a worker’s psychological, as well as physical safety, is protected from hazards and risks related to the worker’s physical environment.”

- The City has maintained the **Certificate of Recognition (COR)** under the Provincial Partnerships Program for more than 15 years. This certification demonstrates the City’s compliance with a provincially recognized standard for health and safety management systems and represents the commitment to health and safety of employees, contractors, and the public.
- **Hazard Assessment, Recognition and Control Standard / Workplace Inspections Standard / Emergency Response Standard** - corporate standards managed by the Workforce Safety and Employee Health branch. Established in alignment with *Bill 30: An Act To Protect the Health & Well-being of Working Albertans* which recognizes risks to psychological health and safety as a workplace hazard.
- **Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committees (JWHSC)** ensure participation of workers in fundamental safety processes such as hazard assessments, inspections and incident investigations. JWHSCs were established in alignment with Bill 30.
- **Occupational Hygiene Program and Occupational Health Surveillance Program** ensure monitoring and assessment of occupational health hazards in order to identify control measures for operational implementation. These

programs identify employee groups that have the potential for occupational workplace exposures and include conducting regular health surveillance.

Anticipating 2021 and Beyond

As data related to the psychological wellness of Canadians during 2020 is published, there is no doubt the pandemic has impacted Canadians' mental health as a whole. Morneau Shepell's Mental Health Index for 2020 was recently released and indicates the majority of working Canadians experienced declines in their mental health due to the pandemic, when compared to 2019. Additionally, the number of working Canadians showing signs of burnout risk tripled this past year. However, certain protective factors can lower the negative impact of the pandemic on a person's mental health. This study found that employees who had workplaces that were psychologically supportive had lower rates of mental health decline than workplaces that did not.

In 2021, it is anticipated that City of Edmonton employees will continue to face the challenges of living day to day during the pandemic while managing changes in the workforce, doing more with fewer resources, and responding to ongoing uncertainty. It will be more important than ever for the City to promote and foster psychological health and safety as pandemic impacts continue and recovery begins.

Areas where the City is working to expand current support for psychological health and safety in the workplace include:

- development of a trauma response team to support employees who are experiencing thoughts of suicide, domestic violence or a crisis in the workplace,
- ongoing review and revisions of workplace violence and harassment policies and procedures for opportunities to enhance trauma-informed best practices,
- ongoing enhancements to virtual mental health supports that align with roll out of the Remote Work Program,
- evaluation and updates to the City's Mental Health/Healthy Living Strategy,
- new programming related to financial wellbeing and literacy, and
- expanded Peer Support Teams across nine branches and areas, in addition to the existing teams in Edmonton Fire Rescue Service, Edmonton Transit Service, areas of Citizen Services, Legal Services, and Integrated Infrastructure Services.

In addition, the results of this report will be shared across the organization to encourage ongoing alignment with the Standard in all of the City's work areas.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play

Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
City of Edmonton employees continuously develop knowledge required to identify and support the evolving needs of each other and Edmontonians.	# leaders trained in The Working Mind	As of end of Feb, 2021 - 885 (67.5%) of active supervisors and 30 of active executives have completed since the supervisor program roll-out Mar 2019.	90% by end of 2021
	# of employees trained in The Working Mind	As of end of Feb, 2021 - 560 (5.5%) of active employees have completed since the employee program roll-out Nov 2020.	20% in 2021, 90% by 2023
City of Edmonton employees know about and access supports for their psychological wellbeing when needed.	# of employees accessing the Employee & Family Assistance Program	Current use is at 11.15%	14-19% utilization by 2022, in line with national norms/industry averages

Attachments

1. National Standard of Canada
2. Application of the 13 Psychological Factors at the City of Edmonton

Others Reviewing this Report

- M. Persson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- G. Cebryk, Deputy City Manager, City Operations
- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development
- K. Fallis-Howell, Acting City Solicitor