

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

Executive Summary prepared by BCNU for the Membership



## What is The Standard?

In 2013, the Mental Health Commission of Canada released a National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety (PH&S) in the Workplace (The Standard). This set of principles, guidelines, and tools for implementation and evaluation is the first of its kind, and is currently being implemented in workplaces across the country; it has been downloaded more times than any other standard on The CSA Group website. The goal of The Standard is to assist employers in identifying, assessing, controlling and (where possible) eliminating psychological hazards in the workplace, as well as in promoting PH&S among workers.

## Where did The Standard come from?

The Standard was developed by The CSA Group in collaboration with the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Bureau de normalization du Québec, with funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Health Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada and Bell Canada. Canadians already rely on CSA standards in healthcare for a number of products – health care and medical devices, equipment and machine safety, elevators and lifting devices and personal protective equipment. It follows that the same organization, using the same standards development process should influence how we develop PH&S guidelines in our workplaces.

## Why is The Standard Important?

**Staff engagement, productivity & morale:** Psychologically healthy workplaces are better able to recruit and retain staff, engage employees and enhance productivity, and are less likely to suffer from high rates of conflict, grievances, turnover, disability, injuries, absenteeism and problems with staff morale.

**Legal issues:** While The Standard is currently a voluntary initiative, changes in labour laws, workers' compensation regulations, tort law and human rights decisions are increasingly moving towards recognizing the responsibility of employers to attend to psychological safety in the workplace.

**Disability claims:** According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, mental health problems and illnesses affect more than 20% of Canadian workers, and account for approximately 30% of short- and long-term disability claims. This places mental health among the top three drivers of disability claims in the country. The focus of The Standard is on preventing mental health problems before they develop into illnesses requiring time off work.

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## What does The Standard look like?

The Standard is based on three strategic pillars: (1) Prevention of harm; (2) Promotion of health; and (3) Resolution of incidents or concerns. Attention to all three areas is integral to fostering a psychologically healthy workplace as well as addressing any ongoing PH&S issues.

Thirteen workplace factors tied to psychological safety are identified, and make up the basis of the actions outlined in The Standard. Each of these factors is described, with a list of broadly defined indicators to help employers assess strengths and gaps in their organizations, and to plan interventions for action where required.

The Standard also outlines guidelines for planning, data collection, implementation, evaluation and corrective action as required, along with sample implementation and evaluation models suited to varying organizational sizes and needs.



## Who is The Standard for?

The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace was developed for application in any worksite. The goal is to assist employers in striving for increasingly psychologically safe and healthy workplaces, for the benefit of employers and workers alike.

## How does this apply to BCNU members?

In this round of collective bargaining, the Ministry of Health agreed to require each Health Authority to adopt The National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace; it is no longer voluntary for Health Authorities.