Psychological Health in the Workplace – Carewest’s Journey

Darrell Lang, Director, Human Resources

February 20, 2019
Outcomes

• Understand why Carewest decided to focus on the psychological health of its workforce.

• How we started this work.

• Resources available for any employer.

• Share some of our learnings and experience.
Who is Carewest?

- Calgary’s largest public provider of continuing care services
- Wholly-owned subsidiary of Alberta Health Services
- 13 locations, 1,400 beds plus community programs.
- 5000+ clientele every year
- 2,700+ employees
A Definition of Psychological Health

Our ability to think, feel and behave in a manner that enables us to perform effectively in our work environments, our personal lives and in society at large.
The most common psychological health concerns in the workplace are

- Anxiety
- Depression
Canadian Experience

Estimated 1 in 10 Canadians have a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year and 1 in 5 will experience one in their lifetime.
Canadian Experience

- 1998 - cost of mental health problems to the Canadian economy = $14.8 billion/year.

- Current estimates $35 billion/year.

- 1/3$ come from public health care; 2/3 from employer benefit plans.

- Mental health problems are the fastest rising cause of disability claims & are expected to be 50% of all disability claims over the next 5 years.
Rise in Psychological Factors Claims
## Carewest Experience

### Top areas of EFAP counselling (3 year average)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DI claims for Mental Health:

38 claims of this nature in 2018

Average lost time from work 80 days (16 weeks)
Call to Action

LEGAL
- Current & emerging legal & regulatory mandates
- Every reasonable effort principle
- Changing legal tolerance

BUSINESS
- Sick time costs
- Premium costs
- Costs of treatment
- Productivity - presenteeism

ACTION

HEALTH
Evidence of the impact of workplace factors on employee mental health
Common Causes in the Workplace

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Personal conflict
- Unreasonable work demands
- Lack of even minimal control over workload and work pace
Common Behaviours in a Positive Workplace

• Fairness
• Civility
• Respect – regardless of power status
We knew some of this data & context.
In the “wondering what to do phase.”
Low priority.
Unclear path forward.
A hidden issue so not a lot of support for action.
The Happenstance for Carewest

- Trend draws the focused attention of Great West Life
- Convergence of COO, HR, EH&S and site operational leadership’s interest.
- Most employers unaware of resources available and the steps to action seem daunting.
- Opportunity for a pilot project.
Pilot

Led by GWL and using mostly Guarding Minds @ Work Resources.

- 1 urban hospice
- 1 urban primary care network
- 1 rural acute care health center
- 2 urban continuing care operators

3 year pilot – assess; create, strengthen & implement; evaluate.

Carewest pilot at 3 of 13 work sites
Guarding Minds @ Work

- Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA) within the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University

- Based on extensive research, including data analysis of a national sample and reviews of national and international best practices, as well as existing and emerging Canadian case law and legislation.

- Guarding Minds at Work is available to all employers - large or small, in the public or private sector - at no cost.
13 Psychosocial Factors

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

- Statement of Commitment
- Staff Survey
- ID areas for Action
- Look for/ implement bigger initiatives
- Look for/ implement Quick Wins
- Explore Resources Available
- Evaluate
- Plan Carewest- wide next steps – strategy
Employee Health, Safety and Wellness
Statement of Commitment

At Carewest, we believe in the importance of the health, safety and psychological well-being of our most valuable assets, our employees. Management is committed to creating a healthy work environment, supporting appropriate training, fostering a positive attitude towards physical health, psychological health, safety and wellness. Each of us share the responsibility to be aware of and comply with Carewest health and safety policies, procedures and relevant government legislation and regulations. Everyone, including volunteers and contractors has a responsibility for their own personal wellness, personal safety and the safety of their co-workers which contributes to a healthy, safe and respectful workplace. Achieving a healthy and safe environment can only be achieved through the collaboration, co-operation and action of all.
Initial Scan

• Short – 6 questions to get a basic temperature check on your organization
• We did it with our managers at our pilot sites.
• Could do it with all employees.
• We skipped to larger survey for 600 employees
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Factors</th>
<th>About</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Fillable PDF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF1: Psychological Support</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF2: Organizational Culture</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF3: Clear Leadership &amp; Expectations</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF4: Civility &amp; Respect</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF5: Psychological Competencies &amp; Requirements</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF6: Growth &amp; Development</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF7: Recognition &amp; Reward</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF8: Involvement &amp; Influence</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF9: Workload Management</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF10: Engagement</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF11: Balance</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF12: Psychological Protection</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF13: Protection of Physical Safety</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. People treat each other with respect and consideration in our workplace.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Our workplace effectively handles “people problems” that exist between staff.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. People from all backgrounds are treated fairly in our workplace.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Unnecessary conflict is kept to a minimum in our workplace</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Our workplace has effective ways of addressing inappropriate behaviour by customers or clients.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Sample questions – Psychological Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Our workplace offers services or benefits that adequately address employee psychological and mental health.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Our supervisors would say or do something helpful if an employee looked distressed while at work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employees feel supported in our workplace when they are dealing with personal or family issues.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Our workplace supports employees who are returning to work after time off due to a mental health condition.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. People in our workplace have a good understanding of the importance of employee mental health.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Carewest Benchmark Survey Results

- **PF1: Psychological Support**: Serious Concerns (13.9)
- **PF2: Organizational Culture**: Significant Concerns (14.3)
- **PF3: Clear Leadership & Expectations**: Minimal Concerns (15.1)
- **PF4: Civility & Respect**: Serious Concerns (13.9)
- **PF5: Psychological Competencies & Requirements**: Relative Strengths (15.9)
- **PF6: Growth & Development**: Significant Concerns (15.4)
- **PF7: Recognition & Reward**: Significant Concerns (14.3)
- **PF8: Involvement & Influence**: Significant Concerns (14.8)
- **PF9: Workload Management**: Significant Concerns (14.8)
- **PF10: Engagement**: Relative Strengths (18.2)
- **PF11: Balance**: Significant Concerns (14.5)
- **PF12: Psychological Protection**: Significant Concerns (12.9)
- **PF13: Protection of Physical Safety**: Significant Concerns (14.8)

*Serious Concerns = 5 to 9*  *Significant Concerns = 10 to 13*  *Minimal Concerns* = 14 to 16  *Relative Strengths* = 17 to 20
Focused on 3 areas with lowest scores

- **Psychological Support** – a work environment where coworkers & supervisors are supportive of employees psychological & mental health concerns, and respond appropriate as needed.

- **Civility and Respect** – a work environment where employees are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients and the public.

- **Psychological Protection** – A work environment where employees’ psychological safety is ensured
Organizational Review Worksheet

PF1: PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

OBJECTIVE: A work environment where coworkers and supervisors are supportive of employees' psychological and mental health concerns, and respond appropriately as needed.

What are the benefits of effectively addressing Psychological Support?
- Improved overall psychological health of employees
- Increased productivity
- Reduced costs from work absence (e.g., sick time, disability costs)
- Successful/sustainable return-to-work

What information may be helpful to refer to or collect?
- Absenteeism/leave data (e.g., sick leave, short- and long-term disability duration and rates)
- Data on costs, reasons and rates for benefits utilization (e.g., on psychiatric drug prescriptions, Employee and Family Assistance Programs [EFAP], psychologists or other regulated mental health professionals), including comparison to previous years
- Existing employee survey data (e.g., on stress/mental health concerns)
- Return-to-work and accommodation policies and procedures

How would you describe your workplace/work unit? (select all that apply; this will help you answer questions below)
- Mental Health Awareness
- Supervisors/managers trained to identify and/or support employees with mental health concerns
- Employees provided with education and/or information on mental health issues
Training & Development

- Provide education and training to all staff to heighten mental health awareness (i.e., mental health literacy)
- Provide additional education about mental health issues to all staff whose role involves leading, supporting or managing (e.g., human resources teams, health and safety representatives, union representatives)
- Create opportunities for training and/or mentoring to enhance interpersonal and people management skills
- Provide training and/or mentoring to help deal appropriately and supportively with employees who have possible mental health concerns
- Supply the tools and supports (including time and incentives) needed to succeed in supporting employees with mental health concerns
- Review third-party providers of psychological services to ensure adherence to evidence-based practices and focus on work function
- Train or engage peer-support workers focused on mental health issues

Communication

- Encourage respectful workplace communication where psychological health concerns can be discussed safely and openly
- Ensure widespread awareness of company benefits and programs that employees can access to address their psychological health concerns
- Share community or online resources to help with psychological health concerns
- Maintain regular and supportive communication with employees who are off work due to mental health concerns

Formal Policies & Programs

- Provide comprehensive benefits that support employee mental health (i.e., coverage for the following: psychologists or other regulated mental health professionals; Employee and Family Assistance Programs; prescription drugs; and short-term and long-term disability plans)
- Provide or link to early intervention supports and programs for employees who may have psychological health concerns. Note that Employee and Family Assistance Programs are well-positioned to provide early intervention.
- When appropriate, help employees to obtain assessment of psychological function to determine treatment and accommodation needs
- Create “sick at work” policies and programs to assist those who remain at work while dealing with mental health concerns.
Some of our actions so far

- Leadership commitment statement
- Standing agenda item for executive meetings
- Additional mental health materials available to staff
- Articles in our internal newsletter, intranet etc.
- Piloted a wellness app - Ikkuma
How are you feeling today?

![Emoticons indicating feelings: Very Negative, Negative, Neutral, Positive, Very Positive]
YOUR ACTIVITY

2

HABITS

11

RANK

705

POINTS

Tune It Up!

Listen to soothing music or nature sounds (at work) to eliminate noise distractions. Apps such as Relax Melodies provide the variety you need.

DONE

Happiness

1/17/19 1:46 PM

Boost your happy hormones!

Depending on the intensity of your exercise, your body will reward you with happiness-boosting hormones.

Ashley

1/17/19 12:21 PM

Ashley just reached LEVEL 12 and unlocked 3 more habits! One level a time is how you become Superhuman!

Jana

1/17/19 9:41 AM

Jana just put the Set Expectations Power-Up on the big board! Ohh! yeahhh 26 more points!

Schedule something significant in the next month that you will look forward to. If you already have something scheduled, consider this Power-Up complete!
I consume green leafy vegetables on a daily basis.

I eat a nutrient-rich, low-sugar, and high-fiber breakfast.

SUPERHUMAN ZONE

Implemented Habits %

- Nutrition
- Routines
- Sleep
- Stress
- Fitness
- Brain
- Time
- Happiness

My Profile  Team Profile  Company Profile
Where are we now – what next?

• 1 year into pilot. Still exploring all of the resources and ideas within Guarding Minds @ Work
• Need to find ways to implement more meaningful supports for staff
• Find supports that staff can use that do not impact on their time undertaking frontline care
• Use what we learn from this pilot to inform a comprehensive strategy and approach – this is still a first/tentative step for Carewest
Questions?