

DEVELOPED BY



MINDFUL EMPLOYER

canada



PROTECTING THE
PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH &
SAFETY OF VOLUNTEERS

Toolkit

Resolving workplace challenges with intention.



Sarah Jenner

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Volunteers come from all walks of life. This means a percentage of them will have lived experience with addiction, trauma or mental illness. Other's will be struggling with personal, financial or health issues. The purpose of this toolkit is to explore the strategies that can be used to improve the psychological health and safety of volunteers.

Protecting the Psychological Health and Safety of Volunteers was developed through the contributions and feedback of the 27 not-for-profit organizations participating in Mindful Employer Canada's "Building capacity to promote and protect Psychological Health and Safety in the not-for-profit sector" case study. This two-year case study was made possible by the *Ministry of Labour's Occupational Health and Safety Prevention and Innovation Program*.

At Mindful Employer Canada, we're continually collaborating with others to develop tools that can improve working lives. We hope you'll use the strategies and resources provided in this toolkit to support volunteers within your organization.

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The National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace states that in addition to employees, the psychological health and safety of volunteers and students should be protected.

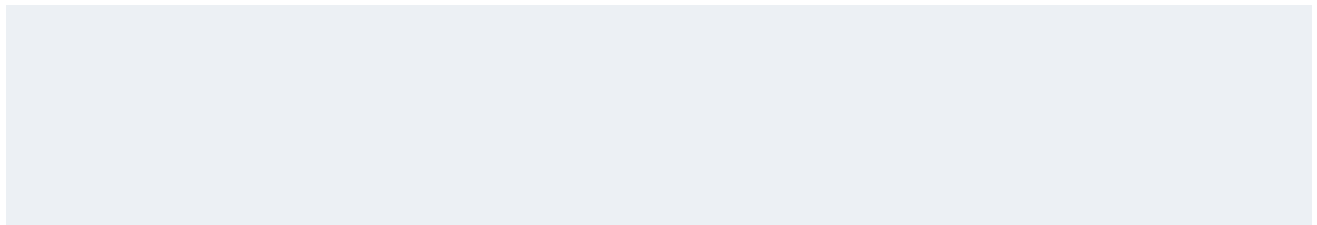
There are, however, some challenges since volunteers are generally not supervised in the same way that employees would be, which means it may be more difficult to identify and respond to a volunteer who may be struggling with mental health concerns.

By putting some structure and strategies in place, organizations can do a better job of not just supporting volunteers but in protecting their well-being. In this toolkit, we will cover three areas: organizational strategies, managing volunteers, and responding when a volunteer may be struggling.

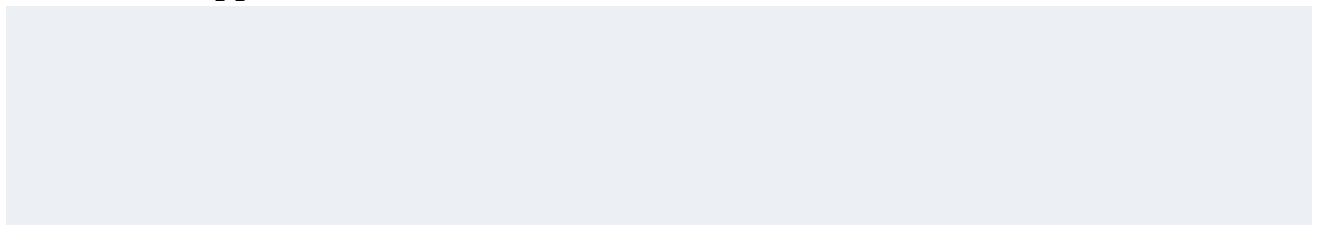
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How does your organization currently support the health and safety of volunteers in the areas of orientation/training, resources/supports, and coaching/mentoring?

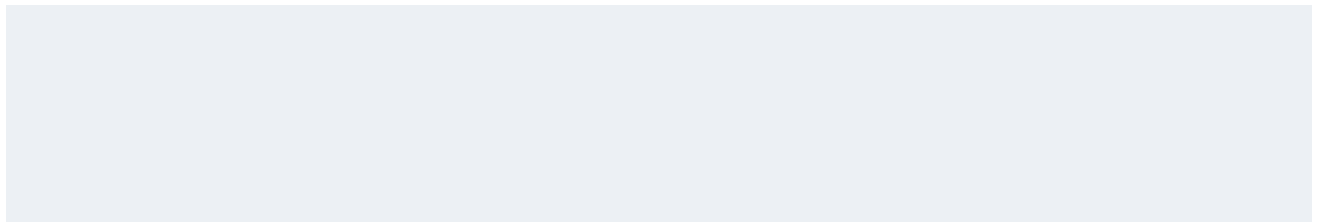
Orientation/Training



Resources/Support



Coaching/Mentoring



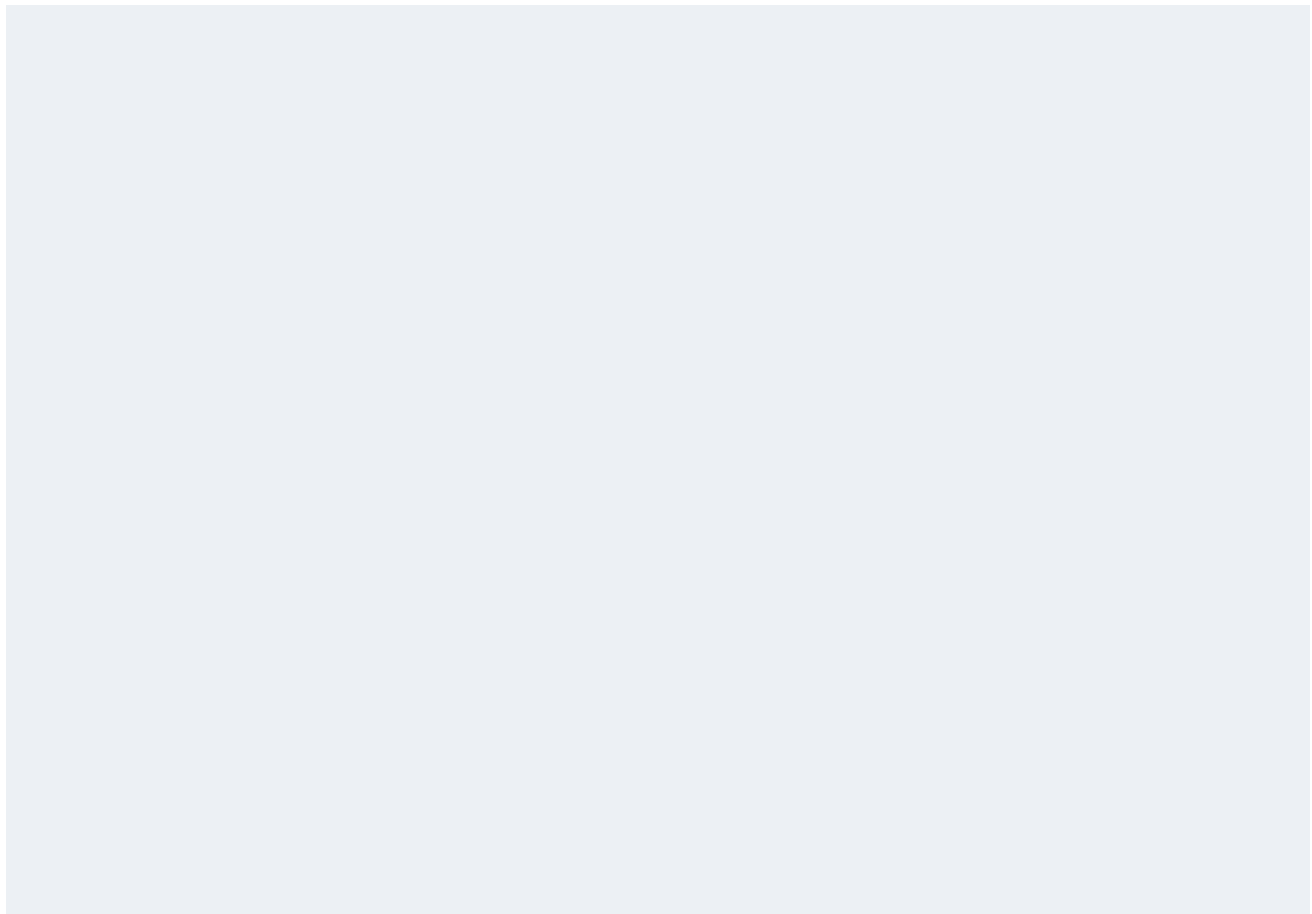
There are policies and processes that can help improve clarity about accountability for volunteers in a supportive way. For example, an interactive and robust orientation, where volunteers get to engage with employees within the organization that could be a support to them, if and when they needed it, such as occupational health, wellness, or human resources professionals

Having clearly defined and written expectations, which include the responsibility of the volunteer to maintain their own well-being, can also set the stage for follow-up by the supervisor/coordinator or facilitator.

A common area for potential conflict can be between volunteers and full-time or unionized staff who may be concerned the volunteers will take away their jobs. Processes that include staff in deciding how volunteers will be engaged and to the extent possible show how volunteer activities enhance their paid jobs, rather than put their jobs at risk.

It's important to orient volunteers to the concept of psychological health and safety and the personal responsibility to do no harm to others.

What would be most useful in your organization in terms of policies to support the psychological health and safety of your volunteers?



What are the pros and cons of each of these policy changes?

Policy Change	Benefits	Risk

Who is the individual you could share these with, that has the authority to make policy changes?

Most people want to feel valued and that the work they are doing matters whether the work is paid or unpaid. While volunteers would not expect to be disciplined or to go through a performance review process, having check-ins such as the One-on-One's, shown here, can help your volunteers to feel that they are being heard and that what they do matters.

Holding volunteers accountable to describe what they are going to do and how they would measure success gives you an opportunity to check in with them to see if they have met their own goals. These meetings could be as short as ten minutes. This also helps to keep the volunteer supervisor aware of how things are going. Where a face-to-face meeting is not possible, the volunteer can still fill in the One-on-One and email it.

Review the One-on-One template below. Consider how practical this resource would be in your organization to facilitate discussion between volunteers and their supervisors. Are there questions you would add or remove?

ONE-ON-ONE *Questions*

01

My challenges right now are (everything that may be frustrating, overwhelming, annoying or concerning you) ...

02

The errors I have made this week are (and I need help to correct them or I corrected them this way) ...

03

Specific people I have delighted in my role as a volunteer include (who and what did you do) ...

04

I am contributing to positive workplace mental health in this way...

05

My fellow volunteers or employees have been helpful to me in this way...

06

I was most energized when doing this volunteer work...

07

Any other comments or contributions...

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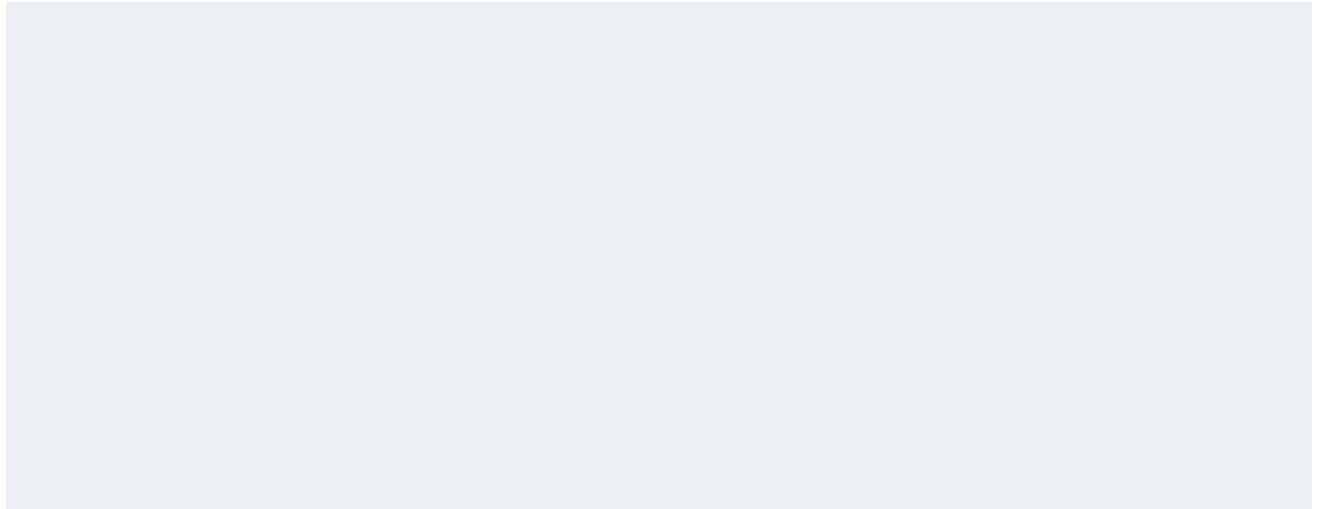
MARY ANN BAYNTON
& ASSOCIATES

If your organizational policies encourage volunteers to reach out, and your management strategies support early identification when issues exist, the next step would be being able to respond effectively when there is a concern.

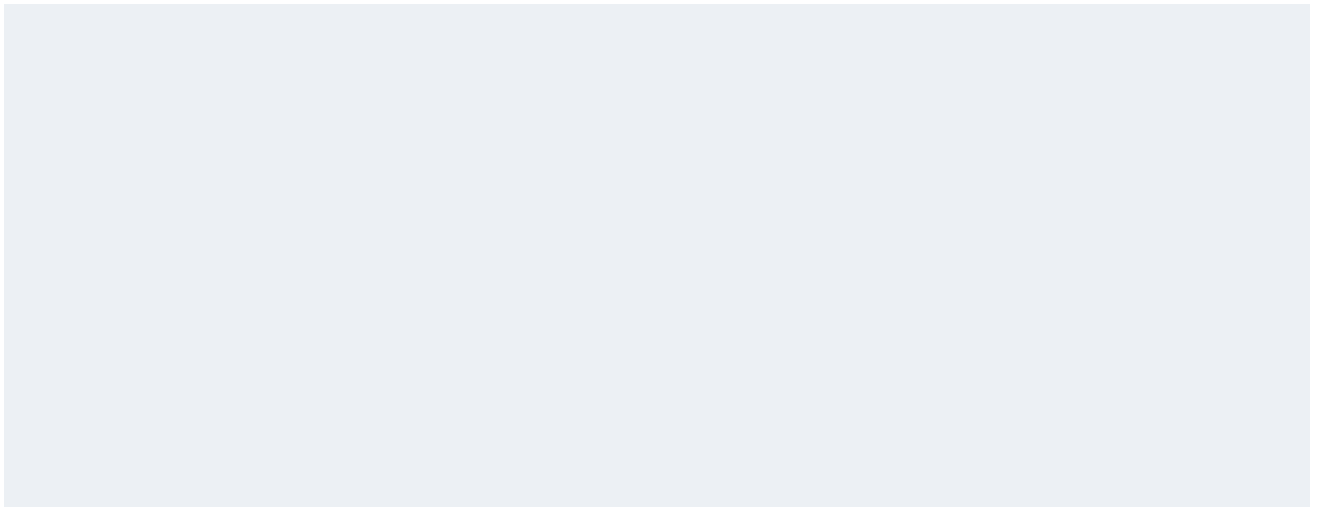
Some resources that are available to full-time staff may not be available to volunteers, such as employee and family assistance programs. But there may be other organizational and community resources that may be helpful.

Discuss the resources that you're aware of, as well as those that should be explored.

What resources does your organization offer that can help support a volunteer that might be struggling with life or health issues?



What other resources could be developed that may be helpful to volunteers?



Fill out this Mental Health Resource List so you can share the document with volunteers. This can help get them support when they need it, and information about what's available to them.

Organizational Resource	Contact Name	Phone	Email
Human Resource Department			
Member of Volunteer Staff			
Wellness/Health Centre			
Occupational Health Nurse			
Other			

Community Resource	Contact Name	Phone	Email
Local Branch of Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)			
Mood Disorders Associations			
Addiction Services			
Distress Line			
Child and Family Services			
Family Support Groups			
Return-to-Work Planning			

Include below is a list of organizations that can be found online and in many cases have resources available on their website.

Community Resource	Organization	Website
Online Information and Tool	Working Through It When employees are struggling with mental health issues, you may be concerned about invading privacy or being seen as harassing. Working Through It is a resource that provides employees with practical strategies for personal coping strategies at work, off work and returning to work.	https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/resources/mental-health-awareness-videos
	Check Up From the Neck Up This simple, online, private, mental health check-up can identify some symptoms of common mood disorders so you can get help if you need it. You can also learn more about mood disorders on this site and find resources to help yourself, your family members, or friends.	https://mooddisorders.ca/program/check-up-from-the-neck-up
	Find your local CMHA CMHA branches across Canada provide a wide range of innovative services and supports to people who are experiencing mental illness and their families. These services are tailored to the needs and resources of the communities where they are based.	https://cmha.ca/find-your-cmha
	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Foundation CAMH combines clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental health and addiction issues.	http://www.camh.ca/
	Workplace Strategies for Mental Health Workplace Strategies for Mental Health is the primary vehicle through which the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace makes free information, tools and resources available to employers and organizations who recognize that a healthier workplace can improve their bottom line.	https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/

Community Resource	Organization	Website
Online Information and Tool	Mental Health Commission of Canada The Mental Health Commission of Canada leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of Canadians.	https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English
	The Family Guide to Mental Health Recovery Project “The Family Guide to Mental Health Recovery” is an interactive documentary project that will provide new hope, insight and guidance to the whole family, as they begin a journey of recovery.	http://www.familyguidetomentalhealth.com/

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Questions to ask before engaging the volunteer

Are you considering having a discussion with the volunteer about their performance? By asking yourself these questions before engaging in a conversation with the volunteer, you can prepare for the discussion by considering your needs and perspectives of the situation.

CONSIDER YOUR OWN NEEDS

- Do I have the time to do this properly or I am pressuring myself to rush through this?
- Am I responding to hearsay or speaking about known facts?
- Am I in the right frame of mind to do this or should I be rescheduling for another day?
- Am I considering my role in the situation or believing that I have no need to improve?

APPROACH THE ISSUES WITH A FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS

- Am I looking for solutions or just rehashing the problem? Listening for Understanding helps you to understand the perspective of the employee before discussing solutions.
- Will this approach bring about new behaviour or focus on old behaviour?
- Will this approach bring about long-term improvement or only short-term results?

EXPLORE POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON THE VOLUNTEER AND OTHERS

- Am I seeing the bigger picture or just this particular situation?
- Will the potential solution provide energy for the volunteer or drain them?
- Can I preserve the dignity of those involved or will someone feel shamed or blamed?
- Does this approach encourage the volunteer to take control and responsibility for their wellbeing and success or am I retaining all control?
- Have I adequately addressed the fears and concerns of others or will I create unease by ignoring them?

HELP THE VOLUNTEER ACHIEVE SUCCESS

- Can the volunteer and I develop a shared plan for success or will we hold separate ideas of what success will look like?
- Am I supporting my volunteer to be successful or am I primarily focused on either personality issues or task concerns?
- Will I monitor and follow up or do I think one conversation will be the end of it?

CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE

- How do you usually communicate direction? Do you know if your communication style works for your employee?
- How do you usually give feedback? Do you know how your style impacts your employee?

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Stronger
Communities
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When you're working with a volunteer to develop a workplace plan consider periodic reviews to help create an objective measure of performance, assess workload, and set priorities. the Task Improvement Worksheet below is a resource that you can use to address and follow up on a specific task where performance may be a concern.

Task improvement worksheet

Task

Newly assigned task

Ongoing task

Date: _____

Employee name: _____

Reviewed with: _____

Date for follow-up: _____

**How would you know you've completed
this task successfully?**

**What do you need to successfully
accomplish the task?**

**How many hours will it take to complete
this task successfully the first time?**

**Given all your other work tasks, when is it
reasonable to expect completion?**

Task improvement time log

Due on:

Challenges or supports	
Date	
Start time	
End time	

Task improvement time log

Due on:

Challenges or supports	
Date	
Start time	
End time	

How did you measure success?

What will you do differently now so you can be successful next time?

All Workplace Strategies resources are available to anyone at no cost, compliments of Canada Life. To learn more, visit clwsmh.com.

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MINDFUL EMPLOYER CANADA'S MISSION



What is Our Mission?

Dealing with the obstacles of today requires leaders who resolve workplace challenges with intention.

Mindful Employer Canada emerged out of a pursuit to inspire and support organizations to create workplaces that are productive, inclusive, innovative, and ambitious.

We do this by creating programs that teach leaders how to resolve workplace challenges using strategies that focus on commitment rather than compliance and empowerment rather than criticism. This can help leaders meet goals like commitment-based management, having difficult conversations, fair process leadership, and setting personal goals.

Leveraging our programs and adjusting how your leaders resolve workplace challenges will reward your organization with positive improvements in leadership success, team culture, employee retention, and disability statistics, which impact the advancement of your organization as a whole.

Established in 2013, Mindful Employer Canada is an organization driven by progressive ideas, comprehensive strategies, and a strong belief in improving the employee experience.

Why should we focus on leadership development?

The reality is employees aren't settling for toxic workplaces and detrimental leaders anymore. And why should they? We invest almost half of our lifetime at work. Don't we deserve to do that in a place that values us? That appreciates us? That supports us? We know the workplace can affect an employee's mental health. We know there are resources to help leaders be better. As organizations, we need to show leaders strategies that support workplace mental health and more importantly, how to use them to improve the employee experience.

That's where our programs excel.

WHERE TO *Find Us*



WWW.FACEBOOK.COM

You can find us on Facebook by searching @MindfulEmployerCanada
#MindfulEmployerCanada #MindfulLeader

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM

You can find us on Instagram by searching @MindfulEmployerCanada
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SPECIAL THANKS TO:



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Workplace Strategies
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