

Frequently Asked Questions

The National Standard of Canada titled Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace – Prevention, promotion and guidance to staged implementation

What is [the National Standard of Canada titled Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace – Prevention, promotion and guidance to staged implementation?](#)

The Standard is a document that outlines a systematic approach to develop and sustain a psychologically healthy and safe workplace. It focuses on mental illness prevention and mental health promotion. The Standard is intended for everyone, whether or not they live with a mental illness.

It is also a voluntary standard. It is not a legal framework or regulation.

The Standard includes information on:

- The identification of psychological hazards in the workplace;
- The assessment and control of the risks in the workplace associated with hazards that cannot be eliminated (e.g. stressors due to organizational change or reasonable job demands);
- The implementation of practices that support and promote psychological health and safety in the workplace;
- The growth of a culture that promotes psychological health and safety in the workplace;
- The implementation of systems of measurement and review to ensure sustainability of the overall approach.

The Standard provides information to help organizations implement key components, including scenarios for organizations of all sizes, an audit tool, and other resources and references.

Why was the Standard developed?

Mental health problems and illnesses are the leading cause of short- and long-term disability in Canada and the toll on Canadian workers and workplaces is substantial.

The workplace plays an essential part in maintaining positive mental health. Creating psychologically healthy and safe workplaces benefits Canadian workers and helps their families and communities. Creating a systematic and sustainable approach for psychological health and safety, similar in spirit to how physical health and safety is managed, is also becoming a business imperative. The business case is clear: a work environment that promotes good mental health is socially responsible, cost effective, and helps attract and keep good employees. It also helps an employer's bottom line and contributes to economic prosperity.



The Standard is also important for risk management. Employers are increasingly being held legally responsible for psychological health and safety in the workplace. As a result, employers may be held liable to claims, for example, if an employee is harassed or bullied or chronically overworked.

Changing Directions-Changing Lives: the Mental Health Strategy for Canada released last year, recommends the wide adoption of psychological health and safety standards in Canadian workplaces. Tracking uptake of the Standard will be a key measure of progress in promoting workplace mental health.

Up to this point, there has been no comprehensive national standard to help guide organizations that want to take action.

What is the financial impact of mental health problems on Canadian organizations?

Mental health problems and illnesses are estimated to account for nearly 30% of short- and long-term disability claims in Canada. In some major employment sectors, the number is closer to 50%. More than 80% of Canadian employers rate mental health problems and illnesses among the top three drivers of both short- and long-term disability claims made by their employees.

Organizations have a vested interest in helping to prevent the onset of mental and physical illnesses and to promote recovery. The longer an employee is away from work due to illness, the less chance there is of a successful return to the workplace.

Who was the Standard developed for?

The Standard was developed for everyone, including both employees and employers whether or not they individually live with a mental illness.

Employees will clearly benefit from workplaces that promote and protect their psychological health and safety.

For employers, the business case rests on four main parameters – enhanced cost effectiveness, improved risk management, increased organizational recruitment and retention as well as corporate social responsibility.

Can any organization use the Standard?

The voluntary Standard can be used differently by various businesses and organizations depending upon their needs.



Some businesses may use the Standard to focus on creating policies and processes to promote good mental health, while others may use it to inform training programs.

The Standard is a starting point. It's important to note that the full range of workplace mental health issues cannot be addressed by meeting the Standard alone. Strong organizational leadership from all workplace stakeholders and a comprehensive approach to organizational change will also be required.

Who created the Standard?

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) provided leadership and commissioned the Standard, working collaboratively with the Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ) and CSA Group.

The project was funded in part by the Government of Canada (through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Health Canada, and the Public Health Agency of Canada), as well as through a financial contribution from the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace and Bell Canada.

The content of the Standard was developed collaboratively by BNQ and CSA Group, with input from a Technical Committee of volunteers with significant experience and expertise in this subject matter. The membership of the Technical Committee included volunteers from the following sectors:

- Employers
- Organized Labour
- Service Providers
- Government/Regulatory Authorities/Insurance
- General Interest (e.g. workplace mental health specialists).

The committee included health and safety professionals, executives, labour leaders, government representatives, experts in law and policy and other groups.

A complete list of Committee members is available at www.mentalhealthcommission.ca.

How do organizations put the Standard into practice?

Download and read the Standard and its annexes free of charge from the following websites:

CSA Group, www.shopcsa.ca

BNQ, www.bnq.qc.ca

MHCC, www.mentalhealthcommission.ca



Get your organization's senior leadership on board and develop a policy statement around workplace psychological health and safety. Ensure your organization's leadership has identified a champion who will take responsibility for moving forward with activities related to meeting the Standard.

Go through a thorough planning process to learn where the gaps exist in psychological health and safety at your workplace. Use available tools such as *Guarding Minds @ Work*, the Standard's audit tool, and existing workplace data to assess what your organization is currently doing to support psychological health and safety in the workplace and what you can do to improve upon that effort.

Take advantage of other tools for employers that complement the Standard such as the Mental Health Commission of Canada's Action Guide for Employers, or its Mental Health First Aid program.

What is the process for developing a Standard?

Anyone can come forward and request that a standard be developed. Often it is a consumer organization, trade/industry association or a government department, which has observed a need. CSA Group and BNQ (in Quebec), evaluate the usefulness of a potential standard in meeting the need, and assess the level of support in the community and industry.

When called upon to develop a standard, they form a committee composed of volunteer members. The volunteers are selected to represent the various interest groups most likely to be affected by the standard, such as labour, business and industry, regulatory bodies, science and academia, and consumer groups, as applicable.

In this case, BNQ and CSA Group functioned as a neutral third party, providing a structure and a forum for developing the standard. The committees were created using a "balanced matrix" approach, which means that each committee was structured to capitalize on the combined strengths and expertise of its members - with no single group dominating.

In the development of *the National Standard of Canada titled Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace – Prevention, promotion and guidance to staged implementation*, the committee considered the views of all participants and the comments received through a public review process. It developed the details of the Standard by a consensus process, which included the principles of inclusive participation, respect for diverse interests, and transparency.

About The Mental Health Commission of Canada

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is a catalyst for change. We are collaborating with hundreds of partners to change the attitudes of Canadians toward mental health problems and to improve services and support. Our goal is to help people who live with mental health problems and illnesses lead meaningful and productive lives. Together we spark change.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is funded by Health Canada.



www.mentalhealthcommission.ca

About Bureau de normalisation du Québec

Reporting to the Centre de recherche industrielle du Québec (CRIQ), the Bureau de normalisation du Québec (BNQ) has acted as a central standardization and certification organization and disseminator of information on standards for over 50 years. Officially recognized by the Government of Québec, the Standards Council of Canada (SCC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), the BNQ takes the lead in developing measures to support business, manufacturing, social and regulatory areas of interest. For more information: www.bnq.qc.ca

About CSA Group

CSA Group is an independent, not-for-profit membership association dedicated to safety, social good and sustainability. Its knowledge and expertise encompass standards development; training and advisory solutions; global testing and certification services across key business areas including hazardous locations and industrial, plumbing and construction, medical, safety and technology, appliances and gas, alternative energy, lighting and sustainability; as well as consumer product evaluation services. The CSA certification mark appears on billions of products worldwide. For more information about CSA Group visit www.csagroup.org

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