



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety

# Choosing the right mental health training for your organisation – guide

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## Introduction

Creating a mentally healthy workplace is everyone's responsibility, and there is duty to take reasonable steps to ensure their own and others' health and safety at work. Initiatives that are evidence based, multi-faceted and involve people at every level are far more likely to effect change than either 'top down' or 'bottom up' efforts. Each group has a specific part to play.

This guide is designed to help any workplace, regardless of industry, identify effective mental health training for specific occupational groups within an organisation. Training should be implemented as part of a broader workplace strategy to address health and wellbeing and to foster an open and supportive culture towards mental health.

This guidance was developed by the Mining Industry Advisory Committee's Mental Health Safety Working Group (MHSWG) with feedback from industry and non-government organisations. This Working Group is addressing the recommendations in the Education and Health Standing Committee's Final Report *The impact of FIFO work practices on mental health*.

## How to approach and structure your training

### Training objectives

The first step is to set out your desired goals, informed, where possible, by data collected in regards to your workers' health and wellbeing and any identified organisational psychosocial hazards and factors.

Training should be conducted as part of a strategic approach to achieving broader health and safety objectives. This then ensures that the training objectives are aligned with the workplace's identified workforce risks and current workforce issues.

### Target audience

Ultimately all workers in an organisation should be provided with support and training around mental health awareness. However, resource and availability limitations will likely require a staggered approach. Furthermore, the training needs of some workers, managers and senior leaders will differ. For example:

- managers, and those with frontline supervisory responsibilities, may require additional training to deal with aggression and violence and manage workers who are experiencing mental ill health
- senior leaders need to understand how mental health training fits into broader organisational strategies and how to lead by example.

## Training format

The format of the training will depend on organisational objectives, budget, time restraints and location of participants. The advantages of different training formats are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Training format options.

Short-duration (1 – 2 hours)	For basic information and key messages, e.g. briefing for senior leaders who have limited time and need to be informed of key messages and objectives.
Medium duration (2 – 4 hours)	Allows for additional content for those in specific roles where they have a responsibility for staff or customers.
Long duration (1 day)	In-depth or multi-topic training e.g. more comprehensive information on mental health conditions, management topics (OSH, HR, workers' compensation interplay), front-line skills, and/or how to act in a 'first aid' capacity.
Modular approach	Can be completed in stages. Format allows for flexibility and offers different options to particular groups.
Online and/or virtual	Flexibility with when and where training is completed and how many people participate at one time.
Integration into existing training	Embed content across existing core training modules e.g. induction, line manager training, leadership development, customer service skills.

## Content of training

### All workers

Worker mental health awareness training is appropriate for all employees, including those groups mentioned below.

The training should help participants develop a knowledge and/or understanding of:

- what 'mental health' is, and mental health as a continuum  
i.e. the differences between mental health, mental health issues, mental illness and personal circumstances
- strategies for talking about mental health – use of language, reducing stigma, how to have a conversation with a colleague
- resilience and coping strategies  
i.e. knowledge of the importance of a healthy mind and body, importance and benefits of physical activity, consequences of dietary choices, dealing with conflict, assertiveness, obtaining a healthy work-life balance, recognising symptoms of mental ill health in themselves and describe what to do next, knowledge and understanding about mental health issues and its impact.
- the legal requirements for reporting work-related hazards to the employer

Training should also help participants identify:

- signs and symptoms of common mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety
- mental health risk and protective factors
- particular issues of concern within the organisation and sector  
i.e. high performance cultures, the impact of shift working on mental health, inadequate sleep and its impact on mental health, harmful use of drug and alcohol

- evidence-based resources on looking after their own mental health and wellbeing and that of others
- sources and referral pathways for specialist support for themselves or colleagues

Training also provides an opportunity to raise awareness of employer-provided health and wellbeing strategies.

## **Managers and supervisors**

Additional training for managers and supervisors should include:

- an overview of employer's legal responsibilities relating to mental health including, duty of care, human resource (HR) processes and reasonable adjustments. This is an opportunity for participants to demonstrate understanding of legal obligations and applicable legislation.
- identification of:
  - good work design principles that benefit worker's mental health and reduces or eliminates the risk associated with psychosocial hazards and factors
  - effective leadership styles for maintaining a mentally healthy workplace
- identification and elimination of, as far as is reasonably practicable, health and safety risks, including those to mental health (i.e. psychosocial hazards).
- how to:
  - have a conversation with a worker who may be, or is confirmed to be, experiencing mental health issues
  - manage and support an employee who is experiencing mental health issues in the workplace [e.g. sources of assistance (EAP), supporting continued attendance at work, managing absences, managing the return to work and 'reasonable adjustments'] as well as identifying when it is appropriate to refer an individual to a professional and seek advice
- information on understanding and respecting privacy and confidentiality requirements.

## **Corporate and boards**

Corporate leaders and board members play a specific role in regards to promoting mental health and wellbeing, and championing programs and training in the organisation. Leading by example and leadership buy-in is critical to the success of any organisational program.

Additional training for this group should include:

- the employer's legal requirements relating to mental health (e.g. duty of care)
- an overview of the business case for creating mentally healthy workplaces
- how to make mental health and wellbeing an objective of the organisation and integrate good health and safety management into all business decisions, policies and procedures
- identification of:
  - effective leadership styles and people management skills for maintaining a mentally healthy workplace
  - HR policies and processes that promote employee mental health (e.g. flexible working conditions, bullying and discrimination policies)
  - good work design principles that benefit employee's mental health and reduce psychosocial risk
  - the importance of raising awareness and reducing stigma of mental health issues in the workplace and strategies to do this.

## Human resources and safety and health professionals

In some organisations, additional training needs for HR and occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals may be identified. This is particularly true if a skills gap has been identified in relation to their understanding of mental health and wellbeing, psychosocial hazards and factors, or if they are championing a program.

HR and OSH professionals have the same needs as managers and supervisors and the following additional training needs may be relevant.

- Identification of:
  - strategies for improving workers' mental health and wellbeing, including training and support options, and effective communication of these strategies
  - and support of internal 'champions' in workplace mental health
  - policies and practices that have an impact on workplace mental health e.g. organisation fatigue management plans
  - psychosocial hazards and factors if involved in incident investigations.
- Understanding of:
  - how to develop and implement a mental health strategy which demonstrates an organisational commitment to creating a mentally healthy workplace
  - how to evaluate strategies
  - psychosocial hazards and factors, and common control measures.
- How to promote employee mental health and wellbeing and personal safety.

## Frontline workers

Additional training may be offered to workers on how to respond appropriately, without harming themselves or others, if someone is in crisis or a situation has escalated. Training requirements are likely to vary according to the specific circumstances and roles of employees, but the following should be included in the content.

- What to do if someone is in crisis or distressed at work.
- How to respond confidently and appropriately to:
  - violent or aggressive behaviour
  - someone experiencing an acute mental health episode such as psychosis (drug induced or a symptom of a mental health condition).
- How to ensure your own safety and maintain your own resilience when dealing with these challenging situations.

## Medical and emergency response personnel

These workers are the first responders in a crisis or emergency situation and therefore require additional specific training to manage mental health emergencies, and the potential psychological impact that critical incidents can have on people.

Additional training for this group includes how to identify:

- someone who is experiencing mental health issues in the workplace and what to do next
- a person who is experiencing an acute mental health episode (including how to respond)
- evidence-based resources on the topic of wellbeing.

## References

[Australian Human Rights Commission. Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers](#)

[Beyond Blue – Heads up](#)

[Business in the Community in association with Public Health England. Mental health toolkit for employers](#)

[Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia. Blueprint for Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

[Safe Work Australia. Principles of good work design – A work health and safety handbook](#)

[Western Australian Association for Mental Health](#)

## Appendix 1 – Additional resources

- Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, [www.dmir.wa.gov.au](http://www.dmir.wa.gov.au)  
*Prevention and management of violence, aggression and bullying at work – code of practice*  
*Alcohol and other drugs at the workplace – guidance note*  
Mines Safety Bulletin No. 139 *Suicide awareness for the Western Australian resources sector*  
Fitness for work: Guidance about mental health and wellbeing [webpage]  
*Psychologically safe and healthy workplaces: Risk management approach toolkit*  
*Introduction to work-related stress*
- Department of Health, [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)  
Slade T., Johnston A., Teesson M., Whiteford H., Burgess P., Pirkis J. and Saw S., 2009. *The mental health of Australians 2. Report on the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing*. Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra, 59 pp.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, [www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3303.0](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3303.0)  
*3303.0 – Causes of death, Australia, 2015*
- Mental Health Commission, [www.mhc.wa.gov.au](http://www.mhc.wa.gov.au)  
*Suicide Prevention 2020 – together we can save lives*  
Mental health training [webpage]
- Suicide Prevention Australia, [www.suicidepreventionaust.org](http://www.suicidepreventionaust.org)  
*Work and suicide prevention: Position statement, February 2014*  
*The dark shadow of work: Suicide among working age adults, 20 February 2014 – media release*
- Mental Health First Aid Australia, [www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au)  
Kitchener B., Jorm A. and Kelly C., 2013. *Mental health first aid manual (Third edition)*. Mental Health First Aid, Parkville, Victoria, 140 pp.
- Parliament of Western Australia, [www.parliament.wa.gov.au](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au)  
Legislative Assembly, Education and Health Standing Committee, 2015. *The impact of FIFO work practices on mental health – final report*. Report No. 5, June 2015.
- Western Australian Association for Mental Health, <https://waamh.org.au/>  
Mental health training [webpage]