

OH&S Committee Role During COVID-19



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BC's Union for Professionals

Prevention Through Education

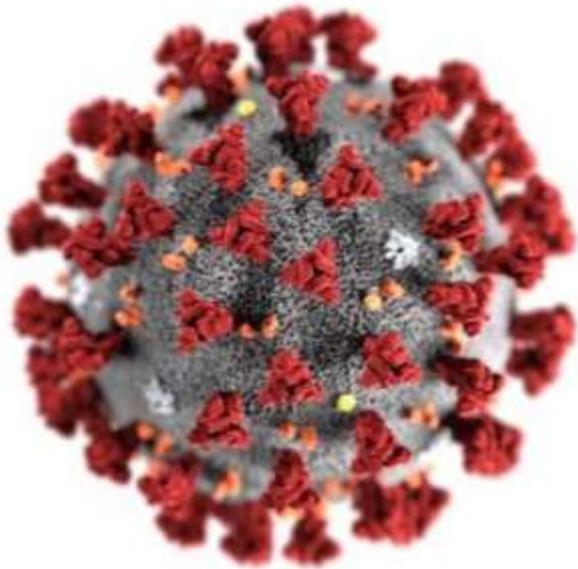
- Our mission is to provide the education and resources necessary to effectively participate in health and safety at the workplace to prevent injury, illness, disease and death.
- The BCFED Health and Safety Centre would like to acknowledge that this training is delivered on unceded First Nations territories.



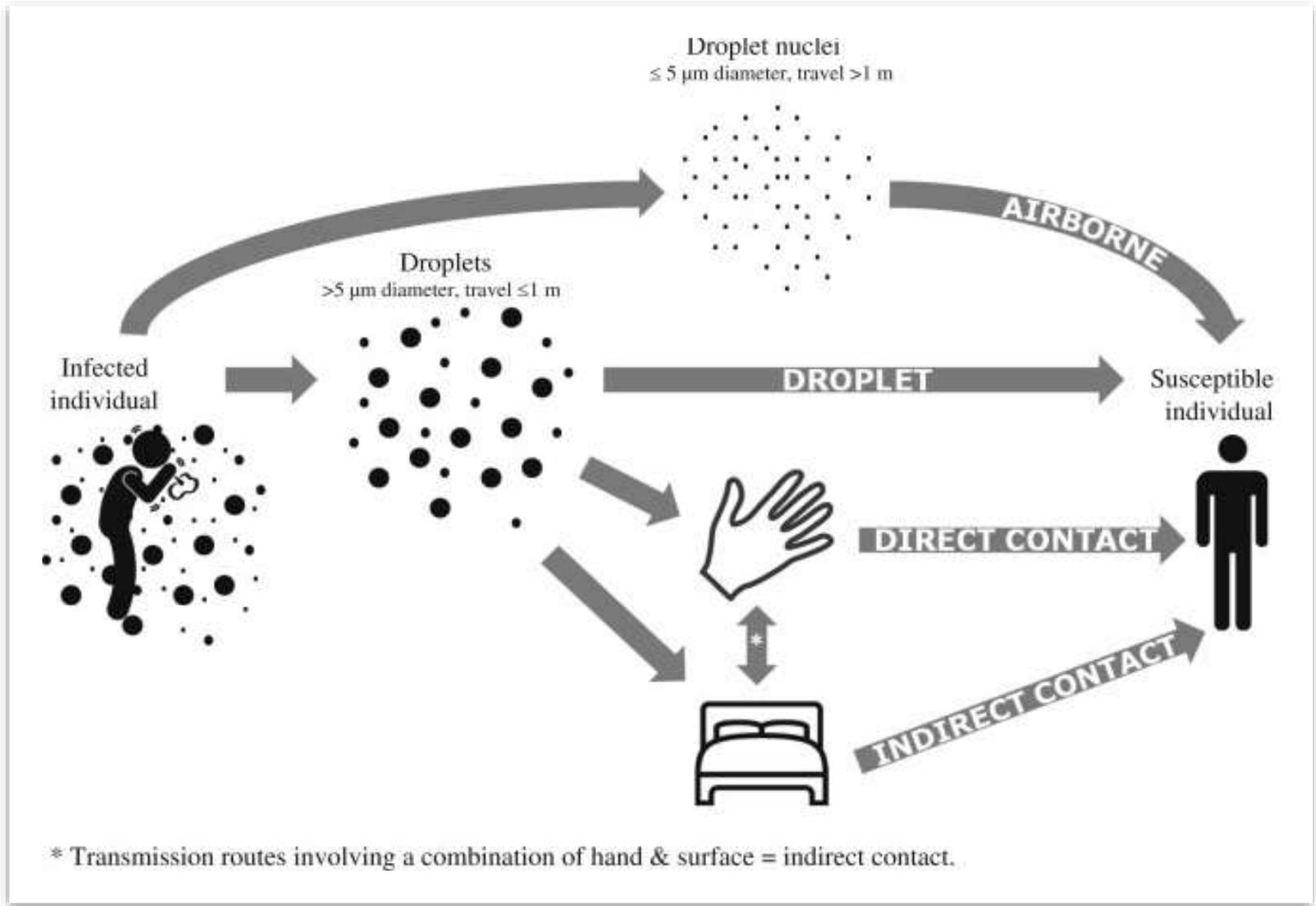
Objectives

- Understand the role and responsibility joint occupational health and safety committees have during this pandemic
- Learn how to identify potential COVID-19 hazards
- Understand the need for inspecting the workplace for potential means of exposure
- Discuss regulatory requirements and PHO requirements
- Focus on investigation of incidents of exposure and potential exposures
- Review the requirements of the H&S program maintenance

COVID-19



- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The disease caused by the new coronavirus has been named COVID-19.
- Virus is known as SARS-CoV 2.
- While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness and death has been reported



Responsibilities

Employer

- Exposure control plans
- Engineering controls
- PPE
- Regulations still in force
- Working alone or in isolation
- Ergonomics
- Violence
- Mental health

Worker

- Staying home if sick
- Following new procedures (PPE)
- Utilize your OH&S rights

Supervisor

- Ensure workers understand hazard posed by COVID-19
- Apply employer's health and safety program

It is a responsibility of all parties to follow the directions of the Provincial Health Officer.

Rights at Work

- In addition to our duties and responsibilities, all workers have OHS rights in the workplace.
- They may not be clearly identified in the law, instead being drawn from many sources.
- In occupational health and safety, our rights at work include:
 - The right to know
 - The right to participate
 - The right to refuse unsafe work
 - The right to protection in relation to prohibited actions

Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee



- 20 or more workers
- Meet monthly
- Produce action-oriented minutes
- Provide those minutes to workplace parties
- Respond to concerns and hazards in workplace
- Participate in worker refusals if necessary

Committee during COVID-19

- Now more than ever joint occupational health and safety committees need to play a critical role in our workplaces in dealing with this unprecedented pandemic.
- The committee is a foundational component of workplace health and safety programs and its' role and responsibilities have never been more vital

Role of Committee

- **Respond** to concerns related to health and safety
- **Identify** circumstances and situations where workers might be exposed to COVID-19
- **Assess** the risk and potential risk of exposure
- **Participate** in the development and documentation of required plans for each respective workplace as applicable
- **Participate** in regular workplace inspections
- **Participate** in incident investigations related to occupational exposure

Inspections



- The employer must conduct inspections of the workplace at intervals that will prevent the development of unsafe working conditions, including potential exposure to COVID-19.
- These inspections must be done *collaboratively* with a worker representative and an employer representative.
- Effort is to consider potential means of exposure to the workforce.
- An inspection report should document the areas inspected and hazards identified.

COVID-19 Inspection Checklist (refer to checklist handout)

- ✓ Potential exposure based on task?
- ✓ Contact with public?
- ✓ Objects and surfaces commonly touched and enhanced cleaning and hand wash stations?
- ✓ Disinfectants available for cleaning?
- ✓ Availability and proper use of PPE?
- ✓ Worker and supervisor understanding of modes of transmission?
- ✓ Worker and supervisor understanding of control measures implemented in the required plan?
- ✓ Do workers know how and to whom to report possible exposures?



A **thing or condition** that may expose a person to a risk of injury or occupational disease.

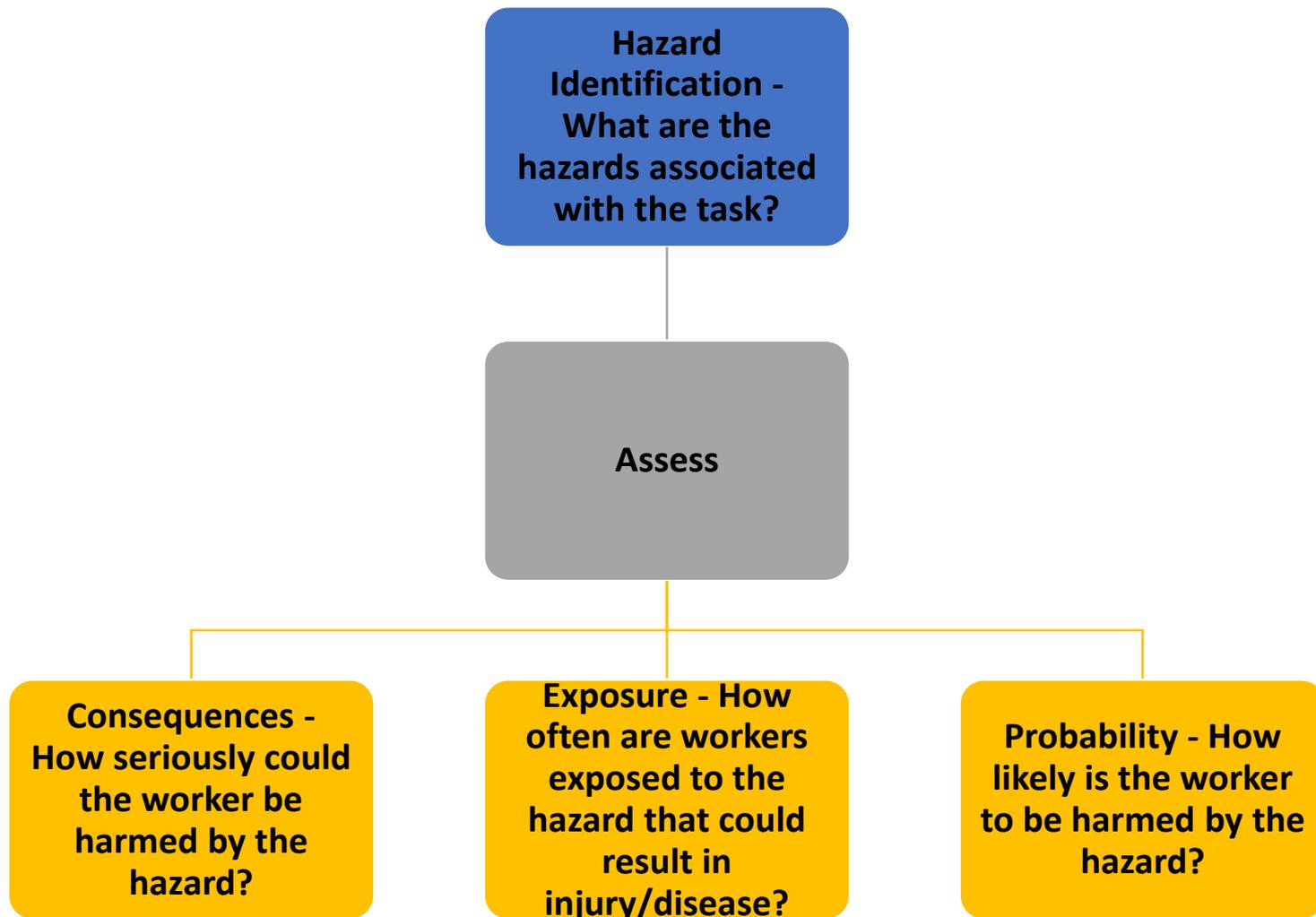
The **likelihood** that a hazard will result in injury or occupational disease.



Risk Assessment

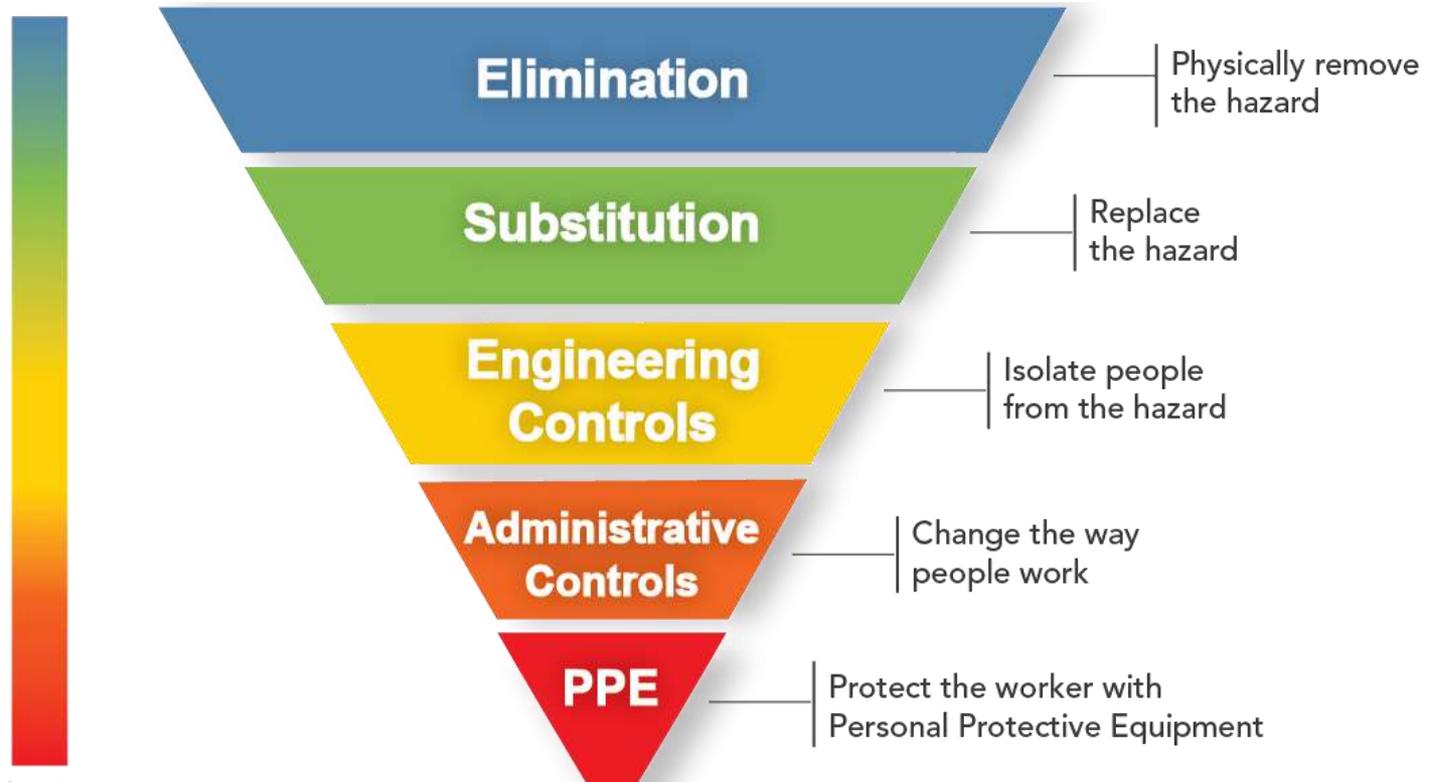
- Risk = Consequence x Exposure x Probability
- The joint occupational health and safety committee must participate in conducting a risk assessment
- Consideration of exposure and probability must be given to identified hazards

Risk Assessment



Understanding the 'Hierarchy of Controls'

Most Effective



Least Effective

Reevaluation

- After implementing control measures it is necessary to reevaluate that the risk has been eliminated or minimized
- Sometimes the introduction of control measures can bring forth new unexpected hazards



Safety Plan/Exposure Control Plan

- A Safety Plan is a document that explains how workers and others will be protected from occupational exposures
- COVID-19 is a new virus requiring a plan to ensure worker safety
- In developing the plan, consideration will be given to potential exposure to COVID-19 in work areas, job functions and job tasks as applicable
- All workers and the supervisors must be trained in the modes of transmission for the virus and the control measures implemented, as documented in the plan

Investigations

- Like any other workplace incident, an incident investigation must be conducted when a worker seeks medical aid or if there is a potential for serious injury
- 48 hours to conduct preliminary investigation
- 30 days to complete full investigation
- Timetable for recommendations
- Conducted jointly with employer and worker representatives

Investigation Checklist (refer to checklist handout)

- ✓ Did the employer have a plan to prevent exposure?
- ✓ Was the task or job duty where the worker was exposed, included in the RA that is part of the plan?
- ✓ Was the work task a high-risk task that could have been eliminated or reduced to a lower level of risk?
- ✓ Were workers and supervisors trained in the modes of transmission and in the control measures outlined in the plan (review the training records)?
- ✓ Were there adequate facilities for washing hands or was hand sanitizer available to workers?
- ✓ Was an enhanced cleaning program being followed?
- ✓ Was the cleaning product a product confirmed to kill the virus – see the Health Canada site?

Investigation Checklist (refer to checklist handout)

- ✓ Was there adequate PPE and were workers trained in the use of that PPE?
- ✓ In work environments requiring respirators (N95) were workers fit tested and trained in donning and doffing?
- ✓ Were regular workplace inspections conducted considering the physical and psychosocial risk factors associated with COVID-19?
- ✓ Had workers been directed to stay off work if they or a family member are ill?
- ✓ Had there been any previous reports of safety concerns related to COVID-19?
- ✓ Was the employer compliant with all orders issued by the PHO, the Emergency Program Act and/or the Quarantine Act?

Recommendations

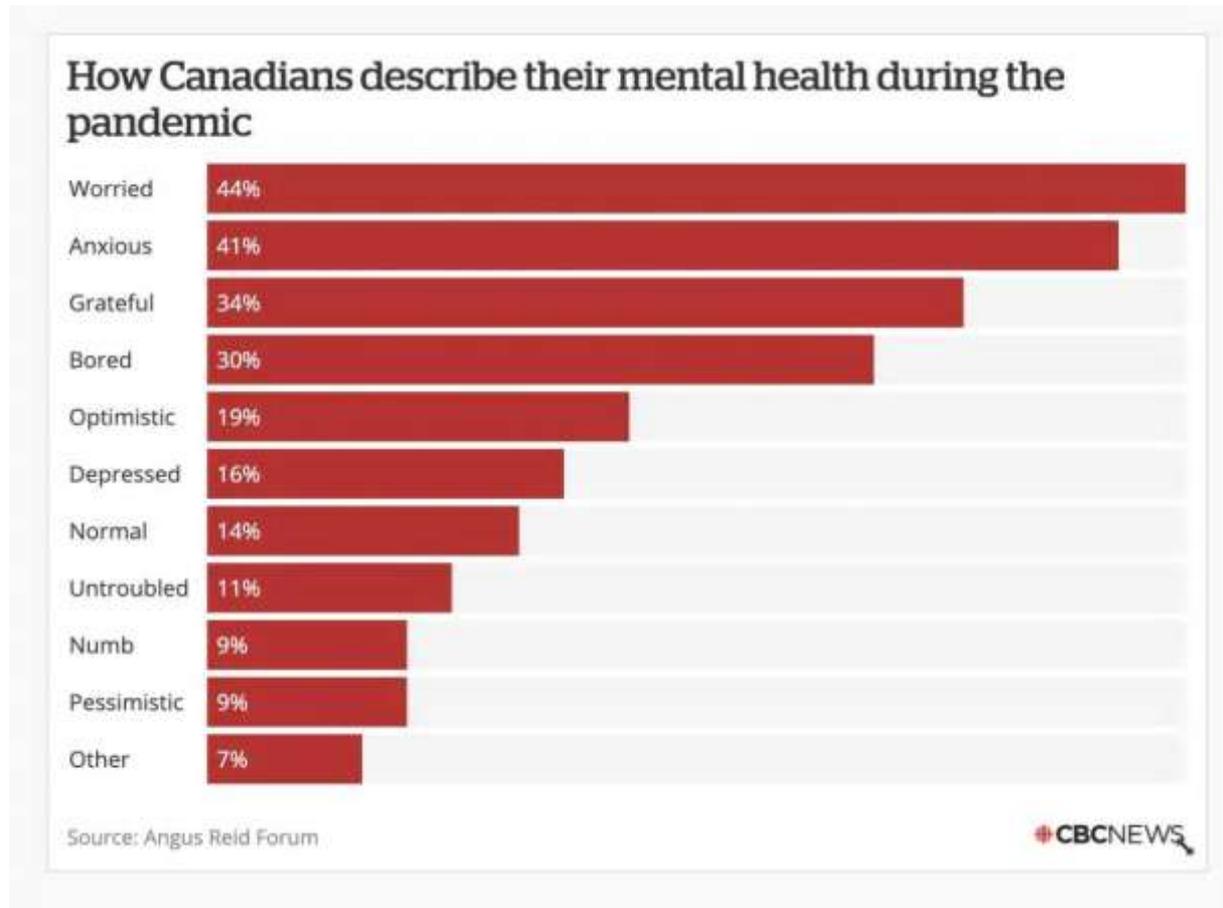
- Very important step in an investigation
- Need to prevent recurrence
- Not about fault or blame
- Follow-up to ensure effectiveness and be sure that the control did not introduce a new risk factor



World Health Organization

- In public mental health terms, the main psychological impact is elevated rates of stress or anxiety
- Increased levels of loneliness
- Increase of fear and worry
- Depression
- Alcohol & Drug misuse

Angus Reid Study



Angus Reid Survey CBC News <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/canadians-angus-reid-pandemic-survey-1.5545594>

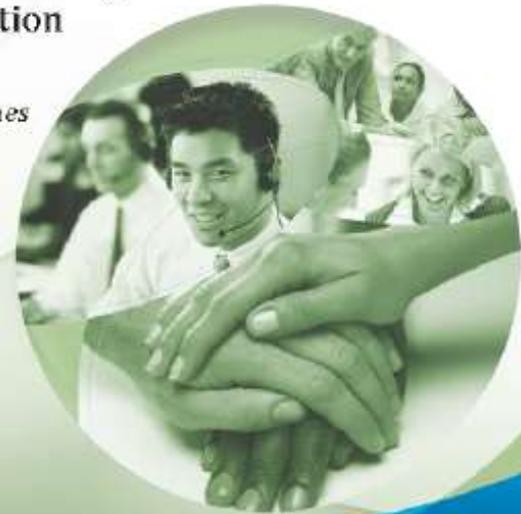
New CSA Standard Z1003-13



CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013
National Standard of Canada

Psychological health and safety in the workplace — Prevention, promotion, and guidance to staged implementation

Disponible en français
*Santé et sécurité psychologiques
en milieu de travail —
Prévention, promotion et lignes
directrices pour une mise en
œuvre par étapes*



Safety Program Maintenance

- COVID-19 is a new virus, research including modes of transmission and control measures to prevent transmission is ongoing provincially, nationally and internationally.
- Employers must ensure that the risk assessment and the safety plan/exposure control plan developed in response to the risk assessment remains current and aligns with any new information provided through the WCB, BCCDC or the Provincial Health Officer.

Program Maintenance and Review

The late Dr. Maya Angelou said:

*“Do the best you can until you know better.
Then when you know better, do better.”*

Resources

- **Mental Health First Aid** healthandsafetybc.ca/course-calendar/course-descriptions/#toc-10
- **Mental Health & The CSA Standard** <https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/course-calendar/course-descriptions/#toc-9>
- **Canadian Mental Health Association** cmha.ca/fast-facts-about-mental-illness
- **Mental Health Commission of Canada** mentalhealthcommission.ca/English
- **Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers** ohcow.on.ca/
- **BC Center for Disease Control** covid-19.bccdc.ca/
- **Battered Women Support Services** bwss.org/
- **BC211** bc211.ca/
- **MRT** <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/overdose/mobile-response-team>

References

- [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19 Poster 002 English.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19%20Poster%20002%20English.pdf)
- <http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>
- <https://reflectionsipc.com/2020/03/12/considering-the-role-of-environmental-contamination-in-the-spread-of-covid-19/>

Thank You!

To all our fellow workers on the frontlines and behind the scenes, we see you and we thank you for the work you do, you are essential every day!

