

## Action Guidelines for a Pandemic

### Providing clear leadership and expectations for workers living with mental illness

During your conversations, avoid stigmatizing language, speak naturally, and use words that fit your organization's culture. Be kind, empathetic, and caring as you show your support.

If a worker has disclosed (before or during an emergency or pandemic) that they live with mental illness, some additional care may be needed. Below are a few examples of actions to consider.

Be considerate that the language used is not stigmatizing. These conversation guides are the framework for conversations, but can be adapted to ensure appropriate wording it used.

Remember to use your own words when framing the questions, in order to suit your organization's culture. Ensure to be kind, empathic and caring during conversations to show support.

Statement	Purpose	Actions
1. Would you like to book some one-on-one time to discuss your specific needs?	Acknowledge and listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledge that the worker may have additional needs.</li><li>• Ask questions to help clarify what those needs might look like.</li><li>• Listen and provide an opportunity for discussion.</li></ul>
2. I recognize your needs, and I'd also like to discuss how we can align them with our business needs and work together to meet both our goals.	Inform and remind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outline your expectations around the worker's role.</li><li>• Emphasize that provisions can be made to accommodate their needs.</li><li>• Remind them that their health is important.</li><li>• Describe what the organization is doing to protect its workers.</li><li>• Share available resources.</li><li>• Create an individualized plan with realistic goals and expectations.</li></ul>
3. How else can I support you? My door is open, and I encourage you to come to me with any concerns or questions.	Respond and follow up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure the worker knows that they can reach out if the suggested solutions aren't working for them.</li><li>• Follow up periodically and schedule check-ins to make sure the plan is still working.</li><li>• Adjust the plan as needed.</li><li>• Find out if additional protection is needed, such as PPE, training, etc.</li></ul>

## Leadership communication during a pandemic or emergency

How you communicate is as important as what you communicate. Communicating with empathy — the ability to recognize, understand, and share the thoughts and feelings of another person — requires listening with an intent to understand. Doing so enables you to make an informed and considerate response, which increases the likelihood of a positive outcome.

Outlined below are suggestions on the different areas workers will find important and informative. The action guidelines include two leadership levels: (1) senior leadership, and (2) managers and supervisors.

### Senior leadership

Topics	Purpose	Actions
Organization's pandemic response plan	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outline what the organization has put in place as a response to the pandemic.</li><li>• Make it accessible, clear, and concise.</li></ul>
The flow of communication for the timely dissemination of information and for questions, suggestions, direction, and response	Transparency and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outline how and when employees can expect communication.</li><li>• Stick to those timelines to provide clear and consistent leadership.</li><li>• Explain which channels being used for feedback and information (e.g., dedicated websites, hotlines, platforms).</li><li>• Update these channels regularly.</li></ul>
When and how the workplace will operate (physical workplace, work from home, in the field)	Business continuity and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set out workers' options for operating safely.</li><li>• Explain your overall vision of how employees can continue working effectively while meeting targets.</li><li>• Be sure enough support is available for the options provided.</li></ul>
Policies for a flexible work site and work hours, including alternative staffing arrangements	Work-life balance for a healthy workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Let workers know about the policies in place to support flexible work hours and work sites.</li><li>• Post this information where workers can easily access it.</li></ul>

Topics	Purpose	Actions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain what you mean by flexible work sites to eliminate uncertainties around decisions.</li> <li>• Provide supports and resources based on the different options available.</li> </ul>
Pandemic procedures for compensation to workers for absences and their return to work	Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the compensation structure and process for workers that must be absent due to the pandemic.</li> <li>• Outline the areas you need to identify so employees can understand how and why their compensation is affected.</li> <li>• Communicate the policies on taking an absence and returning to work.</li> </ul>
Clarity about modifications to existing policies and processes	Transparency and business continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain any changes you have made to existing policies.</li> <li>• Compare policies and processes to make these changes as clear as possible.</li> <li>• Explain the reasons for such changes and the timelines that are involved.</li> </ul>

### Supervisors and managers

Topics	Purpose	Actions
Health and safety information, including the signs and symptoms of outbreaks related to ongoing emergencies	Accurate information to reduce worry and anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with the health and safety team about current procedures and the information they can provide company-wide.</li> <li>• Ask the health and safety team to provide regular information about ongoing emergencies.</li> <li>• Ensure that the information is accurate and timely.</li> </ul>
Policies for civility, respect in the workplace, and prevention and response to workplace harassment, bullying, or violence	Information about psychological safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the policies in place to support psychological safety in the workplace.</li> <li>• Let workers know what workplace harassment, bullying, and violence look like.</li> </ul>

Topics	Purpose	Actions
(particularly when xenophobia is present)		
Information on mental health, indicators of declining mental health, and what to do	Information about psychological health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer mental health information through training, webinars, tip sheets, etc.</li> <li>• Ensure that the information is accurate.</li> <li>• Provide resources to explain the support systems in place.</li> </ul>
Accommodations for high-risk workers	Psychological health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give examples of the types of possible accommodations for workers in high-risk situations.</li> <li>• Explain the supports available to them.</li> <li>• Talk to them individually about their needs and what they might want in order to feel safer.</li> </ul>