

Worksheet for use by workers to identify ways of reducing risk from psychosocial hazards

This worksheet is to guide discussions by small workgroups, aiming to:

- identify psychosocial hazards that affect people in their job
- suggest risk control actions.

The workgroup needs a leader, who may be appointed, or selected by the group.

The leader should be someone trusted by workgroup members, but *not* their own supervisor or manager because some questions to be discussed are about the performance of their supervisors and managers.

Name of job or workgroup:

Location of workgroup:.....

Total number of workers in this workgroup:

Number of workers participating in this discussion:

Advice on completing the following pages

- The anonymity and privacy of group members must be protected at all times.
- When suggesting ways to reduce risk:
 - **Prioritise actions that will eliminate or reduce risk *at its workplace sources*.** These actions are likely to be the most reliable and effective.
 - **Combinations of control actions** are often most effective.
 - **Employee Assistance Programs** for individuals experiencing problems can be useful, but **are no substitute for eliminating or reducing risk at its workplace sources.**

For further guidance, see https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-08/model_code_of_practice_-_managing_psychosocial_hazards_at_work_25082022_0.pdf

Problems with WORKLOAD, WORK PACE, TIME PRESSURES

People in this job sometimes feel stressed, or very tired, because they ...	Tick if YES
Get behind with work?	
Have to go faster to meet deadlines or target quotas?	
Have to work very fast ?	
Don't have enough time to get all work done?	
Work so hard or fast they get a bit breathless ?	
Have too much work for the time available?	
Have to work at a fast pace for the whole shift ?	

If 'YES' to any of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- **Eliminate or reduce workplace causes** – for example:
 - Employ extra staff, particularly at peak workload times.
 - Develop and implement strategies to reduce staff absences that increase workload for others.
 - Re-organise work to reduce peak workloads, or remove/extend deadlines so they are more realistic.
 - Change task procedures so that work performance takes less effort *and/or* less time.
 - Change workstations *and/or* equipment *and/or* software so that work performance takes less effort *and/or* less time.
 - Re-organise work so that some tasks are done less often
 - Consider the need for a limit on total hours worked by any person in a week or month, including overtime (e.g. no more than average of 50 hours per week, or 200 hours per month).
- **If problems remain, help people to cope** – for example:
 - Give individuals greater autonomy or control over *how or when* they do some particular tasks
 - Allow longer or more frequent rest breaks at times when work is most demanding or stressful.
 - Provide other forms of support to staff, to help them deal with demands.

Problems with LONG WORKING HOURS – POOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

People in this job sometimes feel very tired, stressed or dissatisfied because of ...	Tick if YES
Not enough flexibility in working hours?	
Poor work-life balance?	

If 'YES' to either of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- **Eliminate or reduce workplace causes – for example:**
 - Modify the roster system so that people's hours are always predictable and known well in advance.
 - Improve procedures to manage changes to the roster when someone is absent or has to change their hours.
 - Consider the need for a limit on total hours worked by any person in a week or month, including overtime (e.g. no more than average of 50 hours per week, or 200 hours per month).
 - Give individuals greater control of their own work roster (within safe limits).
- **If problems remain ... help people to cope**
 - Ensure that all staff know how to get help from an Employee Assistance Program

Problems with TOO LITTLE INFLUENCE, VARIETY ... WORK NOT APPRECIATED

People in this job sometimes feel frustrated or unhappy because they ...	Tick if YES
Don't have enough influence on decisions about their work?	
Don't have enough variety in their work?	
Feel their work is not important?	
Feel their work is not appreciated by supervisors or managers?	
Feel their work is not meaningful ... doing it well makes no real difference?	

If 'YES' to any of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- **Eliminate or reduce workplace causes** – for example:
 - Investigate whether jobs with more varied or interesting sets of tasks could be created by swapping some tasks between jobs. (Consult affected workers to avoid creating new problems.)
 - Redesign jobs and related responsibilities so that individuals have greater individual autonomy or control over *how or when* they do some of their tasks, and greater input into decisions affecting their work
 - Train supervisors and managers in how to promote a workplace culture of trust
 - Encourage managers and supervisors to give constructive feedback, and to be generous expressing praise and appreciation – provide training in this if needed
 - Encourage employees to recognise each other's contributions
 - Ensure there are effective procedures for formal individual performance appraisals.
 - Train supervisors and managers in performance appraisal procedures.
 - Ask for suggestions about how to celebrate successes – e.g. informal get-togethers, reports in company newsletters, special awards, etc.

- **If problems remain ... help workers to cope** – for example:
 - Ensure that all staff know how to get help from an Employee Assistance Program

Problems with LACK OF SKILL USE, TRAINING, PROMOTION ... LOW SATISFACTION

People in this job sometimes feel frustrated or unhappy because of ...	Tick if YES
Not enough opportunities to learn new skills?	
Not enough opportunities to use existing skills?	
Low job satisfaction – the job is not very satisfying?	
They do not get enough training?	
There are not enough promotion opportunities?	

If 'YES' to any of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- **Eliminate or reduce workplace causes** – for example::
 - Re-design jobs to maximise opportunities for people to use their existing skills or to develop new ones
 - Investigate whether jobs with more varied or interesting sets of tasks could be created by swapping some tasks between jobs. (Consult affected workers to avoid creating new problems.)
 - Provide more opportunities for employees to undertake further training
 - Train supervisors and managers in performance appraisal procedures that identify opportunities for skill and career development options for each individual employee.

- **If problems remain ... help workers to cope** – for example:
 - Ensure that all staff know how to get help from an Employee Assistance Program.

Problems with UNCLEAR RESPONSIBILITIES, EXPECTATIONS OR PROCEDURES

People in this job sometimes feel stressed or unhappy because ...	Tick if YES
They don't know exactly what work is expected of them	
They have to do some things that seem unnecessary	
They don't get enough feedback on their own performance	
Opinions differ on 'correct' way to do some tasks	
People take short cuts , rather than use 'correct' procedure	
Work goals and responsibilities are not clear	

If 'YES' to any of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions (give priority to eliminating or at least reducing the problem):

- **Eliminate or reduce workplace causes** – for example::
 - Ensure that job descriptions or accountability statements are reviewed and updated regularly.
 - Provide new employees with a detailed induction, including details specific to their own job.
 - Ensure that everyone has a job description or accountability statement, defining tasks and responsibilities that are specific, measurable and realistically achievable
 - Resolve any differences in opinion about work priorities, both for individuals and the team, and ensure clear communication of priorities to workers.
 - Hold meetings to discuss practical/operational issues at various times so that *all* staff (all shifts) have frequent opportunities to attend a meeting.
 - Encourage managers and supervisors to give constructive feedback as often as possible (provide training for them if needed), and to be generous in giving praise
 - Ensure that formal individual performance appraisals occur regularly.
 - Train supervisors and managers in doing formal performance appraisals.

Problems with THINGS NOT FAIR

People in this job sometimes feel frustrated or unhappy because ...	Tick if YES
They feel arguments and problems are not sorted out fairly	
They feel people are not treated fairly	
Work is not distributed fairly between people	

If 'YES' to any of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- **Eliminate or reduce workplace causes – for example:**
 - Establish workplace policies and procedures to prevent unlawful discrimination based on personal characteristics such as gender, marital status, age, skin colour, religion, ethnic background
 - Ensure that all managers and supervisors are familiar with those policies and procedures
 - Promote a workplace culture in which people feel valued and can participate fully.
 - Make decision processes transparent enough for people to see there is fairness
- **If problems remain ... help people to cope**
 - Ensure that when employees see something as unfair, they know what procedure to follow
 - Encourage early reporting so problems can be dealt with before things worsen
 - Ensure that all staff know how to get help from an Employee Assistance Program

Problems with
**POOR COMMUNICATIONS, MANAGEMENT
 LACK OF TRUST, SUPERVISOR SUPPORT**

People in this job sometimes feel frustrated or unhappy because ...	Tick if YES
They cannot trust information from management	
There is lack of consultation about changes	
Lack of support from supervisors	
Poor communication with supervisors	
Poor senior management attitudes	

If 'YES' to any of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- Enable frequent informal communication between managers and workers – e.g. by supervisors and senior managers often being present and interacting with workers during normal work activities.
- Consult employees about how best to communicate plans for organisational change in a timely way – both too early and too late can be stressful.
- Hold meetings to inform and discuss practical/operational issues with workers at various times so that *all* staff (all shifts) have frequent opportunities to attend meetings.
- Make sure that reporting lines are clear – that people know who they are responsible to.
- Encourage employees to attend meetings and to feel free to ask questions and report any problems

Problems with EMOTIONALLY DEMANDING WORK

People in this job sometimes feel stressed, or very tired, because ...	Tick if YES
As part of their job, they are required to help people who are upset or unhappy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Their work puts them in emotionally disturbing or upsetting situations	<input type="checkbox"/>

If 'YES' to either of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- Ensure that staff have enough time to do their work *well*; lack of time leads to poorer quality performance, which can make things worse.
- Adjust staffing to enable longer or more frequent rest breaks when work is most demanding or stressful.
- Train workers in strategies for coping with clients/patients who have disabilities or problems that present particular demands.
- Promote mutual help and sharing of knowledge and experience among workers.
- Provide other forms of personal support, in consultation with affected workers.

If relevant, also see suggested actions for [workplace aggression or violence](#) or [bullying and sexual harassment](#)

Problems with POOR TEAMWORK, ARGUMENTS, PERSONAL CONFLICTS

People in this job are sometimes stressed or unhappy because ...	Tick if YES
They don't get on well with each other personally or socially	
There are problems with teamwork	
There are unpleasant arguments or conflicts	

If 'YES' to any of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- **Eliminate or reduce workplace causes** – for example:
 - If relevant, deal with issues such as excessive workloads, lack of clarity about who should be doing what, inefficient procedures or operating practices, insufficient resources, information or training
 - Make sure **everyone** understands the words/behaviours (e.g. swearing, shouting) that are unacceptable because they increase workplace stress levels
 - Consider whether work could be organised so that individuals who don't get along well do not usually work together
 - Organize social activities during or after work hours.
- **If problems remain ... help people to cope**
 - Ensure that all staff know how to get help from an Employee Assistance Program
 - Provide training for managers and supervisors on dealing with workplace conflict; be careful to choose a reputable training provider with expertise in this area (possibly an industry umbrella body).

If relevant, also see suggested actions for [workplace aggression or violence](#) or [bullying and sexually harassment](#)

Problems with

WORKPLACE AGGRESSION or VIOLENCE

In this job, sometimes there is workplace aggression or violence	Tick if YES
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If 'YES' to the above question ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce this problem *at its workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- Ensure there is a workplace policy which includes a clear statement that any form of violence or aggression – whether from clients, customers, members of the public or between workers – is unacceptable
- Ensure that *everyone understands* the policy, including culturally/linguistically diverse people
- Strongly encourage managers and supervisors to always model and enforce acceptable workplace behaviour standards. Provide training if needed.
- Physically separate workers from the public, using barriers, screens, etc
- Minimise factors likely to increase aggression among clients, customers etc – e.g. reduce waiting times by adjusting staffing levels
- Clearly communicate to customers/clients that any form of violence or aggression is not tolerated – e.g. via signs in public areas, service agreements, etc
- Avoid the need for people to work in isolation; regularly check in with isolated workers
- Train workers in how to deal with difficult customers, conflict resolution, and how/when to escalate issues to more senior workers
- Reduce individual time on higher risk tasks by alternating those with other tasks
- Use security personnel, video surveillance, alarm systems, controlled access to premises – particularly at night or when people are working alone
- Provide adequate supervision and support for workers, especially those who are new, young or inexperienced
- Provide a range of ways to report incidents informally, formally, anonymously or confidentially, and ensure that reporting and response systems are widely communicated, fit-for-purpose and regularly reviewed.
- Encourage and facilitate reporting of aggressive or violent incidents.

Many more examples of possible control actions are provided by Safe Work Australia at <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/preventing-workplace-violence-and-aggression-guide> ... see **pp.10-16** for general suggestions and **pp.19-26** for industry-specific suggestions.

Problems with **BULLYING and SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

	Tick if YES
People (one or more) are sometimes bullied	
People (one or more) are sometimes sexually harassed	

If 'YES' to either of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions (give priority to eliminating or at least reducing the problem):

- Ensure there are workplace policies which clearly state that bullying and sexual harassment – whether from clients, customers, members of the public or between workers – are unacceptable
- Ensure that everyone, including culturally/linguistically diverse people, fully understands what is meant by 'bullying' and by 'sexual harassment'
- Strongly encourage managers and supervisors to always model and *enforce* acceptable workplace behaviour standards. Provide training if needed.
- Train workers in how to deal with difficult customers/clients/patients and how/when to escalate issues to more senior workers.
- For corporate events, reinforce behavioural expectations; ensure compliance with responsible service of alcohol policies and make sure everyone knows what to do if they see inappropriate behaviour
- Make sure that:
 - Areas such as change rooms and toilets are private and secure
 - There is good lighting and visibility both internally and externally, including areas such as car parks
 - Off-site locations are safe, including in vehicles, during travel, at conferences, and at client/customer premises
- Minimise the need for people to work in isolation; regularly check in with isolated workers
- Consider using video surveillance, controlled access to premises – particularly at night or when people are working alone
- Encourage people to keep records/screenshots if inappropriate behaviour occurs online or via phone.

For more about controlling the risk of bullying, see pp.12-16 at <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/guide-preventing-responding-workplace-bullying.pdf>

For more about controlling the risk of sexual harassment: see pp.12-15 at <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/preventing-workplace-sexual-harassment-guide>.

A useful Code of Practice is at https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/sexualharassment/employers_code/COP2008.pdf.

Problems with PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH & SAFETY

People in this job sometimes feel stressed or unhappy because of ...	Tick if YES
Exposure to physical danger	
Problems with facilities for taking breaks	
Problems with health and safety	
Problems with physical surroundings: noise, light, temperature, etc	

If 'YES' to any of the above questions ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions (give priority to eliminating or at least reducing the problem):

- **Eliminate or reduce causes of the problem**
For example,
 - Improve the quality of rest facilities
 - eliminate excessive noise at its source, or improve lighting or temperature control.

- **If problems remain, provide protection and/or help people cope**
Possible actions depend on the problem. They might include protective clothing or equipment, and training in how to use it effectively.

Problems with EQUIPMENT, I.T. SOFTWARE, WORK STATIONS OR SPACE

People in this job sometimes feel stressed or frustrated because of ...	Tick if YES
Problems with equipment, tools, or I.T. software	
Problems with work stations or work space	

If 'YES' to the above question ... What are the causes? What actions could eliminate or reduce these problems *at their workplace sources*? (Some suggestions are listed below.)

Causes	Suggested Risk Control Actions

Suggested risk control actions:

- **Eliminate or reduce workplace causes** – for example:
 - Change purchasing policies/ procedures to enable better employee input into purchasing decisions.
 - Have workplace trials of proposed new tools, equipment, software, etc prior to finalising the purchase.
 - Improve equipment maintenance program to reduce the number of problems that develop.
 - Improve procedures so that problems are reported and fixed more quickly.

- **If the problem affects risk from another type of hazard** – for example:
 - Does work station layout cause twisted or awkward postures?
 - Does poor trolley design make users have to push or pull with some force?
 - Is poor maintenance due to lack of management support?
 - Does badly designed software cause people to get behind with work?

If so: review risk control options for relevant types of hazard.