



COVID-19 : Let's protect our mental health too !

Caring for our work environment – Manager

In the present context of COVID-19 special measures, activities are gradually starting again in many sectors. Usual working environments and conditions are deeply altered and these changes of atmosphere could cause distress and have negative psychosocial consequences. As a manager, you hold a key position regarding staff health and safety. Below are some tips to help you support your team, adapt your working environment and limit distress among staff.

➤ Be a considerate leader



- Understand all employees will not react in the same way when facing stressful situations (unusual circumstances);
- Be involved and pay close attention to your staff's mental health (be open and ready to talk about it);
- Be understanding about work/personal time conciliation challenges (e.g. offering a flexible schedule);
- Be proactive, anticipate staff worries and apprehensions;
- Be available for your employees (welcoming and recognizing overwhelming emotions);
- Be open about staff worries and accept suggestions people might have;
- Keep employees informed and sensitized about your organizational strategy (answering staff questions to reassure them);
- Offer regular feedback to your employees (on organizational measures, discussed suggestions or various challenges experienced).

➤ Be well informed



- Stay up-to-date with COVID-19 related information (standards, regulations and precautions that must be followed for staff health and safety);
- Ask for clear and precise information (be careful with contradictions);
- Look for updates and update staff as often as necessary;
- Inform employees of the protection measures set up in their work environment (keep in mind this is an evolving situation);
- Offer your support and refer staff to appropriate organizations and resources (EAP, CLSC, Info-social 811).

➤ Protect all employees (encouraging a sense of security)



- Set up recommended public health and CNESST measures;
- Prepare an action plan for the resumption of your activities;
- Set up prevention and control measures (prioritize physical safety);
- Have all necessary equipment and required protections;
- Regularly communicate with employees, in a clear and transparent way;
- Be attentive to signs of distress around you (irritability, acute stress, restlessness, anxiety, anger, negative talk, isolation, withdrawal, fatigue, lack of concentration, frequent mistakes/omissions, PTSD reactions);
- Prepare a list of useful resources for help, make it available to all employees;
- Encourage staff to have regular breaks.



➤ **Encourage social support and recognition of effort/value**

- Recognize, value and promote the work done by your employees (showing your trust);
- Recognize strengths and wins (feedback on the work that was done);
- Encourage empathy and kindness (be a good example as the manager);
- Remind employees about your commitment to protect their health and safety;
- Encourage and ask for everybody's collaboration;
- Use positive vocabulary and tone in your communications;
- Avoid targeted reactions when an employee is back after being ill with COVID-19;
- Encourage employees to discuss their concerns and express their needs;
- Encourage employees to report all situations they feel are dangerous and to comment on measures that are set up.



➤ **Fostering a culture of support and mutual assistance in the workplace**

- Encourage empathy and kindness among staff (colleagues with each other);
- Offer your employees dedicated periods of time to discuss challenges met in the workplace and to think about solutions (while respecting physical distancing at the same time!);
- Offer relaxation/breathing/meditation sessions to your staff;
- Make quiet spaces available for your employees to take a break or rest (that respect protection measures – 2m social distancing etc.);
- Maintain social contacts and sensitize your team daily (do it yourself as the manager or create peer support groups), ideally this would be done via vocal or video conversations (which have greater positive impacts than emails and text messages);
- If possible, allow your teams to work remotely and create online meeting spaces (using Teams, Zoom etc.).

It goes without saying that, as management staff, you could experience psychological distress yourself. Therefore, it is crucial that you keep paying close attention to your own mental health in order to be able to support others.

- **Psychosocial Helpline : Info-social 811**
- **Suicide prevention lifeline: 1 866 APPELLE (277-3553)**
- **Workplace health and safety for Gaspésie and Magdalen Islands: 1 833 354-0009**
- **Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**
- **Mental Health resource Guide for the Gaspé Coast and the Magdalen Islands : https://casa-gaspe.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Mental-health-Guide_May9.pdf**

Autres ressources pertinentes

- <http://ressortgim.ca/covid-19/> (in French)
- <https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19-info-en/Pages/back-to-work.aspx>
- <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/>
- <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en>
- <https://www.irsst.qc.ca/en/covid-19/irsst-notices>
- <https://www.cisss-gaspésie.gouv.qc.ca/covid-19/sante-mentale/> (in French)
- <https://www.cisss-gaspésie.gouv.qc.ca/employes-professionnels/des-reponses-a-vos-questions/> (In French)
- <http://cosme.ca/covid-19/boite-a-outils/> (in French)
- <https://covidgaspésie.com/en/employers-businesses/>

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