Psychosocial Ergonomic Checklist – Building Healthy Workspaces Virtually

Psychological injury can occur and/or become aggravated during employment. Employers can work towards minimising work related psychological stressors even in times of environmental disaster and illness, through *psychosocial ergonomics* and workplace agility.

The following document provides practical support to employers on ways to engage their workers which optimises mentally healthy work practices outside the traditional controls an office provides.

In NSW the three most common compensable triggers for psychological injuries are:

● Bullying & harassment

● Overwork

● Lack of role clarity

The following guide supports employers to proactively address the compounding factors that can lead to psychological injury.

The checklist's interactive functionality provides employers with a document in which to record, share and demonstrate the safety measures they have put in place to promote staff wellbeing during times of global and domestic change.

PSYCHOSOCIAL Checklist

Conductor (employer, manager, leader etc)	Participant (worker)	Date completed

Business Position

Taking the time to explain the business/organisations position in the face of a global or domestic incident is crucial. This is an opportunity to provide as much stability or clarity as possible about the how the business will be responding to the unfolding events. Sometimes this is uncertain however providing as much information on the business plan for the following days, weeks, months etc is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between worker and employer.

Conductor: Main Points	Participant: Reaction	Outcome	Date Completed
e.g. The business will work remotely until the end of June when it will be re-evaluated	e.g. It is difficult to navigate multiple systems on a laptop	e.g. The business will provide additional screens available for pick up	e.g. 5 March 2020

Role Clarity

Sometimes the nature of employment, type of duties and key performance indicators may change significantly to meet the new needs and or pressure points of the business. If the work requirements and performance outcomes of your staff has been temporarily altered this is an opportunity to provide clear information on new duties, workload and expectations.

Conductor:	Participant:	Outcome	Date Completed
e.g. Unfortunately, hours will be reduced from 5 days to 3 days per week	e.g. This will impact my ability to pay my bills	e.g. Provided a link to NSW Financial Government Support available	e.g. 5 March 2020

Remain Connected

Large picture communication is important, newsletters, virtual meetings, email mail outs etc are an effective way to keep workers informed of business matters, industry trends, achievements and important business news. Equally important is that team and one on one connection continue. Schedule in time to speak with your staff regularly to maintain positive connection. Having a scheduled time demonstrates stability, commitment and improves staff sense of connection and investment in the workplace.

Frequency: (direct reporting line):	Participant(s):	Outcome	Date Completed

Frequency: (peer to peer)	Participant(s):	Outcome	Date Completed

Providing Positive Reinforcement

When working remotely we can sometimes lose the incidental opportunities to provide positive feedback on work, interactions and performance. When discussing work matters make efforts to identify and acknowledge the achievements and accomplishments of your worker both verbally and in writing. Having a formal record of positive interactions can help boost morale and motivation to lift performance.

Conductor:	Participant:	Achievements	Date Completed

Work Hygiene

Working out of the office means that people can often lose a sense of structure to their day, often putting in more hours and spending less time having that crucial work life balance. Encouraging and having a record of informing workers that they are not required to work outside or above their existing hours, that overwork is not an expectation, will help demonstrate the businesses commitment to wellbeing.

Acknowledgement that working remotely may mean that some tasks may take longer to complete and factoring this into timeframes and expectations demonstrates the workplaces agility in adjusting to a new way of working.

Encourage your workers to schedule in their entitled lunch breaks, coffee breaks and encourage them to spend this time away from computers and work content to reduce self-directed overwork and potential burnout.

Having a sense of work and home separation can be difficult when working remotely. Support your workers to find one area in the house that work can be limited to. That way once the work day is over, that work space can be left or packed away providing that person with the sense of separation between work and home, business life and personal life.

Conductor:	Participant:	Outcome:	Date Completed:
e.g. Discussed no obligation to work overtime	*e.g. Agreed to work within contracted hours*	*e.g. agreed to timeframes that work for both parties 7 – 3*	*e.g. 5 March 2020*

Exposure to Traumatic Material

Moving some roles from the workplace to working from home means that people are now having to read and respond to traumatic content within the home. They may also not have the immediate access to other staff and experts that they would traditionally have in the office environment.

Organised structured debriefs (below is an example of a structured 15 minute debrief template), supervision opportunities and systems which improve workers access to colleagues and leaders when needed.

Conductor:	Participant:	Outcome:	Date Completed:
What happened at work that impacted you today?			
How did this impact you today?			
What do you need to do take care of this today?			

List of Key Personnel	Phone	Email	Date Completed
e.g. Site Nurse	e.g. 02959595	nurse@icare.nsw.gov.au	e.g. 5 March 2020

Social Impactors:

While it is not the responsibility of the employer to manage the impacts of workers social situation, being aware of any additional pressures, change in non-work responsibilities and or living arrangements during this time allows employers with organisation agility to find workarounds to best accommodate these needs. Where an organisation does not have the capacity to support improvements in these spaces (financial pressure, schooling children etc) having access to and providing appropriate referrals for community support services demonstrates an organisations social awareness and commitment to fostering health workplaces during crisis.

Conductor:	Participant:	Outcome	Date Completed
e.g. How have you been adjusting to working from home?	e.g. Struggling to home school children	e.g. Shifted key meetings around home schooling timeline	e.g. 5 March 2020

Self-Care

Encouraging staff to engage in self-care when working remotely is a good way of encouraging workers to take responsibility for their own wellbeing. Some organisations may be able to support this by having; office yoga sessions, walking meetings, encourage after work get togethers (virtually). Providing staff with access to information about wellness initiatives and community supports (sleep hygiene, importance of nutrition and exercise etc).

Conductor:	Participant:	Achievements	Date Completed

Any Additional Initiative(s):

Conductor:	Participant:	Outcome	Date Completed

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