



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy

Date: May 27, 2024
To: Toronto Public Library Board
From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Toronto Public Library Board approval of Toronto Public Library's (TPL's) Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy.

As part of TPL's workplace health and safety programs, the Library is launching a series of initiatives focused on workplace mental health and well-being. These initiatives are aligned with the City of Toronto's [Mental Health Strategy](#), launched in November 2023.

A key foundation for this work is the development of a policy statement recognizing the importance of psychological health and safety in the workplace. The proposed policy is based on the City of Toronto's [Psychological Health and Safety Policy](#), which was first published in 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this report.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy aligns closely with TPL's strategic pillars of public service excellence and investing in staff and an innovative service culture. The Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy confirms the Library's commitment to promoting mental health and psychological well-being and to actions that prevent harm to worker psychological health through appropriate policies, programs and services.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy will have a positive impact on persons experiencing psychological health issues by committing the Library to take actions to promote the general psychological health of the workforce, as well as actions to prevent the onset or reduce the severity of psychological health issues when they occur.

COMMENTS

In 2022, TPL conducted a staff survey to which over 70% of staff responded. As was [reported](#) to the Board on October 25, 2022, staff responses to the survey were lowest in areas related to safety, security and psychological wellness. For some, the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated existing challenges.

In response to staff concerns, TPL has implemented a range of initiatives to address workplace safety and ensure TPL spaces are safe and welcoming for all. TPL is now launching a comprehensive workplace mental health and well-being action plan, building on work already underway in many parts of the organization.

This action plan is aligned with the City of Toronto's comprehensive strategy to promote mental health and well-being that was launched in November 2023: ["Our Health, Our City: A Mental Health, Substance Use, Harm Reduction, and Treatment Strategy for Toronto."](#) This strategy incorporates a strategic goal focused on supporting mentally healthy workplaces and optimizing the mental health of workers. In launching this strategy, the City called on city agencies to implement strategies and actions to support the "Our Health, Our City" strategic priorities.

TPL's action plan includes the following short-term steps, with work already underway in many areas, such as:

1. Adopt the [National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace](#), as recommended in the City of Toronto's "Our Health, Our City" strategy.
2. Develop and publish a Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy
3. Survey staff to gain a greater understanding of workplace psychological health and safety at TPL, building on data and insights from prior staff surveys and other sources.
4. Enhance EAP and other support for staff and family members experiencing mental health challenges.
5. Expand current initiatives to address safety and security concerns in branches through Library Safety Specialists, Mental Health First Aid training and other measures.
6. Adopt trauma-informed principles and embed this approach in all TPL workplaces through training, policy design and other measures.

The adoption of TPL's new Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy is an important foundation and underpinning for this action plan.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy

Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy

Policy Classification: Board Policy

Motion # and Approval Date:

Motion # and Last Revision Date:

Effective Date

Purpose

The Toronto Public Library recognizes the importance of psychological health and safety in the workplace. The Library will promote a positive working environment where management and employees collaborate to achieve the Library's goals while promoting the physical and mental health of all employees.

The Library is further committed to promoting mental health and psychological well-being and to actions that prevent harm to worker psychological health through appropriate policies, programs and services.

Scope

This policy applies to all Library employees.

Underlying Principles

The Library recognizes that workplace factors can contribute to psychological health. While it is understood that a certain amount of stress is inherent in work, the Library aspires to a work environment where continuous improvement in work practices and processes address psychological safety and support mental health.

Policy Statement

The Library will achieve its objective of continuously improving psychological safety and supporting mental health in Library workplaces by building on its current actions and strengths in each of the following areas:

- Actions to promote and enhance the general psychological health of the workforce (e.g. efforts to build employee resilience, create a respectful workplace, enhance mental health knowledge at all levels and eliminate stigma)
- Actions to prevent the onset or reduce the severity of psychological health issues in the workplace, such as improvements in:
 - Primary prevention in which changes are made in workplace conditions that may contribute to psychological health issues (e.g. considering the psychological characteristics of work tasks and individual workers to ensure good job-person fit, providing stress management training, supporting work-home balance)
 - Secondary prevention in which psychological health issues are identified and addressed while at an early stage (e.g. providing self-care tools, providing supervisor/manager training, providing early intervention through EAP and HR)
 - Tertiary prevention to reduce life challenges associated with an identified mental health condition (e.g. providing support to stay at work, providing coordinated disability management, supporting access to psychological treatment)

Accountability

Under the leadership of the Human Resources Division, the Library will:

- Communicate this policy to management, workers and joint health and safety committees/health and safety representatives
- Assess particular issues or risk factors of greatest relevance to mental health and psychological safety within the division (consulting with employees and joint health and safety committees/health and safety representatives in this process). Determine whether improvements are needed
- Identify opportunities for change and/or current strengths on which to build and record the findings
- Undertake promotion/prevention actions to initiate change and/or build on strengths
- Evaluate the effectiveness of actions undertaken
- Re-assess regularly with the goal of continuously improving mental health and psychological safety

Related Legislation

- [Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
- CAN/CSA [Standard Z1003-13](#) Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace
- [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) Psychological Health and Safety – An Action Guide for Employers

Related Library Policies

- Occupational [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- Human Rights and Anti-Harassment Discrimination Policy

Definition of Terms

Psychological/Mental Health: a state of well-being in which the individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to their community

Psychological safety: the absence of harm and/or threat of harm to mental well-being that a worker may experience

Note: Definitions in this document are taken from the 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.

Contact

Director, Human Resources



Workplace psychological health and safety policy

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background

- Psychological health and safety was one of four areas of concern identified by staff in the 2022 staff survey. Approximately one-third of staff are looking to TPL to provide more support in managing workplace stress and dealing with incidents that occur in the workplace.
- The City of Toronto published a Psychological Health and Safety Policy in 2014.
- In November 2023, the City of Toronto released “Our Health, Our City: A Mental Health, Substance Use, Harm Reduction, and Treatment Strategy for Toronto”, including a recommendation that all City agencies develop a workplace mental health strategy.

TPL workplace mental health action plan

In response, TPL is launching in 2024 a workplace mental health action plan:

- Adopt the National Standard for Workplace Psychological Health and Safety
- Publish a Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Policy
- Conduct a staff survey focused on mental health
- Enhance EAP
- Implement Mental Health First Aid Training (with MHCC)
- Foster a trauma-informed organizational culture

- The proposed policy mirrors the City of Toronto Policy, incorporating definitions from the National Standard of Canada.
- It recognizes the importance of psychological health and safety in the workplace, and commits the Library to promoting a positive working environment where management and employees collaborate to achieve the Library's goals while promoting the physical and mental health of all employees.
- The Policy further commits to promoting mental health and psychological well-being and to actions that prevent harm to worker psychological health through appropriate policies, programs and services.