

A photograph of several police jackets hanging on a rack, overlaid with a teal gradient. The jackets are dark-colored with reflective stripes and a crest on the chest. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Supporting Mental Health in First Responders:

Employee Role in Stay at Work/Return to Work

BCFirstRespondersMentalHealth.com

Introduction

Unsurprisingly, employees play the most important role in ensuring they can remain in the workplace if they have difficulties performing their duties due to mental health conditions. An employee facing these difficulties must play an active part in the process.

The role of employees

Depending on the specific mental health condition and its severity, employees will need to actively engage in the stay-at-work and return-to-work processes (SAW/RTW).

The role of employees is to:

- Be aware if they begin to exhibit symptoms and signs of mental health problems
- Notify their supervisor if any limitations related to their mental health, whether work-related or not, may impact their ability to perform their work duties
- Check in with their supervisor if required by the organization's SAW/RTW process
- Engage in the organization's SAW/RTW process, including collaborating and participating in meetings (such as with the disability adviser, worker representative, health care professional, and/or operations manager) to:
 - Develop an accommodation plan if it is possible to perform meaningful work
 - Discuss progress
 - Consider changes in their functions and abilities
 - Discuss any other concerns
- Seek the assistance of a health care provider, whether a physician, psychologist, psychiatrist, or other accredited mental health professional
- Obtain the organization's Letter to Health Care Provider and Work Ability Assessment Form, bring it to their health care provider, and request that the provider complete the form
- Return the Work Ability Assessment Form to their supervisor (or line manager)
- Participate in any treatment recommended by their health care provider
- Maintain contact with the workplace if they are not able to remain in the workplace
- Contact and file a claim with WorkSafeBC if the condition is work-related and they are unable to remain in the workplace
- Be aware of any recurrence of symptoms and engage in this process again (note: organizations should provide education around recognizing signs and symptoms)

It is the responsibility of employees to actively participate in this process, collaborating in a meaningful way with those responsible in the organization for SAW/RTW processes and their health care provider.