

A photograph of several police jackets hanging on a rack, overlaid with a teal gradient. The jackets are dark-colored with reflective stripes and police crests. One crest clearly shows the words "POLICE VANCOUVER".

Supporting Mental Health in First Responders:

Mental Health Policy Template

BCFirstRespondersMentalHealth.com

Developing a policy statement

A commitment to positive mental health benefits everyone in the workplace. It improves morale and results in lower absenteeism and greater productivity. It also indicates that an organization values and respects its workforce, honors the work its people do, and supports those who are dealing with occupational stress and trauma. All employers in first responder organizations should implement a written mental health policy statement clearly supporting positive mental health. Here's a suggested step-by-step approach to creating an effective workplace mental health policy statement.

Step 1 — Review existing health and wellness policies or programs and determine the purpose of your program going forward

If your workplace has an existing health or wellness policy, consider updating it to include mental health. For help, see *Supporting Mental Health in First Responders: Recommended Practices*.

Step 2 — Draft a statement for your workplace

The policy statement should clearly state the organization's commitment to protecting the psychological health, safety, and well-being of its employees, and to eliminating the stigma attached to occupational mental health conditions.

Step 3 — Define positive mental health

Explain ways to build resiliency, reinforce positive mental health at work, and support those who are struggling with mental health issues

Step 4 — Apply the policy statement

This should outline the scope of the policy. For example, it applies to permanent, temporary, and contract workers, and to interpersonal and electronic communications.

Step 5 — Inform everyone about the policy statement

Be sure to inform all workers, supervisors, and managers about the policy statement and provide them with copies of it. Post the policy statement in visible places around the workplace.

Step 6 — Review the policy statement annually

Include the date the policy goes into effect and the date when the policy statement will be reviewed each year. Develop and revise the organization's policy statement based on experience and recommended practices. For example, if a mental health incident has occurred, consider whether there are lessons learned that can be incorporated into your revised policy statement.

Template:

Workplace mental health policy statement

The following is an example of a policy statement for first responder organizations. It can be adapted to meet the needs of individual workplaces.

1. Our mental health policy and program

<Organization name> is committed to protecting the psychological health, safety, and well-being of its employees. We acknowledge that workplace stress and trauma is a health and safety issue that we must address, and that by creating a mental health policy and procedures to address mental health issues we can improve the well-being of the organization and all who work for it. We will consistently aim to achieve the highest standards to support positive mental health.

2. Our mental health policy statement

<Organization name> supports a respectful workplace culture that is free from stigma, and is compassionate towards all who may have a mental health condition. We will entrench psychological health, safety, and well-being in all aspects of work and at all levels throughout the organization.

3. Positive mental health

We will ensure that leaders are occupationally aware and educated to recognize signs of mental health injury. Efforts will be made to increase awareness about mental health issues and create an open dialogue among employees, managers, leadership, and unions. We will challenge stigma and make training and support tools available to all workers and employers for their own support and for that of their co-workers. This may include access to employee assistance programs, peer support, and return-to-work programs. At all times, we will ensure confidentiality and privacy.

4. Application

This policy applies to all employees of <organization name> in all locations where employees work or attend. It applies in personal dealings and in electronic communications.

5. Awareness

Everyone at <organization name> will receive a copy of this policy. It will also be posted in buildings and at mobile work locations for all see.

6. Annual review

This policy statement will be reviewed every year. All workers and managers will receive a copy.

Date created: _____ **Annual review date:** _____