

# Mental Health *Policy Audit*

**MAKE  
THE SHIFT**

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# Background

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**Working Well in Wellington was designed to focus on shift workers as a group of workers who are at greater risk of mental injury. The project focused on the work-related factors which are: job demands, job control, poor support, organisational change, organisational justice, recognition and reward, low role clarity and workplace relationships.**

This Mental Health Policy Audit was produced by the Working Well in Wellington project led by Wellington Primary Care Partnership and funded by WorkSafe's WorkWell Mental Health Improvement Fund.

The project is framed around the five organisational mental wellbeing protective factors, as outlined in "Developing a mentally healthy workplace: A review of the literature: A report for the National Mental Health Commission and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance, 2014". These include:

**Job Design:** Enhancing employee control in a workplace environment. Includes healthy rostering practices and the design of work.

**Organisational Factors:** Providing a mentally and physically safe workplace through a sound policy and procedure framework.

**Team/Group Factors:** Support from colleagues and managers, the quality of interpersonal relationships, effective leadership, and availability of manager training.

**Reduction of Home/WorkConflict:** Minimising conflicting demands between work and home.

**Individual Biopsychosocial Factors:** Understanding and minimising individual's biological, psychological and social factors that may impair mental wellbeing.

This Policy Audit Tool has been developed primarily as an organisational strategy. However, it impacts across all of the protective factors.

# Definitions

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**Mental health is more than the absence of illness. The World Health Organization (2014) defines mental health as “...a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community”.**

**Together, a policy and procedure are used to empower the people responsible for a process with the direction and consistency they need for successful process improvement.**

## **Mentally Healthy Workplace:**

The Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance defines the following as common attributes of a mentally healthy workplace:

**Positive Workplace Culture:** Put simply, people feel good about coming to work, and everyone is encouraged and supported.

**Stress and Other Risks to Mental Health are Managed:** Stress, heavy workloads, unrealistic deadlines, poor communication, uncertainty – these and other factors can all contribute to anxiety and depression, and it is up to managers and leaders to identify and control risks within the workplace, as far as reasonably practicable.

**People with Mental Health Conditions are Supported:** Helping employees to stay at or return to work has clear benefits, both for the individual and the business.

**Zero-Tolerance Approach to Discrimination:** Protecting employees from discrimination is a legal requirement and encourages a diverse workforce and ensures everyone gets a fair go.

## **Mental Wellbeing:**

Mental wellbeing is more than the absence of mental illness and is more than feeling happy. Someone with positive mental health and wellbeing is feeling good, functioning well, has satisfaction with life, is developing as a person, and has strong relationships.

## **Poor Mental Health:**

Poor mental health is a where a person's ability to cope with the day-to-day pressures of life, work productively or contribute to a community are impaired. A person's ability to realise their potential is hampered because of the impacts of poor mental health.

## **Policy VS Procedure:**

A Policy is a guiding principle used to set in an organisation, a course of action that guides and influences decisions – the business rules.

A Procedure is a series of steps to be followed as a consistent and repetitive approach to accomplishing an end result.

# Purpose of this Audit Toolkit

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**This Policy Audit Tool is designed to provide the foundation of an organisation's commitment to creating a mentally healthy workplace. It establishes a structure for organisational policies that promote mental wellbeing.**

This is demonstrated by the Working Well in Wellington Organisational Development Model (below). The model reflects the importance of providing a solid foundation of policies and procedures that enable a strengths-based approach to enhancing employees' control in the workplace, and to providing a physically and mentally safe working environment.

This tool is designed to allow the user to audit the presence and quality of policies and procedures to strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health in the workplace, as per the World Health Organization's Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030.

The audit tool provides a mechanism to identify and assess the structure of the policies and procedures that underpin an empowered and mentally healthy workforce. It can identify gaps in an organisation's business rules and specifically determines if the necessary policies are in place to promote and support a mentally healthy workforce. The tool can also provide an audit trail that will enhance quality improvement activities over time.

The tool does not aim to audit the content of the policies. This is best done by an industry specialist as part of the normal policy review cycle and continuous quality improvement process.

## **Integrating Mental Wellbeing Fundamentals**

The Policy Audit Tool requires the organisation to place staff mental wellbeing at the forefront of its vision and mission.

An organisation that wants to develop a culture focused on employee wellbeing must first adopt and implement a vision statement that values, and commits to, its employee's mental wellbeing. The organisational development model can inform the focus of the policy audit process.

Effectively written policies need to relate closely to the policies from which they are derived, and provide clear directions and process steps:

- Communicate organisational, legal, and regulatory rules to employees, executives and board members, independent contractors and consultants, and others working on behalf of the organisation.
- Provide employees with a clear understanding of what constitutes acceptable and lawful business behaviours.
- Help employers demonstrate to courts and regulators, employees, applicants, customers, the media, decision makers and others that the organisation is committed to operating a business environment that is civil, compliant, and correct (Flynn 2011).

**STRENGTHS MODEL**

**DEFICIT MODEL**



**INDIVIDUAL BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS**



**TEAM/GROUP FACTORS | ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS | WORK/FAMILY CONFLICT**



**JOB DESIGN**



# Completing the Audit

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**The audit can be completed in-house or you may prefer to engage an independent auditor – particularly for the first audit.**

**Step 1:** Identify the organisation's vision/mission/values statements that affirm its commitment to protecting the mental wellbeing of its workforce.

**Step 2:** Identify the organisation's mental wellbeing policy and procedures as shown in the WWiW policy audit model and assess them against the nine key focus areas.

Include other policies and procedures that your organisation has. They are listed in general terms at the left of the audit tool. They are grouped under the five protective factors.

The relevant policies should be audited according to the nine key areas. This allows gaps to be identified, which then form the basis for general audit result comments and further recommendations.

The final column provides space for the auditor to include notes, including the titles of any or related policies and procedures.

**Step 3:** The audit results section provides a space for the auditor to provide general feedback, and summarise the audit results. It can provide more descriptive commentary around the quality and completeness of the policies and procedures.

**Step 4:** The auditor provides recommendations for continuous improvement and establishes a feedback loop.

# The Audit Tool

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## STEP 1:

Does the vision/mission and values statement make a clear commitment to creating and supporting a mentally healthy workforce?

**YES**   **NO**

Is this vision/mission supported by a mental wellbeing policy?

**YES**   **NO**

## STEP 2:

Complete the table on the next page, assessing your policy against the audit questions.



# The Audit Tool

Check the audit questions against the policy

Policy in place	Aim of the Policy is stated	Scope identifies the issues addressed in the policy.	Measurable objectives identify action to be taken to address the scope.	Targeted audience/key stakeholders are identified.	Consequences of non-compliance are stated.	The key authorisation person/group is identified.	The date of development is identified.	The date of review is identified.	Links to other policies are evident.
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Defining the expectations, essential requirements and qualifications required of the contracted position (e.g. Position Description).

Defining shifts to be worked applying the EBA, best practice and professional practice rules (e.g. Rostering Principles).

Professional/ethical behaviour expected from each person (e.g. Code of Ethics/Conduct).

Opportunity to discuss performance with manager against expectation of role and opportunities to improve (e.g. Performance Appraisal).

Rules related to media releases, use of social media as it applies to the organisation and confidentiality of information (e.g. Social Media Use/Press Releases).

Legal agreement between employee and employer (e.g. Contract of Employment).

Organisation and employee commitment to attaining and maintaining a mentally healthy workplace (e.g. Mental Wellbeing Policy).

## JOB DESIGN


# The Audit Tool

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Identifies how the organisation deals with reducing or eliminating risky practice by an individual or equipment, and processes for eliminating or reducing risk (e.g. Risk Management).

Fairness in employing staff who best fit the job requirements as per the Position Description (e.g. Recruitment & Selection).

Process for addressing non-compliance with performance requirements (e.g. Position Description), policy requirements and professional practice (e.g. Disciplinary Process).

Legal requirements for safety in the workplace (e.g. Occupational Health & Safety).

Process of introducing new staff to the organisation, their role, and performance expectations (e.g. Induction/Orientation).

## ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS


# The Audit Tool

Check the audit questions against the policy

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Identified expectations about personal aggression/treatment by others to employee and employee towards others (e.g. Code of Conduct, Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination).

Expectations about fairness to all staff, irrespective of individual differences (e.g. Equal Opportunity, Diversity, Inclusion).

Process for dealing with complaints from staff who feel aggrieved (e.g. Grievance/Conflict Management).

## TEAM & GROUP FACTORS


Entitlements for all types of leave.

Commitment to supporting and helping staff who suffer family violence (e.g. Family Violence Policy).

## WORK/FAMILY CONFLICT


# The Audit Tool

Check the audit questions against the policy

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Targeted audience/key stakeholders are identified.
Consequences of non-compliance are stated.
The key authorisation person/group is identified.
The date of development is identified.
The date of review is identified.
Links to other policies are evident.

Expectation of mandatory training or access to professional development (e.g. Training & Education Opportunities Policy).

Expectation of the use of drugs and alcohol at work or consequences of coming to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol (e.g. Drugs & Alcohol in the Workplace).

Support for staff who are injured at work or returning to their role after a work injury (e.g. WorkCover/Return to Work Programs).

Process for accessing assistance for emotional support (e.g. Employee Assistance Program).

## INDIVIDUAL BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS


# Policy Audit Results

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General Comments:

Policy Strengths:

Opportunities for Improvement:

# Policy Audit Results

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Short Term:

Medium Term:

Longer Term:

Continuous Improvement:

# Resources & Bibliography

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World Health Organization, 2019 "Mental Health in the Workplace"

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**Further Resources** <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources>

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-publications/all>

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

[www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)

[www.workwell.vic.gov.au](http://www.workwell.vic.gov.au)

[www.business.vic.gov.au](http://www.business.vic.gov.au)