



COVID-19 & Mental Health

Understanding That Your WHS Duties Apply to Mental Health Too

The duty of employers under the model WHS laws apply to psychological health too. This is a stressful time for all Australians, and you must do what is reasonably practicable to eliminate and reduce the psychological risks to workers and others at the workplace.

Under WHS laws, you must **eliminate or minimise the risk to psychological** health and safety arising from the work carried out by your business or undertaking as much as you reasonably can.

To determine what measures to put in place, you should carry out a risk assessment and consider all the risks to psychological health in your workplace. You must also **consult** your workers and their representatives. Workers often know what the issues are and have ideas about how to manage them. Once you have consulted workers, determined appropriate measures and put them in place, continue to **review** how you are managing the risks to check your measures are working.

This is an unprecedented time for all employers and workers. You may wish to seek professional advice on your WHS duties and how to meet them in your particular circumstances. The WHS regulator in your state or territory may also be able to provide further advice.

Tips for managing stress from COVID-19

- Regularly **ask your workers** how they are going and if anything is stressing them.
- Where workers are distressed about the challenging conditions caused by the pandemic, **acknowledge their feelings** about the situation and **reassure workers** they are doing what they can in the circumstances
- **Stay informed** with information from official sources and regularly communicate or share this information with workers
- **Consult your workers** and representatives on any risks to their psychological health and physical health and safety
- **Support** innovations to address the psychosocial risks where you reasonably can
- Provide workers with a **point of contact** to discuss their concerns
- Make **workplace information** available in a central place
- Inform workers about their **entitlements** if they become unfit for work or have caring responsibilities
- Inform workers about their **rights** under WHS laws, including the right to stop work in certain circumstances and the right not to be discriminated against or disadvantaged for raising work health and safety concerns in the workplace
- Proactively **support workers** who you identify to be more at risk of workplace psychological injury (e.g. frontline workers or those working from home), and
- **Refer** workers to appropriate work related mental health and wellbeing support services, such as employee assistance programs or the [Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service](#).

More information about work-related psychological health and safety and how to meet your duties can be found in the Safe Work Australia Guide: [Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties](#).