

Step-by-Step Plan to Address Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace



Identify Psychosocial Hazards - Assess the Risks - Controls Risks - Review Control Measures

A GUIDE FOR HSRS, WORKERS AND UNION REPRESENTATIVES.

OHS legislation relevant to this guide can be found at www.mindyourhead.org.au
Examples and templates have been provided and linked to throughout the guide.

If your workplace has a HSR (Health and Safety Representative), approach them first about the problem and outline the below strategy - you can work with them on the below.

If you are the HSR, keep your union informed throughout the process (step 1) and, if there are other HSRS in your workplace, communicate with them so they can assist.

If your workplace does not have a HSR, speak with your Union and discuss the below strategy with them. Also speak to them about getting HSRS elected in your workplace moving forward.

Step 1: Inform your Union

- Reach out to your union and inform them about the problem.
- Share the strategy (below) that you plan to use and get contact details for the best union representative to be included in communication with the employer moving forward.

Step 2: Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

Please [see the bottom of this guide](#) for a list of surveys you can use, or design your own.

- Conduct an anonymous survey to:
 - Determine WHAT the hazards are.
 - Understand HOW widespread these hazards are within the organisation – are they present just for a few people or an entire team or the entire workplace?
 - Assess the risk level they pose (low, medium, or high).
 - Depending on the size of the organisation, you can survey the entire worksite or just your team/designated working group (DWG) and ask the HSRS or representatives of other teams to survey their groups, then collate the data.
- Ensure that your survey asks workers what control measures they are aware of that are currently in place (if any) for any hazards, how effective these controls are, and any suggestions they have for improvements.

Step 3: Communication with Employer

- Compile and present your findings on the identified hazards to the employer – this can be emailed to your manager, leadership team/s, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Manager and/or Human Resources (HR). Include your Union representative and Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) in all communications.
- Propose a meeting with the relevant parties, as well as your HSR and Union representative.
 - Emphasise the urgency due to any high risks associated with the identified hazards. It should be addressed immediately.
 - If the request for a meeting is not acknowledged or acted upon within a reasonable timeframe, and there's an HSR in place, they can issue a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN) for failing to provide a safe workplace – [examples are available here](#). If there's no HSR, inform your Union and request their intervention.

Step 4: Risk Management

- During the meeting, present the collected data on the identified hazards and discuss the risks they pose.
- Refer to the [Hierarchy of Controls \(HOC\)](#) as the best practice approach for controlling hazards (whether it is legislated in your jurisdiction or not, it is still best practice) and inquire about the current risk management and control measures in place for the identified hazards. *Highlight that there are either no measures in place or if there are existing measures that they are ineffective as the hazards are still present and pose risk.*
- **Propose a review of Control Measures via a Risk Management Action Plan:** Actioning planning should outline all the identified hazards, what controls are currently in place and their effectiveness, and make suggestions for improvements and/or propose completely new controls. Feedback from your worker surveys should be utilised here. It should also include reasonable/expected timeframes for the changes and identify who is responsible for this.

-An [Example Action Plan is available](#) for you to reference – you can also access example implementation strategies via this action plan.

-An [Action Plan Blank Template](#) is also available for you to use, or you can use any risk assessment tool that you prefer.

-[Guides on using the Hierarchy of Controls](#) for each Psychosocial Hazard are available for you to reference.

A HSR has the right to be involved in such a process, however [WHS/OHS laws require that workers be consulted](#) on health and safety matters

effecting them - ensure that this is pointed out to management so that workers are consulted throughout the action planning (risk management) process.

Throughout the ACTU's Mind Your Head Pilot Program, leadership buy-in (that is, genuine care for the safety of workers and an actual want for the plan to be successful), engagement from workers, and clear, consistent communication were the most important factors in determining the success of an Action Plan.

Step 5: Implement Control Measures

- An implementation strategy can be used to clearly outline how the controls from the risk management action plan will be put into place. Examples are available here. [Examples are available here.](#)
 - Set a clear deadline for the implementation of the discussed measures.
 - Identify a responsible person/s for ensuring this.
 - Discuss how the new measures will be reviewed (see step 6).

Communication with all workers is important throughout this entire process. Leadership should ensure communication with all staff so they understanding what is happening throughout this process, why it is happening, can provide their input and so that they fully understand any new measures that are implemented.

Step 6: Review Controls

- Shortly after the controls are implemented, conduct another survey to assess their effectiveness and gather feedback from workers.
 - Have the hazards or risks changed as a result of the new controls?
- Based on the feedback and analysis, make necessary adjustments or enhancements to the controls to further eliminate or reduce risks.
- Schedule regular intervals (i.e., quarterly or bi-annually) to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the controls in place. Document the findings of each review, including any changes made to the controls, and communicate them to all relevant parties.
- Analyse any incident reports or near-misses related to the identified hazards since the last review to determine if the controls are working as intended.



RESOURCES

Survey Tools:

The Mind Your Head Psychosocial Hazards Workplace Survey is [available here](#).
Victorian Trades Hall Council also have an excellent survey tool, [available here](#).
The People at Work Survey is also an option for larger organisations, [available here](#).