SHORT DESCRIPTIONS OF THE 13 PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS & OTHER CHRONIC STRESSORS

See www.guardingmindsatwork.ca for more complete descriptions and resources.

Psychological Support is an environment supportive of employees' psychological and mental health concerns, and responds appropriately.

Organizational Culture is a work environment characterized by trust, honesty, and fairness.

Clear Leadership & Expectations is effective leadership and support that helps employees know what they need to do, how their work contributes to the organization, and whether there are impending changes.

Civility & Respect is where interactions are respectful and considerate.

Psychological Competencies & Requirements is a good fit between employees' interpersonal and emotional competencies and the requirements of the position.

Growth & Development is encouragement and support for the development of employee interpersonal, emotional and job skills.

Recognition & Reward includes appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' efforts in a fair and timely manner.

Involvement & Influence is where employees are included in discussions about how their work is done and how important decisions are made.

Workload Management is where tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available.

Engagement is where workers feel connected to their work and are motivated to do their job well.

Balance is where there is recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family and personal life.

Psychological Protection is where psychological safety is ensured, workers feel able to ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems, or propose a new idea without fearing negative consequences.

Protection of Physical Safety is where appropriate action to protect the physical safety of employees.
Other Chronic Stressors Above and beyond the factors we've discussed, there are several other key issues in the workplace that can affect employee psychological health. Within each issue are various factors that organizations need to consider when creating a mentally healthy workplace.

- **Stigma and discrimination** related to mental health in the workplace is an area that organizations need to work at eliminating, especially if it relates to mental illness.

- **Stress** is another issue to look at. With proper knowledge and resources, stress can be exciting and motivating. Without the right support, stress can impact the workplace.

- **Demand/control and effort/reward relationships**: The research around balancing job demands and the level of control over those demands is decades old, yet it still applies. Where work demands are high and there is a matching level of control over the demands, employees can still stay in balance. The same applies to effort and reward. If employees put in a lot of effort for very little reward, it’s likely to demotivate them. Organizations need to recognize and balance these concerns.

- **Presenteeism** occurs when an employee is at work, but due to health problems or personal issues, they are not functioning at their optimum level. Most organizations don’t have an effective way of monitoring or measuring this, so people’s performance can slide over time. This stressor often results in a loss of workplace productivity. It’s really worth resolving with proper support for the sake of both the employee, and the organization.

- **Substance Use, Misuse and Abuse at Work**: Addiction is also a concern for employers to keep in mind. Having a policy in place about substance abuse in the workplace could be helpful. While addiction is a medical issue that needs to be dealt with separately, we can protect our workplace by dealing swiftly and effectively when someone shows up at work under the influence.

- **Best practice**:
  - Look beyond the identified factors.
  - Engage employees in talking about the chronic stressors they face.
  - Work together to decide what needs to be done.

As identified by workers, there are other chronic stressors that are unique to specific work environments.

For instance if you had a police force and ballet school, the stressors for these two groups will be very different, and yet they still need to be identified, and they still need to be addressed. It is important to go beyond the identified factors to engage employees in talking about the chronic stressors they are faced with and what you could do find solutions together.

The listed factors and chronic stressors provide a framework for continual improvement. In the same way that we look at other health and safety issues on an ongoing basis, now we have the ability to look at psychological health and safety issues on a continual basis.