Where People Matter and Belong

Creating Psychologically Healthy Workplaces within Toronto Children’s Services

Who we are

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Getting to Know You…

- Do you currently have a Psychological Health and Wellness Strategy in your organization?
- Are you responsible for leading the strategy?
- What are some of the challenges that you are facing?

Toronto Children’s Services

The City of Toronto manages one of the largest child care systems in Canada:
- Over 1000 licensed child care centres
- Approximately 76,000 spaces for children from birth to 12 years
  - Includes home child care, preschool, and before & after school
- EarlyON programs and services are delivered at 275 program locations across the city – and growing
The Perfect Storm

- Increases in stress, psychological distress, and mental illness
- Psychological health and wellness identified as a gap
- Equity and inclusion also identified as a gap
- Policy and legislative support

The Imperfect Journey
Defining Psychological Health and Safety

A belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes.

Amy Edmonson
Defining Psychological Health and Safety

“A workplace that promotes workers’ psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm to worker psychological health, including in negligent, reckless, or intentional ways”.

National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace
Where are we? The Environmental Scan

- Understand the workforce and its climate
- Evaluated how managers lead and skill level to facilitate sensitive workplace mental health conversations
- Understand employees’ needs, gaps, and issues
- Determine resources available

Framing: Senior Management Endorsement

- Identified a management champion
- Built a business case
- Clarified the role for senior management team
- Built in accountability
- Ongoing communication
Staff Engagement: Psychological Health and Wellness Committee

- Staff engagement is critical
- Overlap with Joint Health and Safety Committee
- Ambassadors roles and responsibilities
- Leads, advises, and implements across the organization
- Management and employees work together to implement solutions

Accountability: Policies and Legislation

**Provincial Legislation**
- OHRC
- Occupational Health and Safety Act
- Bill 177

**City of Toronto**
- Psychological Health and Safety Policy
- Collective Agreements

**National Standard of Psychological Safety**
- 13 Psychosocial Risk Factors
Skill and Support: Learning and Development

- Piloted *Mental Health First Aid* and *Understanding Mental Health and Mental Distress*
- Division wide *Deep Diversity* training
- Mental health resources made available multiple ways
- Onboarding and ongoing staff development

Culture: Organizational Transformation

- Change management strategy
- Continuous framing
- Portfolio is assigned human resources
- Destigmatizing language and conversations
- Mental Health Ambassadors and Joint Health and Safety Representatives
- Continuous learning, development, and evaluation
Equity and Inclusion: The Impact of Social Identity

Let's Talk Child Care Campaign and Parent Summits

Development of the 2015-2019 Children’s Services Service Plan

Internal requests for training
The Learning Plan

The learning series included the following components:

Phase 1:
1. Deep Diversity
2. 2SLGBTQ101
3. Indigenous Cultural Competency
4. Supporting Newcomer and Refugee Families

Phase 2:
1. Equity Lens Training
2. Supporting Trans and Gender Independent Children
3. Supporting Indigenous Children in Childcare
4. Confronting Anti-Black Racism
5. Leading for Inclusion Supervisor and Management Training
Guiding Principles

Start with Leaders First
Leaders set the tone, frame the importance and impact and support accountability. Leaders role model the way.

Get Comfortable with Discomfort
Conversations about social identity are not easy, especially when we talk about race.

There are no Safe Spaces
Instead, we hold space for each other with empathy and seek to understand the lived experiences of others.

Guiding Principles

Relationship Building is Critical
Working across differences requires connection and trust. Without this, we risk exclusion and dehumanizing others.

Keep Hope Alive
This is hard work, and we don’t see change as quickly as we would like. Keep momentum going by supporting and accountability.

This is Transformation…from the Inside Out
Structure of Access and Equity Within Toronto Children’s Services

TCS Access and Equity Planning Team

- SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM
- Employee Engagement Committee
- 2SLGBTQ Advisory Committee
- Psychological Health And Wellness Committee
- Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Circle
- Indigenous Advisory Circle

Intersectionality: Using an Equity Lens

- People! People! People! Combined with compassion, empathy, historical framework, healthy use of power, and respectful curiosity
- Complicate issues, consider facets and nuances, rely on facts, evidence, lived experiences.
- Listen with the same passion with which we want to be heard

There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

Audre Lorde
Employee Support: Supportive Performance Management

Psychological Safety & Accountability

Source: Amy C. Edmondson
Harvard University
Employee Support: Supportive Performance Management

- Response is critical
- Rule out rule
- Check your bias and assumptions
- Provide supportive and clear guidance related to behaviour
- Positive psychology skill-building
- Notion of peer support

Where Can You Start?

- Find the people who are passionate about this issue
- Read the National Standard
- Recruit a Management Champion
- Build a business case and get your senior leaders on board
- Learn the skills to address the issues that emerge
Workplace Mental Health Campaigns

A LOT OF PEOPLE GET CANCER BECAUSE THEY JUST CAN’T DEAL WITH REALITY.

HEART DISEASE. JUST ANOTHER EXCUSE FOR LAZY PEOPLE NOT TO WORK.

Workplace Mental Health Campaigns

DEAR MANAGER, GROUP MEETINGS CAN BE A TRIGGER FOR MY SOCIAL ANXIETY. IT KILLS MY ENERGY AND FOCUS. CAN WE FIND TIME TO CHAT?

DEAR MANAGER, SOMETIMES MY HYPERMANIA HELPS WITH CREATIVITY. OTHER TIMES IT MAKES TASKS IMPOSSIBLE. CAN WE TALK ABOUT ACCOMMODATIONS?
Discussion

- What does a culture of psychological health and safety look like in your own organization?

- What is your organization's vision or what do you think should be developed?

- Does your organization incorporate an equity lens in their psych health and wellness mandate?