

Mental Health at Work Mini-Lessons: Guide

Mobilizing Conversations in Schools within Manitoba

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About the Mental Health at Work Mini-Lessons

Background: Care for All in Education (provided by the Canadian Mental health Association) is a program seeking to enhance wellbeing supports and workplace psychological health and safety (PH&S) for staff within schools in Manitoba.

In 2023, they started providing specific school staff (Occupational Health and Safety representatives, Wellness Committee Members, and/or Human Resources staff) with greater education about workplace PH&S, through delivery of a workshop and orientation to an audit tool highlighting best practices for workplace mental health/PH&S in schools. A key message in the workshop was that enhancing PH&S within schools is about shifting from reactive, individual-focused approach to a proactive, organizational-focused approach.

One activity to help enhance PH&S is to have regular conversations about mental health occurring throughout the workplace. These can help promote awareness of mental health information and resources among staff or identify employee needs/psychosocial risks. Further, submitted research by the University of Winnipeg has shown that when educational staff in Manitoba feel greater connectedness and/or well-being at work, they are less likely to be considering leaving their job.

Thus, as a natural next step to support schools, Care for All in Education developed “**Mental Health at Work Mini-Lessons**” – a tool to mobilize conversations about mental health to all staff in the workplace.

Key Objectives of the Mini-Lessons:

1. Spread awareness of mental health-related information and resources to staff within schools in Manitoba.
2. Create opportunities for social connection amongst staff.

These Mini-Lessons are intended to provide school Occupational Health and Safety representatives, Wellness Committee Members, and/or Human Resources staff with a new tool to confidently facilitate group discussions with staff throughout their schools – including education assistants, teachers, principals, superintendents, administrative staff, custodians, drivers, and cafeteria staff, among others.

Care for All in Education plans to provide 8 Mini-Lessons over the course of the 2024-2025 school year.

In the following pages, you will find step-by-step instructions on how to use the Mini-Lessons.

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Logistics of Mini-Lessons Delivery

Time Required: 15 minutes for each Mini-Lesson (can be incorporated into another staff meeting, if desired)*

Recommended Group Size: Groups of 10-12 staff*

Recommended Frequency: Every 1-2 months throughout the school year*

Delivered by: OHS reps, HR staff, and/or Wellness Committee Members

Delivered to: All staff*

**You may need to split staff into sub-groups and deliver each mini-lesson multiple times, depending on staff numbers.*

**Alternatively, you may wish to deliver each Mini-Lesson in a lunch-and-learn format (e.g., if smaller groups are not feasible or if you would like more time for discussion).*

Materials Provided for Each Mini-Lesson:

- Mini-Lesson Plan – brief educational info on the topic, plus prompting questions and follow-up resources
- Summary poster – for display in staff areas, if desired
- Summary memo – for use in communications (internal or parent newsletters, etc.), if desired

Documenting Feedback: While the focus of this activity is to spread awareness and facilitate connection among staff members, some of the conversations may spur ideas for PH&S actions. You may wish to document staff input during the meeting. This feedback can help inform action planning for PH&S at work.

Support: Care for All in Education is available to provide support for this activity. For instance, they offer a workshop providing orientation to the Mental Health at Work Mini-Lessons. Subsequently, if you would like support to facilitate your first Mini-Lesson, our staff are available to assist. Please contact Irene Nordheim (inordheim@cmhawpg.mb.ca) to arrange.

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Mini-Lesson Structure/Agenda

Here's how we'd suggest you structure the meeting with other school staff. Feel free to use this as a starting point, and adapt as you need, to suit your own style and workplace.

Item	15-min
Introduction / Purpose	1 min
Check-In / Reflection Prompt	2 min
Review Educational Information	2 min
Discussion & Resources	8 min
Check-Out & Wrap-Up	2 min

1. Introduction/Purpose

Provide staff with a brief introduction to your role and the purpose of the Mental Health at Work Mini-Lessons. For example, you might say:

Hello everyone, as you know, my name is [your name], and I'm [your role; a health and safety rep / part of the Wellness Committee / other] in our school. One area we're working on improving is psychological health and safety at work for all school staff.

A tangible step to do this is to start conversations about mental health at work, with the people in our work environment (you!). To help us, we've decided to use a resource from the Canadian Mental Health Association's Care for All in Education program: Mental Health at Work Mini-Lessons.

There are 2 goals of these Mini-Lessons: 1) To share mental health-related information and resources with staff throughout the school and 2) Create opportunities for social connection amongst staff.

Overall each lesson will take us about 15-minutes, during which we'll go through some interesting mental health-related facts, and prompting discussion questions. We'll aim to complete a Mini-Lesson together every [expected frequency].

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2. Check-In/Reflection Prompt

Use this as an opportunity to help staff press “pause” on the busyness of their days, or to get them thinking about the topic of the Mini-Lesson.

Use a short prompt to engage the group (e.g., on a scale from 1 to ten how would you rate your well-being today?).

⇒ Note: If someone’s response suggests/mentions they’re feeling very low for any prompts – make a point of thanking them for sharing and offer to check in with them separately after the meeting.

⇒ Note: Some Mini-Lessons may include a suggested prompt relevant to the topic.

3. Review Educational Information

Refer to each individual Mini-Lesson for content.

4. Discussion & Resources

Refer to each individual Mini-Lesson for discussion questions and highlighted resource(s).

Please note: The resources highlighted are not specific to one school or school district. ***You may wish to bring information/handouts on other related resources, specific to your workplace.***

For example, in Mini-Lesson #2 – Finding Support, you may wish to provide information about employee assistance programs, extended health benefits, or other supportive resources available through the workplace in addition to the province-wide resource guide that is highlighted.

5. Check-Out & Wrap-Up

Thank the staff for the open conversation. Offer one last opportunity for anybody to say anything on their mind that they might not have had the chance to mention.

Reinforce the fact that these discussions and having time to connect with each other are one part of enhancing psychological health and safety at work. Welcome them to reach out to you if they have suggestions for other actions for PH&S that they’d like to see!

Final Step:

Take a couple minutes after the meeting to document any additional notes or employee input that you heard.

You may wish to use the input you heard to help inform your ongoing action plans for workplace PH&S in your school/school district!