An organisation's guide to supporting the recovery-at-work and return-to-work of a worker experiencing a psychological illness or injury -
Checklist Two: For sole traders

A tool to support the Victorian Mentally Healthy Workplaces Framework

Victorian Government

VICTORIA
State Government

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the First Peoples of the lands and waters across Victoria and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respect to their Elders past and present.

We recognise that poor mental health disproportionately affects First Peoples' communities. Further, there are long-lasting, far-reaching and intergenerational consequences of the dispossession of First Peoples and their Country that are a direct result of colonisation and the establishment of the State of Victoria. This history, and the systems it gave rise to, continue to harm First Peoples today. It is only through community-led approaches to supporting healing and structural transformation to enable true self-determination that we can begin to right the wrongs of the past.

Acknowledgement of Lived and Living Experience

We acknowledge people with lived experience of mental ill-health and recovery and the experience of people who have been carers, families, or supporters. Some of the most powerful evidence to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System came from the personal experience of people living with mental ill-health, their families, and carers. There has been extraordinary determination and courage as people have revisited painful memories in the hope of shaping a better future for themselves and others. We and other Victorians are deeply appreciative for this.

This website uses language to describe and discuss themes and concepts relating to mental health, but we acknowledge others might use different words to communicate their experience which are also valid.

Disclaimer

This guide is intended for general information and guidance purposes only and should not be considered or relied upon as an official compliance tool or advice. Using this guide does not ensure compliance with Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. Additional resources such as those provided by WorkSafe Victoria need to be considered / adopted to abide by regulations.

While efforts have been made to ensure information presented is accurate and reliable, it is important to note that laws, regulations and requirements can change over time and may vary by jurisdiction.

This guide does not constitute legal, professional or regulatory advice. It is recommended that you consult the appropriate jurisdictional resources and consult with qualified legal or compliance professionals if you require specific compliance and regulatory guidance.

Crisis support services

If you or someone you know or work with are experiencing a mental health crisis, please contact one of these 24 hours, 7 days services

Lifeline: 13 11 14
Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467
Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636
MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978
QLife: 1800 184 527 (3pm to midnight daily)
Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800
13YARN: 13 92 76

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Checklists

There are two checklists of items and actions to support you:
- Checklist One is designed for small to large organisations.
- Checklist Two is designed for sole traders

Only complete the checklist relevant to you. The checklists contain links to important resources and information as well as handy tips. on actions you and your organisation can take to support recovery-at / return-to-work.

Checklist Two: For sole traders

The checklist will take about five minutes to complete, however, you are encouraged to take your time in accessing all the recommended resources and information.
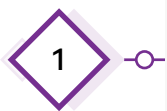
1 | I have sought the appropriate help for my psychological illness / injury

Yes ☐   No ☐

1. **Tip:** if your psychological illness or injury is impacting your mental wellbeing, there are several free resources where you can access support, including:
   - Lifeline (crisis support) www.lifeline.org.au
   - Black Dog Institute (for emergency service workers and volunteers) www.blackdoginstitute.org.au
   - Beyondblue www.beyondblue.org.au
   - Your organisation's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if you have one

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2 I have considered my recovery-at-work /return-to-work preferences

Yes ☐   No ☐

1. **Tip:** Some things to think about when considering your recovery-at-work / return-to-work:
    - Remember to be kind to yourself during your recovery-at-work / return-to-work.
    - Set yourself boundaries and realistic goals and expectations around remaining at work or returning to work after time off.
    - Focus on what you can do, rather than what you cannot do.
    - Ensure you make / allow time to attend appointments.
    - Have frequent and honest check-ins with yourself about what may or may not be working for you and make modifications as necessary.
    - Engage regularly with trusted colleagues in the industry, friends and family and ask for assistance and support as you need.

3 I know that Work Safe Victoria have resources about recovering-at-work / returning-to-work

Yes ☐   No ☐

Information that may be relevant to your context:
- https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/return-to-work

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4 I am aware that creating a 'return-to-work plan' and completing a 'return-to-work arrangements form' will help me structure my recovery / return

Yes ☐   No ☐

1. **Tip:** Creating a 'recovery-at-work' or 'return-to-work' plan will help keep you accountable to behaviours and actions you should take to support your recovery / return. For example, if your plan states you finish work each day at 3pm, rather than 5pm to support your recovery, hold yourself to that commitment (e.g., avoid scheduling meetings after 2:30pm). As time goes on and you begin to feel better, you can update the plan with new goals or information.

2. **Tip:** Although this template is called a 'Return-to-work' arrangements form, it can be used for planning your recovery-at-work with relevant modifications as required, even if you have not had time off.

3. **Tip:** The template references some examples of workplace modifications for physical injuries, you are encouraged to complete this form to cater for psychological illness or injury.

Information on completing a Return-to-work arrangements form:

- www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/return-work-arrangements-form

Please note: *There are no specific recovery-at-work templates – refer to the handy tips*

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5 I have contingencies for when things do not go to plan

Yes ☐   No ☐

1. **Tip:** Things to think about for contingency plans may include:
   - Do you have someone to support or help you if you start to feel worse during the day?
   - Do you have someone to take on duties you may not be able to?
   - What would you do if you needed to take a period of time off?

6 Where possible and necessary, I have / am modifying my workplace to accommodate my recovery/return

Yes ☐   No ☐

1. **Tip:** To support your recovery/return, you may need to:
   - Modify your daily tasks and activities to accommodate your illness or injury
   - Take on alternative roles which may help keep your mind busy and stimulated as you recover.
   - Modify your working environment such as removing any reminders or things which may make your psychological injury worse.
   - If you feel comfortable, be willing to share with customers about your injury and illness if it is impacting your usual work routines.

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