

Why Supports Matter

- Everyone faces complex, high-pressure situations with limited guidance in the community social services sector.
- Consistent organizational support reduces stress, builds confidence, and sustains well-being.
- Support is about how it is experienced through care, recognition, and guidance.

Key Hazards of Need for Employer Supports (WorkSafeBC)

- Unclear leadership expectations
- Lack of supervisor support (e.g., infrequent check-ins or guidance)
- Absence of a psychological health and safety policy
- Limited access to mental health resources
- Inattention to equity, diversity, and inclusion

Three Ways Support Is Experienced

1. Interpreting Intent: “Do they genuinely care?”

- Individuals subconsciously interpret the intent behind organizational actions.
- Support feels meaningful when it is timely, relevant, clearly communicated, and responsive to real challenges.

2. Social Exchange: “Are my contributions valued?”

- Everyone needs to feel valued for their effort, even if recognition is subtle.
- Support is often evaluated subconsciously; consistent acknowledgment sustains engagement.

3. Self-Enhancement: “Does this strengthen my sense of value?”

- Inclusion in decisions, opportunities for growth, and constructive feedback reinforce competence and professional worth.

Common Gaps in Support

- Limited time or resources for supervision, debriefing, or mental health supports
- Inconsistent check-ins among leaders
- Mental health resources exist but are hard to access or not communicated
- Recognition that is sporadic or absent
- Policies that are unclear, outdated, or inconsistently applied

Role-Based Strategies for Strong Support

Organizational support is a shared responsibility requiring coordinated effort across all levels.

Employers

- Allocate resources and time intentionally for the well-being of employees and leadership
- Provide access to mental health and culturally relevant supports
- Establish and communicate psychological health, safety, and DEI policies in collaboration with employees
- Recognize contributions and offer professional development
- Access guidance and supports for leadership well-being, including peer networks, mental health resources, and professional development
- Respond transparently and promptly to concerns

Managers/Supervisors

- Check in regularly and build rapport with team members
- Seek and incorporate employee input when making decisions or planning work
- Guide workers through challenging situations, provide follow-up, and share relevant resources as needed
- Recognize effort and achievements meaningfully
- Advocate for team needs with senior leadership

Employees

- Share feedback on the effectiveness of available supports
- Seek guidance when needed
- Support and recognize each other's contributions through collaboration, shared learning, and mutual appreciation
- Participate in debriefings and professional development

Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committees (JOHSC)

- Regularly check in with teams to identify areas where additional support is needed
- Consult workers and recommend practical improvements to support
- Promote available resources and supports so staff know what is available
- Review reported incidents and near-misses to identify gaps or breakdowns in support
- Regularly evaluate psychological health and safety initiatives to ensure they meet staff needs

Next Steps: Strengthening Employer Support

No matter your role, there are practical ways to make support real in your workplace:

- **Notice patterns:** Observe where support is strong and where gaps exist.
- **Start a conversation:** Share observations with colleagues, managers, or your JOHSC.
- **Take small actions:** Even simple steps, like offering peer recognition, requesting a check-in, or following up on available resources, can strengthen support.
- **Promote awareness:** Understanding gaps and sharing experiences helps build a more supportive, sustainable workplace for everyone.

For more information on supports and resources for social services workers in BC, [visit our Key Resources page.](#)

