

ADDRESSING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN CANADIAN MINING

ADOPTING A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Effectively addressing sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace begins with a trauma-informed approach that links action with psychological safety.

By linking action with psychological safety in this way, organizations acknowledge the emotional and psychological impact of disturbing incidents on individuals. This approach not only empowers people who are directly and indirectly affected to come forward and seek help but also ensures that preventive measures and support mechanisms are in place to prevent further harm. This means:¹

- Understanding that trauma and violence impact people's lives and behaviours.
- Aiming to create emotionally and physically safe environments, particularly for subjects of harassment and witnesses.
- Providing opportunities for people to make choices, collaborate and connect.
- Integrating strengths-based capacity-building interventions and options to support coping and resilience.

During informal discussions and formal investigations, acknowledge both historic and ongoing issues and their traumatic impacts on individuals to build trust and support healing. For example, consider intersectionality factors such as race, class, gender, (dis)ability and understand how they shape an individual's lived experience.

1. Government of Canada. (2018). Trauma and Violence Informed Approaches to Policy and Practice. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/health-risks-safety/trauma-violence-informed-approaches-policy-practice.html>

Use the following principles to adopt a trauma-informed approach when addressing a concern or complaint of sexual harassment or gender-based violence² as well as to create a positive reporting culture within your organization:

1. Acknowledgement

Listen to and acknowledge all parties' experiences of trauma as they are shared, including the subject of harassment, witnesses, alleged perpetrator and other affected staff. This may extend beyond a specific incident to past incidents and the coping strategies they may have developed.

2. Safety and trustworthiness

Help the subject, witnesses and persons indirectly affected feel they are in a safe space and recognize their need for physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional safety. There are many factors that can hinder a sense of safety, such as fear of reprisal, blame, disempowerment or stigma.

3. Choice, control, and collaboration

Actively involve the individuals concerned in their own healing process by discussing options for informal or formal approaches to addressing their concerns. Active involvement and providing choice as much as possible help to build a sense of control of the situation and next steps.

4. Empowerment

Throughout the process of addressing a concern or incident, be transparent with the individuals affected about the next steps, about how any information they share will be used and what their options are. Believe in and help to build the subject's strength and resilience by involving them in the process to address their concerns. Support the subject of harassment's evolution to empowerment.

5. Cultural, historical, and gender issues

Incorporate processes that are sensitive to an individual's personal and social identity, including first language, disability or any religious or cultural considerations that may be helpful (for example, providing materials in multiple languages or formats, providing an interpreter, an elder or permitting a trusted support person to accompany). Be sensitive to systemic barriers and other potential stressors that can extend far beyond a specific incident.

Adopting a trauma-informed approach is a recommended health and safety strategy for organizations seeking to address sexual harassment and gender-based violence effectively. By recognizing the profound impact of trauma and violence on individuals and communities and by implementing the principles outlined in this tipsheet, organizations can create a workplace culture that promotes physical and psychological safety, respect and belonging. Through these efforts, we support subjects, witnesses, and alleged perpetrators on their path to recovery while working collectively to prevent such incidents in the future.

2. Purkey, Eva, Rupa Patel and Susan P. Phillips. "Trauma-informed Care: Better Care for Everyone." Canadian Family Physician, Vol 64: March 2018. P. 170-172. <https://www.cfp.ca/content/cfp/64/3/170.full.pdf>

References

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Klinic Community Health. (2023). Trauma-Informed. <https://klinik.mb.ca/education-training/training-opportunities/trauma-informed/>

Purkey, Eva, Rupa Patel and Susan P. Phillips. "Trauma-informed Care: Better Care for Everyone." Canadian Family Physician, Vol 64: March 2018. P. 170-172. <https://www.cfp.ca/content/cfp/64/3/170.full.pdf>