

HOUSING AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

A Comprehensive Wellness Guide for **First Nations Housing Staff**

BURNOUT



First Nations Housing
Professionals Association

L'Association des professionnels de
l'habitation des Premières Nations



Housing Staff

Prioritizing the wellness of First Nations housing staff is essential to supporting healthy, resilient communities. Housing staff play a vital role in providing safe, secure, and culturally appropriate housing, directly impacting the well-being of residents.

Supporting the physical, mental, and emotional health of staff helps sustain this important work. Providing practical resources and strategies for self-care, stress management, and balance can help reduce burnout, strengthen capacity, and support effective service delivery.

Investing in staff wellness also contributes to stronger workplaces by improving morale, retention, and creating a more supportive environment. While housing staff may not address all wellness or mental health concerns directly, having the knowledge and resources to recognize challenges and connect individuals to appropriate supports is key.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 Introduction
- 4 Burnout
 - Workplace Burnout
 - Recognizing the Signs
- 5 Managers Role in Addressing Stress
- 6 Showing Staff Appreciation
 - Strategies for Work-Life Balance
- 7 Mental Health and Wellness
- 8 Action Plan

Acknowledgment

The **First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA)** is delighted to introduce the Housing and Wellness Program, aimed at offering crucial information and guidance to First Nations individuals residing on-reserve or engaged in housing-related roles. This initiative delivers educational programs, tools, and resources tailored for First Nations housing staff, residents, and youth. Through the implementation of this program, our aim is to address housing, health, and safety concerns holistically.

BURNOUT

Workplace Burnout

Workplace burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term stress and overwork. It is marked by feelings of exhaustion, detachment, and a sense of not achieving anything meaningful. Burnout usually results from ongoing workplace stress that hasn't been managed well.

Among First Nations housing staff, burnout can be common due to several factors:

Heavy workload

First Nations housing staff often manage demanding caseloads, administrative responsibilities, and high community expectations. These pressures can contribute to ongoing stress and exhaustion.

Emotional toll

Work can be emotionally demanding, as staff regularly support individuals and families facing housing insecurity, intergenerational trauma, and complex social challenges. Without proper support, this sustained exposure can lead to burnout.

Limited resources

Many housing departments operate with limited funding, aging infrastructure, and insufficient support services. Trying to meet community needs under these constraints can create frustration and feelings of helplessness, increasing the risk of burnout.

Cultural context

First Nations housing staff work within culturally specific environments that require sensitivity to community customs and traditions. Balancing these cultural responsibilities alongside housing demands can add additional pressure to their roles.

Historical and systemic Challenges

Ongoing systemic inequalities and discrimination have contributed to socioeconomic challenges and barriers to services within many First Nations communities.

Recognizing the Signs and Causes of Burnout

Burnout is a common issue among First Nations housing staff and can show up through various signs of prolonged stress and exhaustion. Recognizing these signs is essential for addressing burnout effectively:

Signs

Emotional exhaustion: A feeling of emotional exhaustion and drained energy levels.

Negative workplace attitude: Developing dissatisfaction and disappointment with one's job.

Reduced performance: A decline in performance and productivity, marked by difficulty concentrating and meeting deadlines.

Overwhelm and overwork: Feeling overwhelmed by job demands, with tasks feeling unmanageable.

Loss of motivation: A decrease in enthusiasm and engagement in work-related activities.

Reduced personal accomplishment: A reduced sense of value and ability in fulfilling job responsibilities. While many stressors are external, staff may also experience internal pressures such as fear of failure, self-imposed expectations, or a loss of control.

Causes

Heavy workload: Managing excessive workloads, high caseloads, and tight deadlines can lead to feelings of overload.

Lack of resources: Working in resource-constrained environments, including limited funding and inadequate support services, can hinder the ability to meet housing needs.

Limited autonomy: Experiencing restricted decision-making authority can lead to frustration and a lack of control.

Unclear job roles: Facing uncertainty in job roles and expectations can contribute to uncertainty and stress.

Lack of recognition: Feeling undervalued and unappreciated can undermine morale and motivation.

Poor work-life balance: Struggling to maintain a healthy work-life balance, with long hours and limited relaxation time, can lead to burnout and fatigue.

MANAGERS ROLE IN ADDRESSING STRESS

By taking proactive steps, managers can create a workplace culture that protects staff well-being and reduces burnout. Leadership actions should focus on structural supports, fair workloads, and culturally grounded policies.

Here are some strategies managers can use to reach these goals.

Monitor workloads and scheduling

Regularly review and distribute workloads fairly to prevent overload and burnout. Ensure scheduling practices support reasonable work hours, adequate rest, and sustainable productivity.

Provide training and support

Offer training and professional development to help staff manage workloads, build resilience, and strengthen communication and stress-management skills. Provide practical tools and resources that support confidence and effectiveness in their roles.

Incorporate traditional practices and values

Encourage the integration of traditional practices and cultural values within the workplace, when appropriate. This may include honouring cultural events and creating space for traditional wellness activities. Embedding these practices strengthens identity, respect, and collective well-being.

Implement Cultural Leave Policies

Establish policies that allow employees to attend cultural events, ceremonies, and community engagements. Recognizing the importance of these practices supports belonging and cultural continuity in the workplace.

Ensure Access to Mental Health Supports

Provide clear, confidential access to mental health resources, including employee assistance programs (EAP), counseling services, or community-based supports. Communicate these services regularly and normalize help-seeking as part of a healthy workplace culture.

Integrate the Medicine Wheel in Wellness Practices

Incorporate the Medicine Wheel framework to promote holistic well-being. By recognizing the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health, managers can support balanced, culturally grounded approaches to staff wellness.



Showing Staff Appreciation

Appreciation strengthens morale, builds trust, and reinforces a sense of purpose. When staff feel valued, engagement and retention improve.

Here are several ways managers can show gratitude and recognition in the workplace:

Recognize individual contributions

Acknowledge the unique efforts and strengths of each team member, emphasizing their impact on the team's success.

Publicly celebrate achievement

Share staff achievements during team meetings, in newsletters, or on social media to highlight their accomplishments and create a culture of recognition.

Organize appreciation events

Plan events like team-building activities or retreats focused on showing appreciation for hard work and dedication.

Provide tangible tokens of appreciation

Give small gifts, awards, or handwritten notes to express gratitude for staff contributions.

Offer constructive feedback

Provide regular feedback to employees, recognizing their accomplishments while also guiding them for growth and improvement.

Support growth opportunities

Help staff develop their careers by offering training opportunities, mentorship programs, and pathways for professional advancement within the organization.

Strategies for Work-Life Balance

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential for long-term wellness. Practical strategies can help staff manage responsibilities while protecting personal time and energy.

Flexible work hours

Offer flexible work options, such as remote or hybrid arrangements, to meet the diverse needs of staff members.

Clear expectations

Clearly outline expectations about work hours, availability, and job responsibilities to ensure everyone understands their roles.

Encourage boundary setting

Motivate staff to set boundaries between work and personal life, such as turning off work notifications after hours, to protect their personal time.

Promote vacation use

Encourage employees to take their vacation days to rest and recharge.

Schedule regular check-ins

Have periodic check-ins with staff to discuss their workload and any challenges they may face, offering support and guidance when needed.

Lead by example

Model a healthy work-life balance by prioritizing self-care, taking breaks, and respecting personal boundaries, showing the team the importance of balance.





MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The tips and tools outlined in this guide support the mental health and wellness of First Nations housing staff. By prioritizing wellness, promoting work-life balance, and fostering a positive work environment, organizations can strengthen overall staff well-being.

A holistic approach that supports physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health is key to cultivating a healthy workplace.

It is important for First Nations housing staff to recognize that they are not alone; resources and support systems are available during challenging times. Encouraging open communication and sharing information about available supports can empower staff to seek help when needed.

This guide provides general information and is not a substitute for professional medical or mental health advice.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis or requires immediate assistance, please contact one of the mental health hotlines mentioned in this guide or seek help from a qualified healthcare professional. These hotlines offer confidential support, crisis intervention, and resources for individuals facing mental health challenges.

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line

1-855-242-3310
hopeforwellness.ca

Suicide Crisis Helpline

9-8-8
988.ca

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line

1-866-925-4419

MMIWG Support Line

844-413-6649

ACTION PLAN

Implementing a wellness guide requires planning and collaboration within the workplace. Below is a proposed implementation plan for any workplace seeking to use this guide:

1. Conduct a needs assessment

Perform an assessment to gauge the current state of staff well-being using surveys, interviews, or focus groups. Identify stressors, challenges, and areas for improvement.

2. Establish a wellness committee

Form a dedicated team committed to implementing the guide and ensuring its successful integration within the department or organization.

3. Customize the guide

Tailor the wellness guide to align with the specific needs and values of the community and department, ensuring accessibility and relevance to their experiences.

4. Provide training and capacity building

Offer training sessions to staff and managers on effectively utilizing the guide. Equip managers with the necessary knowledge and resources to support their teams.

5. Integration into policies

Incorporate the guide's practices into existing policies and staff training programs to ensure alignment with organizational goals.

6. Promotion

Use various communication channels (newsletters, meetings, email announcements) to introduce the guide and its benefits, ensuring visibility and awareness among staff.

7. Implement supportive strategies

Roll out supportive strategies outlined in the guide, such as regular check-ins, recognition programs, and opportunities for peer support. Foster a culture of openness and trust to demonstrate commitment to staff well-being.

8. Evaluation

Establish mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and feedback to gauge the guide's effectiveness, allowing for continuous improvement.

9. Continued support

Provide ongoing wellness support for staff, including refresher workshops and access to counseling services.

10. Sustainability

Develop a sustainability plan to ensure the long-term viability of initiatives. Implement processes for regular monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of practices over time.



By following this **action plan**, the organization can effectively utilize the wellness guide to support staff members and cultivate a healthier, more supportive work environment.

Methods for Assessing Impact

To assess the impact of the wellness guide and identify areas of success and improvement, staff can use the following methods.

Surveys

Conduct regular surveys to gather feedback from staff about their experiences with the guide, including questions about perceived improvements in well-being, the effectiveness of strategies, and areas for enhancement.

Focus groups

Organize focus group discussions to explore staff perceptions and experiences with the guide more deeply. Encourage open dialogue and constructive feedback to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Performance metrics

Track relevant performance metrics, such as absenteeism rates, productivity levels, and employee satisfaction scores, before and after implementing the guide. Compare these metrics to assess any changes or improvements over time.

Case studies

Develop case studies highlighting success stories and positive outcomes resulting from the implementation of the guide. Share these stories with staff to illustrate tangible benefits and encourage continued engagement.

Qualitative feedback

Encourage staff to provide qualitative feedback through suggestion boxes, one-on-one discussions with managers, or anonymous feedback channels. This feedback can offer valuable insights into individual experiences and perceptions.

Observations

Managers and supervisors can observe changes in staff behavior, morale, and team dynamics following the implementation of the guide. Look for signs of increased engagement, improved communication, and a more supportive work environment.



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