City of Hamilton
Human Resources

Hamilton

Maintaining Workplaces that Promote Mental Health and Wellbeing

Strategy and Guide for the City of Hamilton 2023-2026

May 2023

Workplace Mental Health: Why it Matters

In 2016, Senior Leadership Team and Hamilton City Council approved its first *Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy* along with a *Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy*. The strategy was updated in 2019 to address recommendations put forth by the organization's Workplace Mental Health Advisory Committee.

The goals of the strategy continue to guide our mental health programs:

1. Raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing and reduce stigma associated with mental illness

2. Provide people leaders with the skills, knowledge, tools and supports they need to create a workplace that supports positive mental health and wellbeing

3. Provide employees with the skills, knowledge, tools and supports they need to improve personal resilience and achieve optimal mental health and wellbeing

4. Create a sustainability plan

At the core of our strategy is a desire to help our employees achieve optimal mental health and wellbeing and foster psychological safety in our work and workplaces.

The strategy is also guided by these principles:

- The strategy and programs are based on evidence-based best practices

- The strategy aligns with our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility work

- Employee mental health and wellbeing is a key consideration in decision making

- Everyone in the workplace has a role to play in creating and maintaining a workplace that promotes mental health and wellbeing

- Each employee has responsibility for their health and behaviour

- Creating a workplace that supports mental health and wellbeing is only possible if aligned with our Culture Pillars

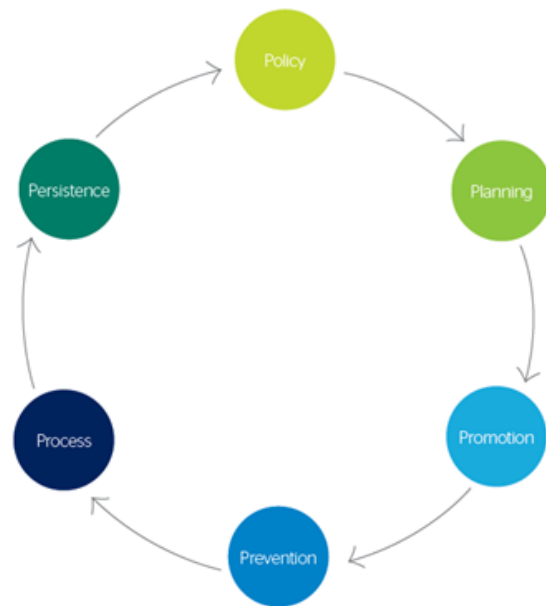- Sensitive employee health information will remain confidential

Our strategy is aligned with the elements outlined in the *National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace*. The standard is a set of guidelines, tools & resources focused on promoting employees' psychological health and preventing psychological harm due to workplace factors.

Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing: A Framework for Change

To assist in our efforts in creating workplaces that promote mental health and wellbeing, we adopted the framework from the *Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers (2012).* This guide, created by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, identifies actions an employer can take to enhance and protect employee psychological health and safety based on 6 key elements.

In 2019, the Workplace Mental Health Action Committee (WMHAC) provided SLT with recommendations based on assessing our progress in meeting the requirements of the *P6 Framework*. In response, SLT supported taking specific actions that formed the Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2021.

P6 Framework

P6 Framework Components	Accomplishments
Policy Commitment by organizational leadership to enhance psychological health and safety through workplace interventions • Obtain endorsement from our senior management team • Establish an advisory committee to guide strategy development, implementation and evaluation • Develop and communicate the policy to all employees	• Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy approved by SLT and Council in 2016. • Workplace Mental Health Action Committee established in 2017, composed of stakeholders from across the organization including departmental and union leadership and Human Resources. • Policy posted on eNET, HOWI and communicated via newsletters, Wellness Roadshow talks and training sessions across City.
Planning Determination of key psychological health indicators across the organization, selection of actions, and specification of objectives. • Gather the facts by looking at all sources of employee data • Survey our employees to get their feedback and ideas • Measure readiness to change for all workplace parties	• Consolidated and analyzed yearly employee data from our benefits provider, Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) provider, long-term disability cases, short-term disability and workers' compensation claims. • Our People Survey (OPS) launched in 2017 measures the prevalence of employees who are dealing with mental health issues and monitors their perception of the City's support in creating a psychologically healthy and safe workplace; employees are asked a series of evidence-based questions as part of the City's survey.
Promotion Actions taken to promote the general psychological health of the workforce.	• Provided targeted workshops requested by department leadership, departmental wellness committees, Return to Work Services and others.

P6 Framework Components	Accomplishments

• Build employee resilience through workshops and self-help resources
• Create respectful workplaces
• Enhance mental health knowledge
	• Highlighted wellness resources/services in supervisor training, monthly newsletters, Corporate New Employee Orientation, team meetings, other workshops (e.g. The Working Mind, Mental Health@Work Leadership Certificate Training Program, Chronic Pain Self Management Program, Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training), health and safety events, departmental events (e.g. recognition days, team building events, wellness events).
	
	• Resources include:
	  ▪ LifeSpeak (Provides personal and workplace health and wellness topics via videos, tip sheets, podcasts, web chats, and more.)
	  ▪ Homeweb (our EFAP website)
	  ▪ Our internal Shifting Minds video-based campaign focusing on how employees think about themselves and others and how to seek the required support they need. * Respect * Rethink * Reconnect * Renew * Resources
	  ▪ ResilentME online program from the Public Sector Health & Safety Association
	  ▪ Webinars and talks from the Canadian Mental Health Association
	  ▪ BounceBack, Wellness Together, MindBeacon: provides free counselling and resources
	
	• Leaders are provided with a Mental Health Toolkit that identifies resources to help deal with situations in the workplace that could contribute to stress and poor performance such as workplace stressors, relationship building, communication (difficult conversations, discussing sensitive topics), managing workload, priorities, poor performance, bullying (co-worker, interpersonal conflict (defusing situations). The tool kit has prominence under People Leader Resources in Howi. Any upcoming redesign of the website will ensure that the tool kit remains a highlighted resource for leaders.
	
	• Mental health promotion and stigma reduction campaigns were held annually in May and October with visible SLT participation. SLT also ensures that messages to their department emphasize employee mental health and well-being. It was often a topic at departmental meetings and events. The City Manager provided messages in support of employee mental health during these campaigns and throughout the year. Key messaging includes the importance of all employees monitoring their mental health and wellbeing and accessing the resources and services when needed.
	
	• Corporate Communications included workplace mental health in its communication channels, to ensure that mental health and wellbeing resources are known and easy to find. Areas on eNet and Howi are dedicated to these internal and external resources. Examples of such resource areas include:
	  ▪ Employee-Managing Stress& Anxiety; Resilience; Workplace Balance; Parenting; Working from Home
	  ▪ Leader-Transitioning Back to Work; Leading a Remote Workforce; Leading through Crisis and Change, Maximizing Team Performance; Recognizing Employees

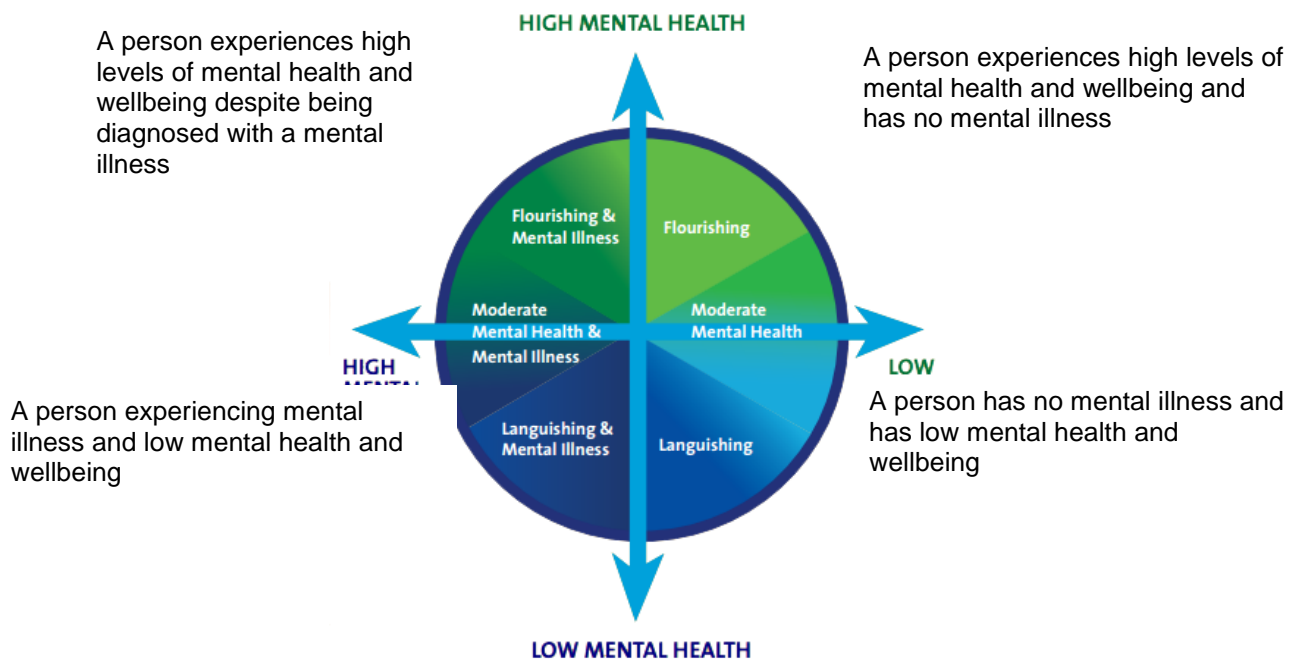| P6 Framework Components	Accomplishments
Prevention	
Actions taken to prevent the occurrence of significant psychological problems or mental disorders – may occur at the primary, secondary or tertiary level. • Use a mental health and wellbeing lens for job design and employee selection • Provide stress management training to all employees • Support work-home balance through policies and procedures • Provide manager training on workplace mental health • Provide early intervention through employee and family assistance program • Support staying at work strategies to keep employees with mental health issues actively at work • Ensure access to psychological treatment when appropriate • Provide coordinated disability management to support employees off work and in their return to work	• Mental health and wellbeing considerations are incorporated into change management training and processes; resources are allocated to mitigate mental health hazards associated with workplace change. • For example, employee mental health and wellbeing was a key consideration in the Hamilton@Work COVID-19 RECOVERY: Future Work Models & Return to the Workplace Strategy. The strategy recognized that all employees need support as the City transitioned to a return to the workplace and new work models. Leaders consider the health, safety and psychological well-being of staff both working on or off-site. • Human Resources examined current recruitment, job design and return-to-work processes and updated where applicable to include cognitive demands for many positions. Interview questions have been revised to ensure questions probe the ability to manage cognitive demands where applicable. Return to Work Services assesses cognitive demands, when required, during the return-to-work and accommodation processes. • The non-union, CUPE 5167 and Hamilton Fire benefit packages were redesigned in 2019 to offer improved access to psychological support by increasing the annual benefit amount from $100 to $1,000, removing the cap on per-session billing amounts and changing eligible services to include Clinical Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Psychotherapist, or Social Worker. The use of this benefit by staff and eligible dependents has increased yearly. A redesign of the non-union benefits plan was launched in January 2023 allowing more flexibility to allocate benefit allowances. • 147 employees were provided access to specialized depression (124) and trauma (23) services over the past 5 years through our EFAP provider. • All members of SLT have completed leadership mental health training. New members of SLT will be registered in a program as required. • 580 people leaders completed the Mental Health@Work Certificate Training provided through Queen's University and Mourneau Shepell (now LifeWorks) since this training was made available in 2014. • To date approximately 200 leaders and 600 employees have completed The Working Mind (TWM). Sessions are ongoing through 2023 • Hamilton Paramedic Services and the Hamilton Fire Department implemented Road to Mental Readiness training for first responders to their staff. Hamilton Paramedic Services (HPS) management and worker representatives jointly developed a peer-to-peer critical incident support team and program. The team will respond quickly to support paramedics who have been exposed to traumatic events or ongoing work-related stress. Paramedics and Firefighters were also provided

P6 Framework Components	Accomplishments
	with access to psychological supports through enhancements to the EFAP and other services. • A working group is developing policies that will cover expectations for the public and staff behaviour in our workplaces and procedures to respond to acts of unwanted behaviour, harassment and violence. A new workplace harassment policy has been drafted and will be finalized in 2023. • Return to Work Services improved processes for early and safe return to work through coordinated disability management and psychological treatment.
Process	
Evaluation of implementation and results of actions taken to enhance psychological health and safety. • Plan an evaluation of the effectiveness of our interventions • Measure the implementation process to ensure programs are reaching employees • Measure short - and longer - term outcomes	• Undertook review to ensure that key indicators are incorporated into the questions within Our People survey (OPS). The content and design of the survey assesses key indicators of employee mental health and well-being. Resources are in place for leaders to help them respond to survey results for their teams. • Human Resources tracks the nature of illness and injury, where available, for short-term sick absences using disability management software and data from long-term disability benefits provider. • In 2020, Short-Term Disability claims analysis was piloted, and information was provided to work groups where the volume of mental health related absences was high. The data indicated that mental health was the leading cause of absences in 2020. This trend continues through 2022 and mental health continues to be the top diagnostic category of all long-term disability claims received by Manulife on behalf of the City.
Persistence	
Sustainment of effective actions in a process of continuous improvement. • Support champions and communities of practice • Create a culture of psychological safety • Conduct quality improvement cycles	• Continue review of questions and ensure that key indicators are incorporated into the questions within Our People survey (OPS) • Human Resources identifies best practices by continuing to benchmark with other municipalities through established networks like the Single-Tier Municipal Group and Association of Municipalities of Ontario. A survey was undertaken in 2020 and 2022 that identified that our programming and priorities are in line with other similar employers. There is consistency across employers as we are all following the national standards for workplace mental health. • Corporate workplace wellness and mental health committee to remain in place and meet quarterly; mental health and wellness champions continue to be recruited and supported.

At this point, our strategy is moving from creating to maintaining workplaces that promote mental health and wellbeing (*Persistence* in the P6 Framework*)* by building on the programs, policies and practices that have been established and adding new initiatives and enhancements that address gaps and emerging issues.

What Do We Know?

Mental health is fundamental to overall health and wellbeing.

Good mental health allows an individual to cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and contribute to their workplace and community (adapted from World Health Organization). Good mental health makes us more resilient to everyday stresses and hardships and can help to reduce the risk of developing or worsening mental health problems and illnesses. When someone develops a mental health illness, they can still achieve good mental health and recovery with the right supports. The absence of mental illness does not imply the presence of mental health, or vice versa (Corey Keyes, Mental Health Continuum – see diagram below). Complete mental health means both flourishing and being free of mental illness. States other than complete mental health have been associated with limitations in activities of daily living, missed days of work, physical conditions, and greater use of acute health care services and prescription medication. (H. Gilmour, Health Analysis Division at Statistics Canada)

A person experiences high levels of mental health and wellbeing despite being diagnosed with a mental illness

A person experiences high levels of mental health and wellbeing and has no mental illness

A person experiencing mental illness and low mental health and wellbeing

A person has no mental illness and has low mental health and wellbeing

The goal is to promote mental health and prevent mental illness. There is no health without mental health.

A workplace that supports mental health and wellbeing:

- Integrates mental health into everyday practices
- Provides a respectful, supportive and receptive environment for employees
- Provides mental health and wellbeing promotion, prevention and anti-stigma initiatives
- Implements policies and practices to deal with bullying and harassment related issues
- Provides training for management
- Provides employee assistance programs

- Continues to evaluate and evolve business practices to reflect employee needs and wellness issues

Positive mental health improves the quality of life and is integral to overall health and well-being. There is growing recognition that improving the state of mental well-being for the whole population brings social and economic benefits to society. Since most people of working age spend a great part of their time at work, the role of the workplace in promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental illness is vital.

Mental illness affects all Canadians.

At some point in our lifetime, either directly or indirectly, or through a family member, friend or colleague mental illness will affect us. In any given year, it is estimated that 1 in 5 people in Canada experiences a mental health problem. The total becomes about 1 in 3 if those suffering from addictions are included.

Manulife reported **depression is the #1 by occurrence and depression related drug claims #2** (2022). Depression combined with mental disorders accounts for 15% of the occurrences and depression related drugs are ranked #4 when considering the cost to the drug plan.

Mental illness and substance use disorders are the leading causes of disability in Canada. People with mental illness and substance use disorders are more likely to die prematurely than the general population. ***Mental illness can cut 10 to 20 years from a person's life expectancy (CAMH)***.

The disease burden of mental illness and substance use in Ontario is 1.5 times higher than all cancers put together and more than 7 times that of all infectious diseases. This includes years lived with less than full function and years lost to early death. It is estimated that 67,000 deaths per year are attributable to substance use in Canada. This includes:

- over 47,000 deaths attributable to tobacco, and

- nearly 15,000 deaths attributable to alcohol.

There were an estimated 14,700 opioid-related deaths in Canada between January 2016 and September 2019 (CAMH)

Employees with alcohol and drug problems can have a significant impact on the workplace and negatively impact attendance, performance, behavior and safety. Furthermore, given that human rights legislation includes drug and alcohol dependencies within the meaning of disability under the Human Rights Code, employers have a legal obligation to accommodate these disabilities within their organization. The duty to accommodate requires employers to make every reasonable effort, short of undue hardship to the business, to accommodate an employee with a disability within the workplace — and this includes both drug and alcohol dependency. The duty requires a search for a "reasonable" accommodation that allows the employee to be a productive employee and safely engage in meaningful work. Such accommodations at The City could consist of but are not necessarily limited to: referral to an inpatient addiction program at Homewood Health, monitored return to work, relapse prevention support, or moving the employee to a different position (perhaps with less responsibility), or modification of the employee's schedule. Although challenging, the goal is to find the balance between the

rights of the employee and the ability of the employer to carry out its intended business without undue hardship.

In Canada, it is estimated that approximately 21% of the population (about 6 million people) will meet the criteria for addiction in their lifetime (CAMH). Last year (2022) eight (8) employees were admitted to the inpatient addiction program at Homewood Health. Most addiction sufferers hide their drug use from employers and coworkers, but there can be signs to suggest a problem. The City has multiple approaches to identifying and assisting employees with addiction issues through policies, training, educational talks and newsletters. The City has staff (such as RTW Services, Human Rights Services, and HSW Specialists) available to assist the workplace and individual staff with mental illness and addiction issues.

Due to its prevalence, mental illness is one of the most pervasive and difficult workplace issues faced by employers today.

Cost of ignoring workplace mental health issues:

As part of the initial development of our strategy, City of Hamilton leadership met with Dr. Linda Duxbury, a leading researcher on employee well-being and mental health, and work–life balance. Dr. Duxbury and senior leadership discussed the potential costs to the organization associated with poor employee mental heath that can result in:

- Increased absenteeism
- Poorer physical health
- Greater use of our health care system
- Greater use of prescription drugs
- Higher benefits costs
- Declines in creativity and innovation
- Lower levels of commitment and job satisfaction
- Higher intent to turnover
- Loss of talent, expertise and related expenses to training replacements
- Recruitment and retention problems
- Overtaxing internal services and supports (i.e. Return to Work Services, Labour Relations, Health & Safety, Leader workload, associated team workload due to absent team member)
- Reputation of the City

Key Mental Health Workplace Supports: Overview

The *Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* resulted in new and enhanced resources, supports, programs and initiatives that provide a solid foundation for a workplace that supports employee mental health and well-being. These include:

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy**: The purpose of this policy is to establish and maintain progressive workplace practices that promote positive mental health and wellbeing of all employees.
    - o **Other policies supporting workplace mental health:**
        - Violence and harassment prevention policies
        - Flexible work arrangements including telecommuting
   - Disconnecting from Work Policy

- **Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)**: Homewood Health offers an integrated service encompassing a variety of programs that offer cognitive behavioural therapy (e.g. marital, relationship, stress, depression, anxiety, addictions, life transitions, grief, etc.), and Life Smart Coaching™ targeting a wide range of everyday challenges in areas such as finance, legal, nutrition, holistic medicine, elder care, smoking cessation, retirement, career development and more. The service is free and confidential (24/7) for employees and their dependent family members.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
EFAP Utilization Rate (%)	15%	16%	17%	15%	14%	14%	12%
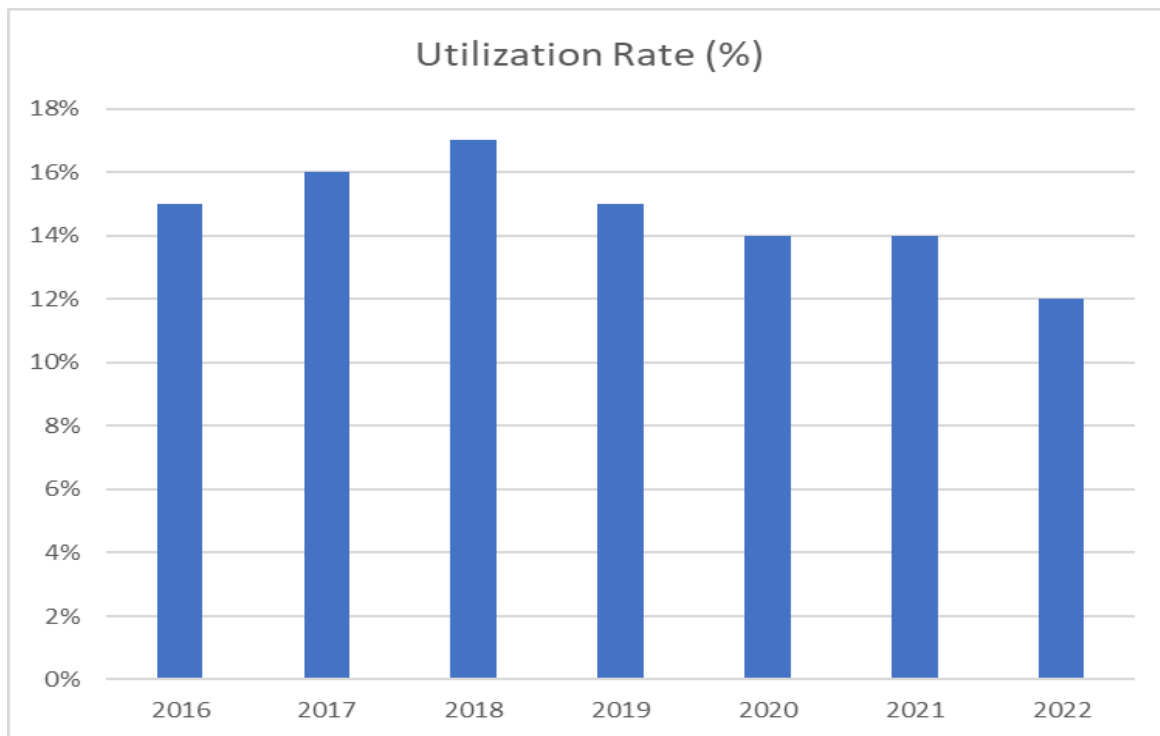
Reason for EFAP Counselling Cases 2016-2022

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Mental Health	43%	40%	46%	55%	58%	58%	43%
Relationships	24%	25%	21%	18%	16%	16%	21%
Family Concerns	13%	16%	14%	9%	8%	10%	10%
Work	10%	8%	10%	9%	8%	8%	10%
Crisis/Trauma	2%	4%	3%	3%	5%	5%	6%
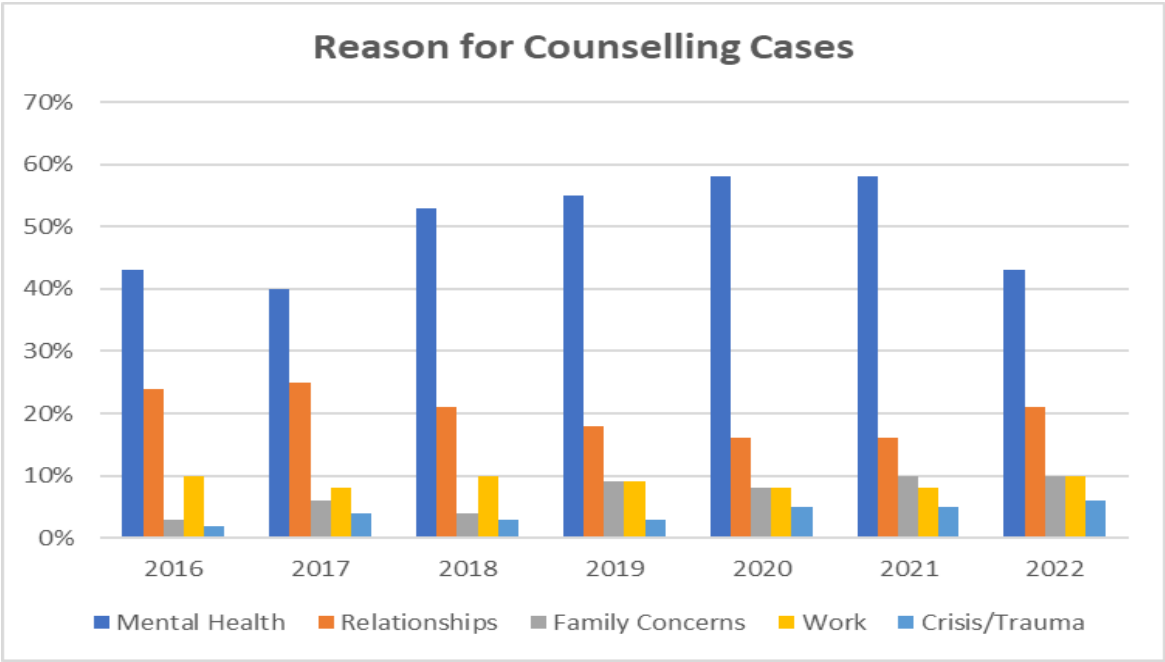
Reason for EFAP Life Smart Services 2016-2022

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Legal	41%	48%	55%	51%	54%	43%	43%
Nutrition	16%	9%	16%	6%	9%	17%	9%
Child/Eldercare	10%	10%	8%	7%	8%	4%	7%
Financial	8%	9%	12%	8%	6%	4%	7%
Career Coaching	9%	8%	5%	8%	8%	9%	5%

Reason for Life Smart Services
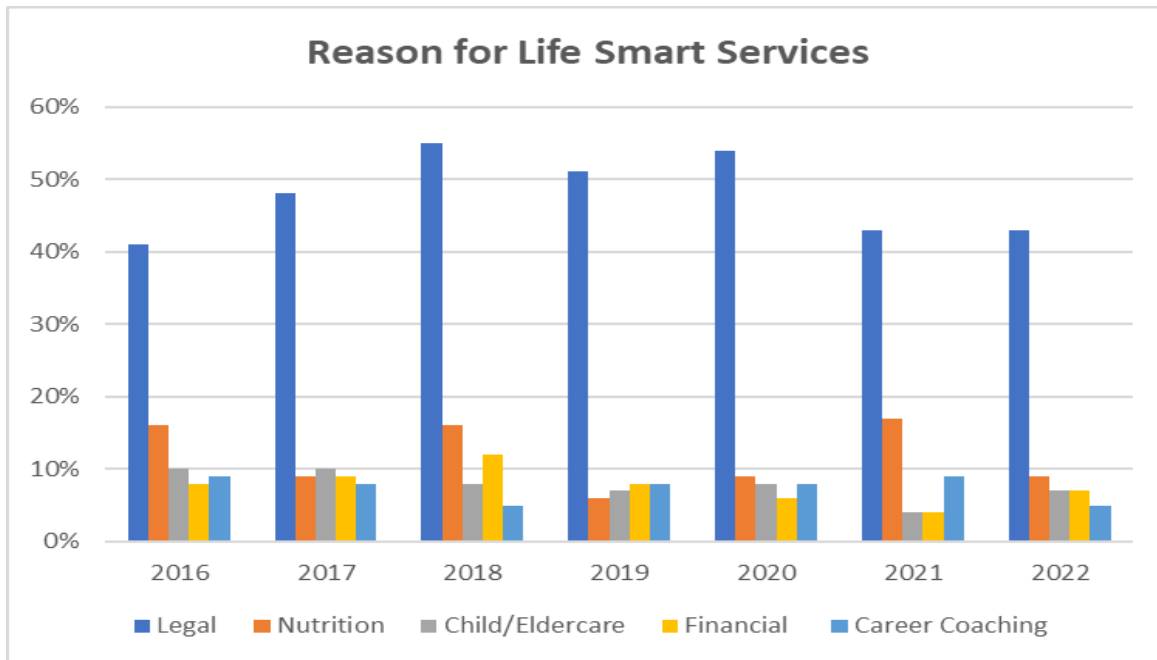
Additional Services provided by Homewood Health include: Depression Care; Trauma Care; Fitness to Work Evaluation; Key Person Advice Line; Substance Abuse Assessment and Treatment.

- **LifeSpeak On Demand**: This web-based program is an expert-led online streaming video resource dealing with a wide variety of health, family, eldercare, personal growth and development, and work-life balance topics. Employees and their families can access the support they need to overcome hurdles and accomplish goals.

  A good example of matching the needs of staff to just-in-time supports is the ongoing strong usage of LifeSpeak On Demand. This resource is highlighted in much of our communication to staff. Employees are engaged with the program and are accessing the content. The following is usage data for 2022:

LifeSpeak Category/Topic	Number of Users
Personal and professional development	1,677
Resilience and mindfulness	471
Mental health	296
Diversity, equity, and inclusion	116
Physical Health	88
Relationships	41
Financial Health	36
Parenting and Eldercare	34
Question of the Week	15
Total	2,774

- o Top 5 modules accessed:

    1. The Leader as Coach
    2. Conflict Management 101
    3. Building Engagement and Motivation in Your Team
    4. Productivity Strategies I
    5. Navigating Difficult Conversations

- **Mental Health@Work Certificate Training for Leaders:** This certificate program was arranged through Queen's University and Mourneau Shepell (now LifeWorks) and aligns with the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace. This progressive program teaches practical, empathetic and solution-focused leadership skills for managing performance and promoting workplace mental health. The program helps leaders better understand mental illness, poor mental health, stigma surrounding mental illness and its effect on individuals and workplace culture. Over the course of three modules, participants explore the business case for mental health in the workplace while improving their understanding of relevant legal, ethical and business concerns. A primary objective of this training is to increase employees' comfort level in discussing mental illness and give them the skills to improve their mental health and support each other. Since the program began at The City, 580 leaders have completed certificate training.

- **Manager's Workplace Mental Health Toolkit:** A resource for leaders that identifies available resources to help them deal with situations in the workplace that could contribute to stress and poor performance. The topics include:

  o Workplace Stress
  o Relationship Building
  o Communication (difficult conversations, discussing sensitive topics)
  o Managing workload, priorities, poor performance
  o Bullying (co-worker)
  o Interpersonal Conflict (defusing situations)
  o Managing a hybrid team

- **The Working Mind:** A training program focused on reducing stigma and increasing resiliency in employees and leaders. This training program helps everyone better understand mental illness, poor mental health and stigma. The goal of the employee session is to give practical knowledge of mental health and mental illness so staff can improve their understanding of their own mental health status, reduce stigma and negative attitudes towards people with mental health problems in the workplace, support their colleagues with mental health problems and improve their own mental health and resilience. The people leader session covers the content of the employee session as well as practical knowledge for people leaders to support the mental health and wellbeing of their employees, ensure a workplace climate that is respectful and inclusive and encourage people to seek help for mental health problems.

- **Chronic Pain Support Program:** For employees who live with chronic or ongoing physical and/or mental pain. The program provides the opportunity to learn new ways to live with chronic pain and improve the quality of life on and off the job. Staff who attended the program in the past found the discussion, tips and skills valuable for their own self-care. The program topics cover what to do when:

  o You have difficulty sleeping and feel worn out
  o You feel closed off from others
  o You feel like pain is controlling your life
  o Other discussions include: The Pain & Symptom Cycle, pacing, exercising, relaxation, action plans, problem solving, healthy eating, depression, positive thinking, working with health
  o 101 employees have participated in this program since 2014

- **Resiliency workshops:** Resiliency is a multi-faceted skill set that includes internal dialogue, past and present experiences, home and work environments, learning from past mistakes and successes, mental and physical health and the list goes on. Everyone is unique in their personal strengths and vulnerabilities when coping with every day challenges. Resiliency skill building is offered through a variety of formats, such as workshops, videos, newsletters, tip sheets, and counselling. By embracing a culture of psychological health and safety in the workplace, we are preventing mental health injuries and promoting a work environment that supports employee mental health and resiliency.

- **Respectful Workplace:** Respect in the workplace training is offered through a variety of formats, such as workshops, videos, newsletters, tip sheets, and counselling. A respectful workplace is supported by policies, campaigns and training.

- **Critical Incident Peer Support team:** Critical incidents are traumatic events that are sudden, unexpected and personally distressing. As an aspect of creating and maintaining a safe, supportive and healthy workplace, The City of Hamilton supports a Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) Team. The City is committed to providing an immediate, organized and professional response to critical incidents in the workplace using trained City employees who provide support to affected peers and teams. Interventions are designed to reduce negative cognitive, emotional and physiological symptoms. CIPS members hold international credentials to provide defusing and debriefing sessions to mitigate the impact of events, help to accelerate the recovery process and provide education. The CIPS Team provides additional wellness resources, information about critical incident stress to employees, and enhances awareness and education of the team's role.

CIPS Callouts				
2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
27	22	3	14	19

- **Non-violent Crisis Intervention training**: This training focuses on the prevention of violence in the workplace and offers proven strategies for safely defusing anxious, hostile, or violent behaviour at the earliest possible stage. It provides employees with a safe way to resolve situations when confronted by anxious, hostile or violent behaviour, while still protecting the important relationships with those in their care. To date 731 employees have attended this training.

- **Shifting Minds (anti-stigma campaign)**: This campaign's objective is to help reduce the stigma around workplace mental health by encouraging conversation and self-reflection. There is a focus on how employees think about themselves and others and how employees seek required support. The campaign includes a video format that focuses on five areas:
  - Respect
  - Rethink
  - Reconnect
  - Renew
  - Resources

- **Workplace Mental Health Advisory Committee (WMHAC)**: This committee was established to guide the implementation and evaluation of the Workplace Mental Health Strategy and aims to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health by encouraging conversations and self-reflections in the workplace. The committee's priorities include:

  1. Support and contribute to the City's aim of providing a mentally healthy and supportive environment for all employees by reinforcing the Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy in everyday activities as well as being an active representative of the Policy's principles
  2. Actively engage in policy and strategy development, data generation, planning and evaluation
  3. Champion positive mental health and well-being in their workplaces and groups
  4. Act as a liaison for two-way communication between the Committee and the employees they represent, including departmental wellness committees
  5. Take reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing
  6. Assist with the selection of appropriate evaluation tools
  7. Guide, support and promote the implementation plan for the P6 framework Make recommendations on progressing the Workplace Mental Health Strategy

- **Job Design**: Identification of cognitive demands for job positions (return to work, job assessments, interviews)

- **Our People Survey (OPS)**: This survey includes questions that gauge the impact of the workplace and work on employees' mental health. The survey measures the prevalence of employees who are dealing with mental health issues and their perception of the City's support in creating a psychologically healthy and safe workplace. Employees are asked a series of evidence-based questions that align with the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety framework: Questions covered include:

  o Supervisor Support
  o Workload Manageability
  o Fair Distribution of Workload
  o Inappropriate Behaviors Not Tolerated
  o Importance of Mental Health

Overall, the City had positive results in the areas related to Health, Safety and Wellness. The index average was 73.4% for Psychological Health. The overall Psychological Health Wellness score is based on the average of the following four (4) statements:

  1. Overall, I feel physically safe at work
  2. Work is distributed fairly within my work area/team
  3. My direct supervisor(s) would be supportive if I were dealing with personal or family issues
  4. Overall, I feel psychologically safe at work (e.g. safe from psychological or emotional harm)

The results indicate that most respondents feel positive about Health, Safety and Wellness at the City of Hamilton.

- **Corporate Wellness Newsletter**: Communication throughout the year pertaining to service provider services, resources, events, training and more. Mental health promotion and stigma reduction campaigns are also held annually in May and October.

Key Considerations

The following factors have been identified as impacting overall employee health and present opportunities to develop new approaches and resources as part of our strategy moving forward.

1. **Stigma and discrimination persist**

Stigmatization associated with mental illness may prevent employees from seeking medical treatment and, in the workplace, the fear of being ostracized may deter employees from seeking accommodation.

More than 2 in 5 Canadians believe that their career options would be limited if they had a mental health issue, and their workplace was aware (LifeWorks-The Mental Health Index, Dec. 2021).

In a 2019 survey of working Canadians:

- 75% of respondents said they would be reluctant – or would refuse – to disclose a mental illness to an employer or co-worker.

- *Respondents were nearly 3 times less likely to want to disclose a mental illness like depression than a physical one like cancer.*

- Top reasons for this reluctance were:
    - the belief that there is stigma around mental illness,
    - not wanting to be treated differently or judged, and
    - being afraid of negative consequences, such as losing one's job.

- However, 76% of respondents stated that they themselves would be completely comfortable with and supportive of a colleague with a mental illness (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health)

2. **Respectful relationships are essential to the organization's bottom line**

In a 2022 survey of 3000 Canadians by LifeWorks -The Mental Health Index, co-worker relationships are contributing to the effort employees put into their work:

- 25% of respondents indicated that relationships with co-workers most positively impact the effort given to their work.

- 15% of respondents indicated their mental health and wellbeing positively impacts the effort given to their work, and 12% indicated the relationship with their manager has the most positive impact on their work effort.

3. **The mental health of Canadian workers is heavily impacted by how well they trust their employer**

- 1 out of 5 Canadians believe trust between employees and their employer has decreased compared to before the pandemic. Additionally, those who report a decline also have the lowest mental health score, more than eight points below the national average.

- Nearly half (46%) of those who report a decline in trust cite a change in workplace culture as the top reason, followed by perceived changes in the handling of employee wellbeing support (43%) and communication (30%).

- Higher mental health scores are among those who report improved trust.

- 11% of respondents indicate the level of recognition received most positively impacts the effort given to their work.

4. **Covid-19 affected employee mental health**

The pandemic resulted in many changes for employees and our community. Notably, a negative impact on employee mental health and overall wellbeing.

Mental health/illness continued to be the most frequent diagnostic category, representing 40% of all disability claims. This percentage was slightly above the industry comparison group at 38%. LTD mental health claims (38%) were attributed to a primary diagnosis of depression. (Refer to HUR22003)

The City noted a dramatic increase in accessing health and wellbeing training for mental health, physical conditions, stress management and parenting issues in the first year of the pandemic. (Refer to HUR21001/FCS21026, 2020)

The impact of the pandemic on our mental health and overall wellbeing will be a key factor for employers to consider in their strategic business practices for years to come.   "Today's workplace is being tested. The data shows how critically important it is for organizations to be intentional about making employee wellness a priority, and to be mindful of the relationship between culture and employee trust (TELUS Health Chief Operating Officer, Michael Dingle, The Mental Health Index Report, 2022)."

It is important to recognize the impact of the extended period of pandemic restrictions, changes to work and home routines, and isolation has had on the mental health and well-being of our employees. At the end of 2021, the mental health of the population (Canadian workers) was equal to the most distressed 4% of the pre-pandemic benchmark population. This negative mental health trend continued throughout 2022, with employees still reporting they are experiencing increasing strain resulting in unfavorable mental health scores (LifeWorks, The Mental Health Index, Nov. 2022). Staff at all levels of the organization have experienced anxiety and stress and continue to need support to respond positively to challenges at work and at home. Continued supports are critical as we move into our recovery plan. (Refer to HUR21013)

5. Leaders are a vulnerable group

The mental health scores of managers have been lower than non-managers and lower than the overall Canadian average (LifeWorks-The Mental Health Index-2021 year in review).

- Nearly half of managers would feel more negatively about themselves if they had a mental health issue, compared to a third of non-managers.

- Managers are more likely to report an improved relationship with their work peers and with their leaders compared to nonmanagers.

- Managers are nearly 40% more likely to report increased job stress than non-managers.

- Managers are more than 70% more likely than non-managers to have concerns about their mental health and their ability to cope or indicate that they feel in crisis.

6. Employees who are also parents are an at-risk group

Parents are nearly twice as likely as non-parents to report that the COVID-19 pandemic has a negative impact on their mental health (LifeWorks-The Mental Health Index-2021 year in review).

Parents report more substance use than non-parents and indicate an impact on their work and home lives.

- Nearly 1 in 5 parents are concerned for the mental health of their child(ren).

- 64% of parents work when feeling unwell at least one day per week compared to 36% of non-parents.

- Parents are more than 40% more likely than non-parents to report wanting flexibility in work location and 30% more likely to report wanting flexibility in work hours.

- Parents are more than 50% more likely than non-parents to be in crisis or to have concerns about their ability to cope (LifeWorks-The Mental Health Index-2021 year in review).

Moving Forward

Our organizational culture must support open and frank discussions about the mental health needs of the workforce while they are at work; no amount of allocated days off or other approaches will truly impact the workforce in any meaningful way without staff seeing leaders actively committing to a healthier workplace environment and those strategies embedded in everyday business practices.

From Janette Smith, City Manager

> "…As we continue to work hard to provide important services to our community, I want to make sure we're also taking care of ourselves. Please continue to pay attention to your own mental and physical health needs as you move through your work days, balance family obligations, etc.

Here are some tips for staying well that I personally find important:

- *Staying physically active.* Finding ways to move and keep active at home and outside while still maintaining physical distancing
- *Eating well.* Cooking healthy meals at home or supporting our local restaurants by ordering meals for curbside pickup, take out or delivery
- *Staying connected.* Using our technology to maintain important social connections
- *Taking some downtime.* Making sure that when you're not working, you're getting rest, enjoying your favourite activities that support your relaxation, etc.

If things start to feel overwhelming, just a reminder that there are resources that can help. …Let's take good care of ourselves first and foremost so that we can continue to support one another and our community as we move through this challenging time together."

Comments from LifeWorks global leader and senior vice president, research and total wellbeing, Paula Allen, The Mental Health Index, 2022:

"…, we have clearly seen that employees who work for organizations that support employee mental health, have better mental health scores than employees who work for organizations that do not. The support includes the provision and promotion of mental health services, but the current data clearly shows that workplace culture also plays a strong role…that starts with awareness and leader training."

The **Workplace Mental Health Strategy** was developed to address mental health in the workplace. At work, mental health issues can significantly decrease a worker's productivity, increase absenteeism and negatively impact the organization's culture, reputation and bottom line. As a result, such impacts must be addressed with a view to mitigating factors contributing to mental health issues.

As we worked through the Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and created a foundation for a workplace that supports employee mental health and wellbeing, the focus now is on *Persistence*: reinforcing and embedding the outcomes from the previous cycle, while looking for opportunities for continuous improvement.

As we move forward into the stage of *Persistence*, we are focusing on the following areas:

Embedding the Strategy into Our Culture

Living this strategy daily is critical in improving the overall health of employees, facilitating healthy and safe returns to work, and ensuring that both physical and psychological health and safety are taken into consideration.

Initiatives	Actions	Evaluation Method	Indicators of Success
Update the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy	In 2023: • Update the policy to reflect our current state and best practices • Obtain SLT and Council approval • Communicate to staff	• HSW team to confirm the document is updated to reflect our current state and best practices through research and discussion with other municipalities	• Policy is reviewed, updated and approved by SLT and Council • Updated policy document is communicated to staff
Evaluate hybrid work models that allow working from home arrangements	During 2023-2025: • Include in Our People Survey (OPS) • Provide recommendations	• Add questions pertaining to the impact of work from home arrangement on employees in OPS • Human Resources to identify best practices by continuing to benchmark with other municipalities through established networks like the Single-Tier Municipal Group and Association of Municipalities of Ontario	• Questions pertaining to work from home arrangements are added to OPS • Confirm and identify best practices by benchmarking with other municipalities • Use the results of OPS and benchmarking to inform next steps on work from home arrangement and related supports
Keep positive mental health and wellbeing at top of employee's mind	During 2023-2026: • Create monthly Mental Health Moments • Align communications with national mental health awareness days/weeks/months	• Track "hits" on eNET and HOWI monthly mental health communication • Track any comments from staff pertaining to mental health communications	• "Mental Health Moments" communication is implemented each month in alignment with national communication awareness events • Tracking "hits" • Tracking anecdotal comments
Enhance supports by incorporating Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA)	During 2023-2026: • Remove barriers to access • Provide culturally appropriate initiatives and communication • Engage equity-deserving groups	• Engagement surveys • Meetings with diverse groups • Program review	• Access to resources by equity-deserving groups • Changes that removed barriers to programs
Integrate strategy into a broader Employee Wellness Strategy	During 2023-2024: • Establish Workplace a Wellness Advisory Committee • Create a wellness strategy • SLT approval is received.	• Establish a committee composed of stakeholders from across the organization including departmental and union leadership and Human Resources • Develop a wellness strategy and present to SLT for feedback and approval	• Committee is established and meeting quarterly • Wellness strategy is approved by SLT

Leadership Support

Leadership is expected to model and support these activities daily through various modalities: team meetings, education, participation, active acknowledgement of mental health and wellbeing being a priority.

Initiatives	Actions	Evaluation Method	Indicators of Success
Create People Leader training	During 2023-2025: • Deliver Mental Health Leadership Certificate Program • Continue The Working Mind (TWM) program • Create new modules delivered through the Learning Management System platform	• Track the number of employees and leaders participating in training • Track new learning modules that are created • Elicit feedback on training through a survey	• New learning are modules created • Working group is created to determine best practices for evaluating the effectiveness of training
Develop supports for mental health-related action plans arising from Our People Survey	During 2023-2024: • Review the action plans • Identify common challenges and opportunities • Create new tools and resources to assist teams in meeting goals of their action plans	• Track the number of supports developed related to OPS review • A comparison of subsequent OPS results will provide an indicator of ongoing and new successes/challenges/ trends	• Action plans are reviewed • Challenges and opportunities are identified • Supports are developed and tracked for yearly comparison of trends in challenges/improvements

Employee Accountability

Staff are accountable for taking advantage of supports available to ensure workplace wellness is a key priority for themselves and their coworkers.

Initiatives	Actions	Evaluation Method	Indicators of Success
Raise awareness of supports available to employees with caregiver responsibilities	During 2023: • Identify supports available through existing workplace policies, leaves, Employee & Family Assistance Program and other sources • Create an awareness package	• Develop a metric to capture staff awareness of the supports available to them	• Awareness supports are developed • Awareness supports distributed 4 times per year • Working group is created to determine best practice for evaluating effectiveness of training
Increase knowledge of de-escalation techniques	During 2024-2025: • Promote Non-violence Crisis Intervention training • Augment with new customized program that can be delivered with shorter duration	• Track the number of participates • Develop a survey to determine the effectiveness of training	• Customized in-house program is developed • Customized in-house program is implemented • Track the number of sessions • Working group is created to determine best practices for evaluating effectiveness of training

Update the existing Zero Tolerance Program	During 2023-2024: • Re-establish an advisory group • Develop a program applicable to staff and public • SLT and Council approval is received. • Communicate to staff and public	• Monitor the number of violations of this policy	• New workplace harassment policy is finalized • Revised program and communication strategy is finalized. • Checklists are implemented that staff can use to assess their individual and group respectfulness and civility in order to build better working relationships on their teams • Tracking system is developed and implemented to monitor number of violations

Facilitating Access to Key Resources			
Staff are made aware of resources through ongoing communication and provided with straightforward access to the resources when they need them.			
Initiatives	**Actions**	**Evaluation Method**	**Indicators of Success**
Centralize on-line resources	During 2023-2025: • Identify all online resources • Assemble in dedicated area(s)/platform(s) • Communicate availability to staff • Ensure resources are available for those employees without at-work computer access	• Completion of this task is confirmed	• On-line resources identified • On-line resources assembled in dedicated area(s)/platform(s) • Centralization communicated to employees quarterly • Working group established to determine how resources can reach employees without computer access
Develop guidance documents for stakeholders involved in current employee mental health disability management	During 2023-2025: • Create guidance documents to support management of mental health related absences and reduce time away from work • Identify opportunities to facilitate employee access to specialized care	• Confirm guidance documents are developed during the designated time period • Assess the efficacy of tools via survey to stakeholders involved in this process	• Best practices for employee mental health disability management are identified by benchmarking with other municipalities • Guidance documents are developed • Guidance documents are implemented • Working group is established to determine the process to assess the efficacy of new guidance documents– develop a survey
Research application of Peer Support resources into areas outside of current programs	• 2024-2026 • Review of Peer support programs in Hamilton Fire Department and Hamilton Paramedic Services • Identify opportunities to apply similar models to other workgroups	• Human Resources to identify best practices by continuing to benchmark with other municipalities through established networks like the Single-Tier Municipal Group and Association of Municipalities of Ontario	• Benchmarking with other municipalities is completed • Working group is established to determine next steps in developing and implementing peer support resources