

# Supporting Managers with Mental Health Training



## OVERVIEW

One of BC Hydro's priorities is supporting mental health in the workplace, and ensuring that a holistic view of health is woven into the overall workforce strategy. BC Hydro is raising awareness about mental health amongst employees and wants to ensure that managers feel well equipped to support their employees. BC Hydro is ensuring that their leaders understand the role they play in creating a psychologically healthy working environment. With this in mind, they have made the decision to provide training to their managers around mental health and supports in the workplace. They will continue to rely on employee feedback to understand how their strategy is working.

## OBJECTIVES

BC Hydro had a number of objectives for their mental health training:

1. Build awareness about how to support employees facing mental health concerns, and the various supports available to them.
2. They wanted to ensure that the majority of managers had access to and completed this training. This meant training had to be easily accessible.
3. Ensure that managers have a common understanding of mental health, and their role in creating a safe workplace – by giving managers the skills and tools to recognize when an employee is struggling. Bring common language to the discussion of mental health.
4. Encourage employees to reach out for support and reach out early.

## APPROACH

To meet their objective of ensuring the training was accessible to as many managers as possible, BC Hydro decided on 30 minute online training sessions. Their research suggested that it was more effective to involve more people in the dialogue, at least at first, rather than trying to go really deep with fewer people. Their initial approach to the training was as follows:

- Researching what options exist for mental health training and understanding what the organization has done around mental health in the past.
- Customizing the content to pertain specifically to BC Hydro.
- Communicating BC Hydro's focus on mental health to all staff.
- Offering the training and amending training as necessary to respond to feedback.

### Conducting Research

To understand the context they were working within, BC Hydro worked to understand what their employees had experienced around mental health awareness in the past. For managers who had been at BC Hydro for many years, they would have had exposure to various forms of training, and BC Hydro was keen to build upon this experience. In addition, BC Hydro wanted to understand what training was available in the marketplace, and what would work best for their context.

### Customizing Content

BC Hydro's Health and Recovery Team developed their own content through research, and also worked with their benefits provider, Sunlife, to revise some of their content and integrate it into what they developed internally. They customized the scenarios and revised the content to be less clinical. Stakeholders from the business, human resources and training all provided input into the content and structure of the course before it went live.

### Communication Campaign

To ensure that their employee base was aware of BC Hydro's focus on mental health, the Health and Recovery Services team worked with the Communications team to help spread the word. The communications campaign launched in May during Mental Health Week with the CEO writing an email to all employees about the importance of recognizing mental health in the workplace. Additional communications featured people profiles where employees shared their own stories about mental health struggles and recovery. Throughout the year, there has been monthly features on mental health that always link back to existing resources and supports like the Employee Family Assistance Program and this online training course.

### Rolling Out Training & Incorporating Feedback

BC Hydro's training for managers included:

- a. What does mental health look like in the workplace?
- b. How to pick up on signs that an employee might be dealing with mental health concerns.
- c. What supports are available to an employee dealing with mental health?



Once a manager completed the training, they took an online quiz to gauge their understanding of the content. This also helped BC Hydro quantify how many people took the training. BC Hydro proactively sought feedback on the training they rolled out, and made changes as a result. The feedback is captured under lessons learned.

## OUTCOMES

Currently, 418 employees have taken the training. A few BC Hydro employees chose to share their stories of mental health more widely. Having high performing employees share their story about struggling with mental health has helped bust myths about “who” has mental health challenges.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Through constantly seeking feedback, BC Hydro had a number of lessons learned during the rollout of the training:

### **People leaders are changing**

BC Hydro realized that because people leaders are changing constantly, it is important for the training to be offered constantly, and having it readily accessible for new people leaders, or those needing a refresher, is helpful in ensuring its success.

### **Collaboration is key with other departments**

BC Hydro found great success in working cross-departmentally on this initiative. As an example, the collaboration between the Communications Team, HR and the Recovery Team was critical in the rollout of the initiative. Also, in developing the course content, having a number of different reps from various parts of the business involved in testing the content was key to ensuring its relevance.

### **Offering the training beyond managers**

Some of the feedback BC Hydro received from its employee base is that they wanted access to the training as well. They decided to extend the online offering to any employee who wanted to take it, while ensuring there continues to be a focus on ensuring managers take it.

### **Training is just one component**

While the training is key to supporting managers to support their employees, it is also one component of a larger initiative, and needs to be supported with a variety of different tactics as part of an overall strategy.

### Timing is everything

BC Hydro assessed organizational readiness prior to rolling out this training, and found that to roll this out successfully, the organization needed to fully embrace this and be on board.

### NEXT STEPS

BC Hydro will move forward with their focus on mental health as a priority in the workplace. They want to work to continue to build manager and employee resilience in the topic of mental health. One of their next steps is launching a campaign on mindfulness, and the practice of it in the workplace. They will also be working on how to address mental health concerns in a proactive way. Lastly, they will be building mental health strategies into other areas of their work.