

# Prevention plans for psychosocial hazards



## What is a psychosocial hazard?

Psychosocial hazard means any factor or factors in any of the following:

- work design
- systems of work
- management of work
- carrying out of the work
- personal or work-related interactions

that may:

- arise in the working environment, and
- cause an employee to experience one or more negative psychological responses that create a risk to their health or safety.

### Examples of psychosocial hazards include:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Aggression or violence                  | • Low role clarity                      |
| • Bullying                                | • Poor environmental conditions         |
| • Exposure to traumatic events or content | • Poor organisational change management |
| • Gendered violence                       | • Poor organisational justice           |
| • High job demands                        | • Poor support                          |
| • Low job control                         | • Poor workplace relationships          |
| • Low job demands                         | • Remote or isolated work               |
| • Low recognition and reward              | • Sexual harassment                     |

This list is not exhaustive. If you identify another psychosocial hazard that may arise in the working environment, you have a duty to control the risks associated with that hazard.

Learn more about psychosocial hazards in the *Psychological health compliance code*.

# Prevention plans for psychosocial hazards

## How to develop a prevention plan

A prevention plan is a written record that documents the **risk management process**. It can be used to help control the risk of psychosocial hazards in the working environment.

The steps are:

1. **Identify** hazards.
2. **Assess** the risks to health and safety created by exposure to those hazards.
3. **Control** risks. Do this by eliminating the risk. If it's not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks, reduce them so far as is reasonably practicable.
4. **Review and revise** risk control measures.

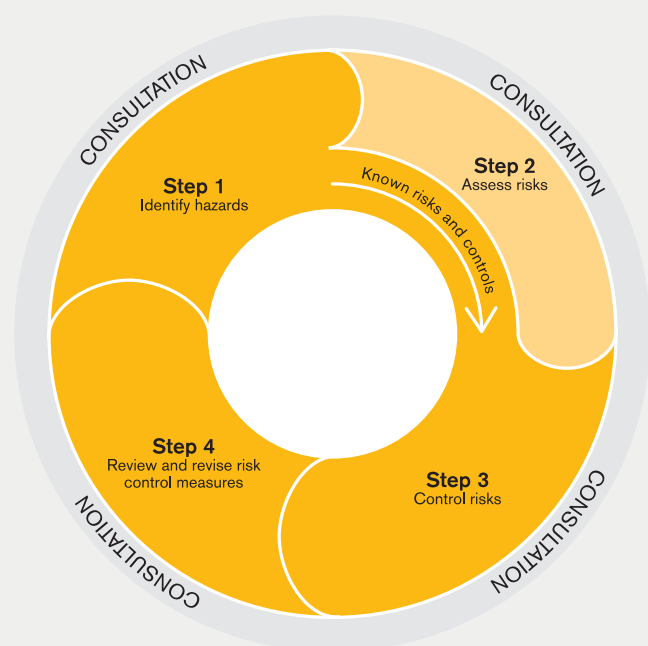


Diagram 1: The risk management process.

Learn more about the risk management process in Part 3 of the *Psychological health compliance code*.

There are multiple ways to structure a prevention plan, including the template below. Some employers may already have existing risk management documentation, such as risk registers. Employers can create their own prevention plan templates to suit the circumstances of their workplace.

## Consultation

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, employers must consult with employees on matters related to health or safety that directly affect or are likely to directly affect them. They must do this so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes when developing prevention plans.

For more information about consultation, see [worksafe.vic.gov.au/consultation](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/consultation).

## Workplace circumstances are important

The size and nature of an organisation is relevant when developing prevention plans.

A larger or more complex organisation may need multiple prevention plans to properly record:

- the risks associated with psychosocial hazards
- which risk control measures are in place.

For example, an organisation-wide plan may be developed when:

- a psychosocial hazard is identified as being common to all areas of an organisation
- the required risk controls are similar across the organisation.

Where psychosocial hazards are specific to work areas (for example, teams, locations or designated work groups), a prevention plan for each may be appropriate. Plans for individual work areas should capture all psychosocial hazards identified for that area.

# Prevention plans for psychosocial hazards



Psychosocial hazards may interact or combine to create new or higher risks. When managing psychosocial risks, employers should consider all the psychosocial hazards employees may be exposed to in their working environment. A prevention plan may identify multiple hazards that interact; for example, poor workplace relationships and high job demands that lead to bullying.

## Example 1 – small business with 5 employees

The employer has identified psychosocial hazards in their working environment as:

- bullying
- sexual harassment.

They use the below template to set out the risk management process in place for all hazards, as they are common across the business.

## Example 2 – organisation with 100 employees in client-facing and back-office roles

The employer has identified psychosocial hazards in their workplace as:

- aggression or violence
- bullying
- high job demands
- sexual harassment.

In consultation with health and safety representatives (HSRs), they decide that an organisation-wide prevention plan can be created for bullying because the risks and risk control measures are common across the organisation.

Client-facing and back-office employees have different risks and risk control measures. A separate prevention plan is made for each group to address aggression or violence, high job demands and sexual harassment.

## Reviewing and revising prevention plans

Employers should review prevention plans regularly to check if:

- risk controls are working effectively
- there are additional or modified controls needed to control the risks
- any new or unintended risks are present
- any improvements or changes can be made to:
  - the physical environment
  - work systems and procedures
  - training
- the plan reflects:
  - any changes in legislation
  - current state of knowledge
  - feedback from employees.

Employers must review and, if necessary, revise risk control measures:

- Before making changes to any thing, process or system of work that is likely to result in changes to risks associated with psychosocial hazards.
- If new or additional information about a psychosocial hazard becomes available.
- If there is a report of a psychosocial hazard or a psychological injury.
- If a notifiable incident occurs or risk controls fail for any other reason.
- When an HSR requests a review.

See Part 3 of the *Psychological health compliance code* for more information.

## Further information

For more information and resources on psychological health, visit [worksafe.vic.gov.au/psychological-health](https://worksafe.vic.gov.au/psychological-health).

# Prevention plan template



Employer/organisation name:

Work area, if applicable:

Date of prevention plan:

Approved by:

Position:

## Details of consultation undertaken (in accordance with s35 of the OHS Act, including employees and any HSRs)

Consultation date(s):

Method(s) of consultation:

Who was involved:

Summary of matters discussed:

# Prevention plan steps

## 1. Identify the psychosocial hazard/s

- Hazards are anything that could cause harm to a person. They may be reported or non-reported.
- Include information sources if relevant.
- Consider if teams, locations or designated work groups are exposed to different hazards.



## 2. Assess the risk – the potential for the hazard to cause harm

- Consider how, and to what extent, the hazard/s identified in step 1 create a risk to employee health and safety.
- Consider if employees may be exposed to multiple hazards and how they may combine and interact.



## 3. Control risks

- Decide on appropriate risk control measures to eliminate or reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Outline how to apply these risk control measures in the workplace.



## 4. Review and revise

Review the prevention plan according to the list on page 3. Update the plan whenever any changes are made to risk controls.

### Complete the steps for each psychosocial hazard you identify

#### 1. Identify the psychosocial hazard/s

**Multiple hazards may be interacting, so tick all that apply.**

This list is not exhaustive. If you identify another psychosocial hazard that may arise in the working environment, you have a duty to control the associated risks. If you need more space, consider if a separate plan for different hazards or work areas is needed.

See the *Psychological health compliance code* for more information on:

- signs of harm: Part 2
- identifying hazards: Part 3, Step 1 and Appendix B.

Aggression or violence	Low job demands	Poor support
Bullying	Low recognition and reward	Poor workplace relationships
Exposure to traumatic events or content	Low role clarity	Remote or isolated work
Gendered violence	Poor environmental conditions	Sexual harassment
High job demands	Poor organisational change management	
Low job control	Poor organisational justice	
Other		

How was the hazard/s identified? For example, through employee consultation, workplace observation, or hazard and incident reports. Do not include personal details or information that could identify individual employees.

What does the hazard/s look like in your workplace? What negative effect could this hazard have on employees? This may be physical or psychological harm, including illness, injury or death.

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## 2. Assess the risk

See the *Psychological health compliance code* for more information on:

- doing a risk assessment: Part 3, Step 2.

How likely are employees to be exposed to the hazard? Are some employees more likely to be exposed?

How often or for how long are employees exposed to the hazard?

How severe are the consequences if employees are exposed? Could some employees experience more severe consequences?

Are employees also exposed to any other hazards?

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### 3. Control hazards and risks

See the *Psychological health compliance code* for more information on:

- eliminating and reducing risk: Part 3, Step 3
- example risk control measures: Appendix C.

What are you already doing to eliminate or reduce the risk?

Risk control

Who is responsible

Timing

What other controls will you use to eliminate or reduce the risk?

Risk control

Who is responsible

Timing

How will you inform employees about these risk controls?

Planned review date

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## 4. Review and revise

See the *Psychological health compliance code* for more information on:

- reviewing and revising risk controls: Part 3, Step 4.

Review date

What is the reason for review?

Details of consultation

Outcome of review