



# MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING STRATEGY REGINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2020-2024

## Statement of Purpose

The goal of an organization-wide mental health and well-being strategy is the long-term, continuous improvement of workplace mental health. This document provides an overview of Regina Public Schools' commitment and approach to advancing a mentally healthy workplace, and illustrates the intended actions for the future. The Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy is a foundational document that will guide the development of a dynamic environment that supports a flourishing, resilient and healthy workplace and learning community.

## Vision

*Regina Public Schools is a safe and respectful community that cultivates the full potential of all individuals through an inclusive and supportive environment that fosters mental health and well-being.*

This vision will place mental health in its rightful place as an organizational priority and will be used as a foundation when making decisions and taking action.

June 3, 2020

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## 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT MESSAGE

Everything we do as a school division, we do for the benefit of our students; their learning, their development and their health and safety always come first. But as employees of Regina Public Schools, we cannot do our jobs if we as individuals are not well. We recognize the critical importance that mental health and well-being has on the lives of every one of us.

Recognizing the importance of mental health and well-being has to become woven into the fabric of everything we do, much like our focus on our students. In the spring of 2019, we formed a Health and Wellness Committee that included employees from throughout our organization including representatives from our employee groups. This Committee identified a number of mental health-related issues in our school division and made a number of recommendations.

As a result of this Committee's work, and with the eager support of the Regina Board of Education, we have formed a Mental Health and Well-Being Working Group, whose membership represents all employees. We have also identified three strategic priorities that will guide our school division and help us focus on optimizing employee mental health and well-being.

These strategic priorities are to:

- Raise mental health awareness, reduce stigma and promote well-being;
- Align administrative procedures and processes with the vision for promotion and protection of mental health in the workplace; and
- Create and sustain a healthy and supportive workplace culture.

Ultimately our goal is to fulfill the vision of the strategy: Regina Public Schools is a safe and respectful community that cultivates the full potential of all individuals through an inclusive and supportive environment that fosters mental health and well-being.

On behalf of school division administration and the Board of Education, I encourage all employees to review the following pages of this strategy document, to take the time to understand the importance of the subject matter, and to become agents of change and support for the well-being of all employees.

Greg Enion  
Director of Education

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regina Public Schools' Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy has emerged from evidence-based research, collaborative dialogue, and Regina Public Schools' commitment toward advancing the recognition of the important role employee mental health and well-being plays in overall school mental health, and ultimately student success.

The Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy is a framework to provide direction for Regina Public Schools to comprehensively and proactively review resources and opportunities for the promotion of mental health and well-being, planning, and responsiveness in support of a mentally healthy workplace. It is intended as a framework for the development and implementation of action plans to support positive employee mental health and well-being.

To help achieve Regina Public Schools' broader mission and values, as set out in Regina Public Schools Strategic Plan 2017-2020, this strategy focuses on three strategic priorities specifically related to optimizing employee mental health and well-being.

The three strategic priorities, which are interconnected, are intended to guide the work of Regina Public Schools as it strives to fulfill the vision of the strategy, *Regina Public Schools is a safe and respectful community that cultivates the full potential of all individuals through an inclusive and supportive environment that fosters mental health and well-being.*

1. Raise mental health awareness, reduce stigma and promote well-being.
2. Align administrative procedures and processes with the vision for promotion and protection of mental health in the workplace.
3. Create and sustain a healthy and supportive workplace culture.

For each strategic priority, this strategy focuses on three primary goals:

Goal 1: Develop knowledge and understanding of mental health and minimize stigma in the workplace through Mental Health Awareness and Training.

Goal 2: Apply a "mental health lens" to existing platforms and procedures and in the creation of new procedures and practices to ensure the development and maintenance of optimal employee mental well-being.

Goal 3: Adopt a continuous improvement process that strengthens commitment to foster a civil, respectful, safe, collaborative and inclusive workplace that is conducive to employee engagement, productivity, connections and resiliency.

The overall goal in implementing this strategy is to ensure a highly coordinated and strategic use of resources related to employee mental health, ensure that, as a collective, everyone is working from common guiding principles and goals, and that Regina Public Schools effectively measures the actions undertaken to support a mentally healthy workplace and employee well-being.

### 3. CONTEXT

#### 3.1 Introduction

Regina Public Schools employs 2,550 individuals who provide educational services to 23,836 students across 57 elementary and high schools and division office.

Regina Public Schools' 2017-2020 Strategic Plan is guided by the mission statement, *To instil the value of knowledge, the dignity of effort and the worth of the individual*, as well as four Shared Values, *"I Belong," "I Respect," "I am Responsible" and "I Want to Know."*

#### 3.2 Background

In the spring of 2019, a Health and Wellness committee, comprised of employee representatives from RPSTA, CUPE 650, CUPE 3766, CUPE 4643, SUN, Human Resources, Workplace Health and Wellness, Occupational Therapy, and the Deputy Director of School Services, was initiated. The purpose of the committee was to discuss issues and provide recommendations to the Director of Education and the Administration Council Executive for improving staff mental health and wellness for the division. Following this, the Senior Leadership team and the Regina Board of Education acknowledged that there were issues that needed to be paid attention to in respect to employee mental health and well-being.

The Director of Education added *"Health and Well-being"* to the Leadership for Learning Framework's *"Big Rocks"* as part of the *"Climate of Belonging"* rock for the 2019-2020 year and, subsequently, introduced the *Mental Health and Wellness Initiative* in his opening address at the 2019-20 school year start up.

In August 2019, a consultant was hired to lead the *Mental Health and Wellness Initiative*. A review of the current state of mental health and wellness from the employee perspective was conducted as well as data collection on sick time rates, Employee Family Assistance Program usage, turnover, engagement, Worker's Compensation Board claims, grievances, and over expenditures in the budget for substitute teachers and substitute educational assistants. Additionally, research was undertaken into relevant literature on workplace mental health and employee well-being. A report, *"Mental Health and Wellness Initiative for Regina Public Schools"* was produced on February 25, 2020, which generated 20 recommendations. The report was subsequently presented to the Regina Board of Education on March 3, 2020.

An Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from all employee groups as well as a representative from the non-unionized staff and the Student Achievement team, was formed in the fall 2019. This committee developed the draft Vision Statement for a future *Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy*: *"Regina Public Schools is a safe and respectful community that cultivates the full potential of all individuals through an inclusive and supportive environment that fosters mental health and well-being."*

### 3.3 External Context

The Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy is intended to be flexible and agile to the current realities in the external environment. To better future proof the strategy, Regina Public Schools acknowledges that tailoring it to the needs of the staff as they change and grow is important. At the time of the development of this strategic plan document, the world is faced with a global pandemic; COVID-19. This has resulted in the majority of employees (educators and those who support schools) working from home, students receiving supplemental learning and social-emotional support by their teachers and staff through on-line platforms, staff-to-staff connections occurring virtually, and senior leaders collaborating, making daily decisions and developing a roadmap of how to operationally do business during an unprecedented time.

### 3.4 Strategic Alignment

Regina Public Schools' Strategic Plan 2017-2020 identifies six priority strategies, with strategic priority two: *"Engage students, families, staff and communities in education"* and strategic priority six: *"Demonstrate effective governance, leadership and accountability"*, aligning with the Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy.

Outlined in the Regina Public Schools' Strategic Plan is the statement of how success will be measured, "Success in staff engagement is measured when staff believe there are the right conditions to do their jobs, are committed to the school division's goals and values, are motivated to contribute to organizational success and have an enhanced sense of their own well-being."

## 4. THE STRATEGY

### 4.1 Preface

Why consider employee mental health and well-being in a school division?

The mental health of educators and all staff who support schools is the foundation for overall school mental health. All employees of a school division who enjoy optimum mental health and well-being are in a better position to support students' mental health and well-being, and academic learning which are critical foundations for overall student success.

Regina Public Schools acknowledges that employees are experiencing mental health distress and stress challenges based on a number of different factors, and acknowledges that the workplace is a key environment to promote mental health and well-being. A system-wide approach to mental health considers how best to create conditions which promote flourishing for Regina Public Schools' employees.

## Factors Impacting our Mental Health at Work



### 4.2 The Benefits of Taking Action

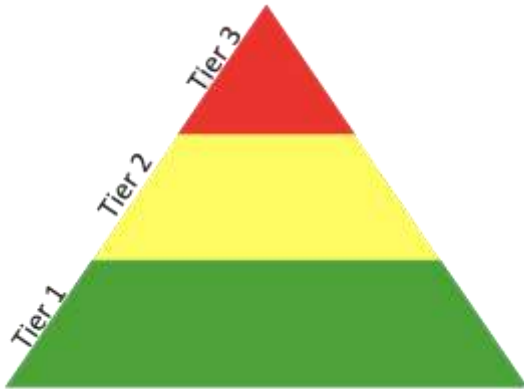
A psychologically healthy and safe workplace allows all employees to realize their potential and effectively contribute to Regina Public Schools' mission.

Given the following National Statistics, Regina Public Schools believes that committing to a Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy is prudent and proactive:

- 1 in 5 individuals will experience mental health issues or develop a mental illness at some point in their working years;
- close to half of working Canadians consider their work to be the most stressful part of their daily life;
- depression is the number one cause of disability in Canada.

### 4.3 Tiered Approach

To maintain consistent ideology and language to that of how Regina Public Schools supports the needs of all students through an *Intervention First* tiered model, a parallel pyramid approach to supporting employee mental health and well-being has been developed.



Foundational:

- ❖ committed leadership
- ❖ positive culture-respectful, collaborative, diverse, inclusive
- ❖ safe, caring, welcoming environment
- ❖ engagement, sense of belonging
- ❖ equity

Tier I – Needs of All:

- ❖ Promotion and prevention > mental health promotion, awareness, mental health literacy, stigma reduction, professional development, communicate existing Workplace Health and Safety administrative procedures and available supports including EFAP, performance assessment and feedback.

Tier 2 – Needs of Some:

- ❖ Prevention and proactive early identification > Attendance Support, Return to Work Accommodations, EFAP, Benefits, and ongoing Tier 1 interventions.

Tier 3 – Needs of Few:

- ❖ Intervention/Treatment > EFAP, Supports following Traumatic events/critical incidents, pathway to refer to specialized community/medical resources, ongoing Tier 1 and 2 interventions.

#### 4.4 Mental Health and Mental Illness Defined

According to the World Health Organization, “mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community.”



Mental health is an expression of our emotions and signifies a successful adaptation to a variety of situational demands allowing us to maintain our full potential and participate successfully in everyday life.

Mental health refers to psychological well-being which can be viewed on a continuum from flourishing (optimal) to languishing (minimal).

### Mental Health Continuum Model

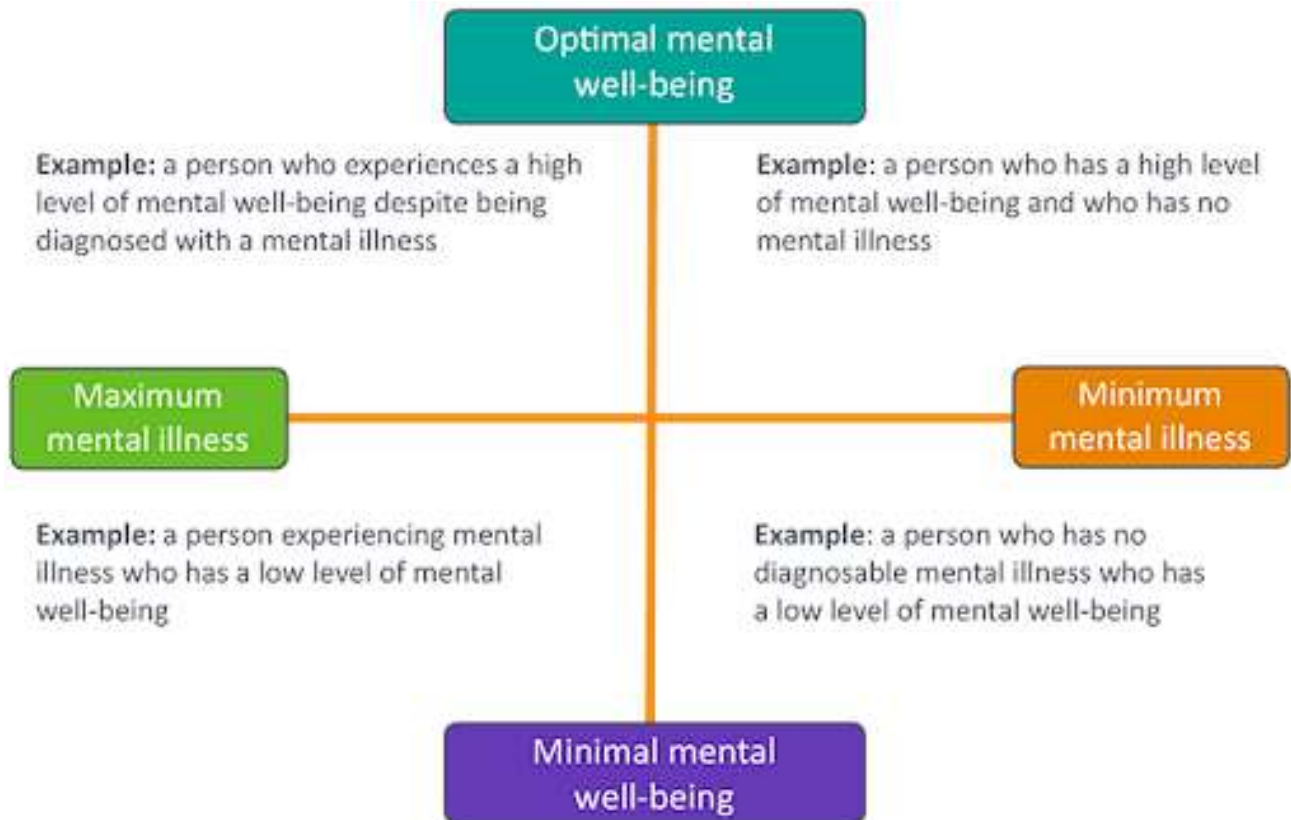


<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal mood fluctuations</li> <li>• Calm &amp; takes things in stride</li> <li>• Good sense of humour</li> <li>• Performing well</li> <li>• In control mentally</li> <li>• Normal sleep patterns</li> <li>• Few sleep difficulties</li> <li>• Physically well</li> <li>• Good energy level</li> <li>• Physically and socially active</li> <li>• No or limited alcohol use/ gambling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irritable / impatient</li> <li>• Nervous</li> <li>• Sadness / overwhelmed</li> <li>• Displaced sarcasm</li> <li>• Procrastination</li> <li>• Forgetfulness</li> <li>• Trouble sleeping</li> <li>• Intrusive thoughts</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Muscle tension / headaches</li> <li>• Low energy</li> <li>• Decreased activity/socializing</li> <li>• Regular but controlled alcohol use / gambling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Pervasively sad / hopeless</li> <li>• Negative attitude</li> <li>• Poor performance / workaholic</li> <li>• Poor concentration / decisions</li> <li>• Restless disturbed sleep</li> <li>• Recurrent images / nightmares</li> <li>• Increased aches and pains</li> <li>• Increased fatigue</li> <li>• Avoidance</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Increased alcohol use / gambling is hard to control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angry outbursts / aggression</li> <li>• Excessive anxiety / panic attacks</li> <li>• Depressed / suicidal thoughts</li> <li>• Over insubordination</li> <li>• Can't perform duties, control behaviour or concentrate</li> <li>• Can't fall asleep or stay asleep</li> <li>• Sleeping too much or too little</li> <li>• Physical illnesses</li> <li>• Constant fatigue</li> <li>• Not going out or answering phone</li> <li>• Alcohol or gambling addiction</li> <li>• Other addictions</li> </ul>
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(Mental Health Commission of Canada)

Mental illness, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada, refers to diagnosable mental health disorders, and is defined as “a biological condition of the brain that causes alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour (or some combination thereof) associated with significant distress and impaired functioning.”

Mental health and mental illness are viewed as two distinct dimensions but are seen as related and existing along an intersecting continuum. The dual continuum below illustrates how the presence of a mental illness does not imply absence of well-being and vice-versa.



Adapted from CAMH 2014

#### 4.5 Guiding Principles

The Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy is founded on three Guiding Principles:

1. Regina Public Schools, as an organization, and the individual, both have a shared responsibility in promoting and maintaining workplace mental health and well-being.
2. Workplace mental health and well-being is based on a culture of respect, trust, honesty, fairness, collaboration and inclusivity.
3. Workplace mental health and well-being initiatives are based on best practices which are regularly reviewed and evaluated in order to sustain a supportive culture.

## 4.6 Strategic Priorities

Three strategic priorities have been identified to address and promote employee mental health and well-being. The 20 recommendations that came from the *Mental Health and Wellness Report* (Appendix A) fall under one of the three strategic priorities that are intended to guide the work of Regina Public Schools as it strives to fulfill the vision of the strategy. The following strategic priorities are interconnected and advancement of one will impact advancement of another:

**Strategic Priority One:** Raise mental health awareness, reduce stigma and promote well-being.

**Strategic Priority Two:** Align administrative procedures and processes with the vision for promotion and protection of mental health in the workplace.

**Strategic Priority Three:** Create and sustain a healthy and supportive workplace culture.

All three strategic priorities will be the focus of planning and implementation activities through a phased approach to 2024. Each of the strategies will have a detailed implementation plan developed by the Mental Health and Well-Being Working Group with guidance from the Steering Committee, which is comprised of individuals from Administrative Council Executive, Superintendent of Human Resources and Workplace Diversity, and the Mental Health and Wellness Consultant. The implementation plan is available as a separate document.

For each strategic priority, a broad goal, key objectives and targeted outcomes, both qualitative and quantitative have been established:

**Strategic Priority One: Raise mental health awareness, reduce stigma and promote well-being.**

**Goal:** Develop knowledge and understanding of mental health and minimize stigma in the workplace through Mental Health Awareness and Training.

**Objectives:**

1. To increase awareness of the mental health continuum and psychological and health and safety in the workplace.
2. To promote the importance of social connections through actively promoting mental health week.
3. To improve mental health literacy and develop skills and knowledge to help individuals to better manage developing mental health problems.
4. To increase awareness of mental health and dispel the myths of mental health problems.
5. To begin dialogue about the National Standard for PH&S and the 13 Psychosocial factors.

### **Performance Measure and Targeted Outcomes:**

- Percentage of leadership, educators and all staff who have an increased understanding of the mental health continuum model and increased understanding of the stigma of mental health. (qualitative measure through survey mechanism)

### **Strategic Priority Two: Align administrative procedures and processes with the vision for promotion and protection of mental health in the workplace.**

**Goal:** Apply a “mental health lens” to existing platforms and procedures and in the creation of new procedures and practices to ensure the development and maintenance of optimal employee mental well-being.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To “bring to life” the Regina Public Schools Shared Values and ensure all employees see how their role makes a difference to the goals in the organization’s Strategic Plan.
2. To engage employees through a consultative process in the creation of the 2021-24 Strategic Plan and have employee mental health and wellness be a key priority.
3. To revise existing Health and Safety administrative procedures to ensure they embed mental health and psychological health language.
4. To expand the scope of existing committees to increase opportunities to discuss mental health and wellness.

### **Performance Measure and Targeted Outcomes:**

- Number of existing platforms that have been leveraged to embed a mental health and well-being and psychological safety focus.
- Number of newly created or revised administrative procedures that have applied a “mental health lens” to ensure the development and maintenance of optimal employee mental well-being.

### **Strategic Priority Three: Create and sustain a healthy and supportive workplace culture.**

**Goal:** Adopt a continuous improvement process that strengthens commitment to foster a civil, respectful, safe, collaborative and inclusive workplace that is conducive to employee engagement, productivity, connections and resiliency.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To promote employee work-life balance.
2. To build on strength of promoting collaborative practices.
3. To enhance employees’ capacity to manage risks and reduce presence and/or impact of psychological risks.

4. To build leadership capacity specific to enhancing social and emotional skills to support others and for leaders to care for themselves.
5. To build mental health capacity, resiliency, and social emotional skills through ongoing professional learning, training and coaching.
6. To adopt a respectful workplace philosophy.
7. To provide a variety of flexible means for employees to become aware of existing EFAP services and how to access.
8. To ensure that workforce renewal is linked with workplace improvements that ultimately contribute to positive school system performance.
9. To develop or adopt a mentorship model to support employee groups, such as new hires that may be at more risk of experiencing mental health distress.

#### **Performance Measure and Targeted Outcomes:**

- Percentage of employees who have increased usage of EFAP services pertaining to mental health related issues.
- Percentage of employees who believe that their workplace culture has improved in areas of civility, respect, collaboration and inclusivity. (qualitative measure through survey mechanism)

## **5. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

A communication strategy is critical to ensure that all stakeholders including administrators and staff, labour groups, and the Regina Board of Education continue to be engaged and are kept informed of progress.

A separate communication strategy document will be developed which will include communication milestones.

## 6. APPENDIX A

### **RECOMMENDATIONS – *Mental Health and Wellness Initiative Report*** **(February 25, 2020)**

The recommendations below are listed in no particular order of priority. Those flagged with an asterisk\* are recommendations deemed to be *high impact/low-no cost* that may assist Regina Public Schools in decisions regarding implementation. A phased approach to implementing recommendations where focus is on continuous improvement will be a critical success factor.

- 1. Maintain an Advisory Committee for Mental Health and Well-Being.\*** Regina Public Schools to consider maintaining an Advisory Committee for the long-term which provides a structure to support ongoing work of a Mental Health and Wellness Strategy. An Advisory Committee with representatives from the various employee groups is recommended for purposes of continued *buy in* and to ensure diversity of thinking and to include idea generation, problem-solving and solution seeking. Establishing a *Terms of Reference* for the Advisory Committee including purpose, scope, membership and reporting structure will be beneficial.
- 2. Vision Statement.\*** Regina Public Schools to consider adopting the draft vision statement that the Advisory Committee developed to guide a Mental Health and Wellness Strategy: *“Regina Public Schools is a safe and respectful community that cultivates the full potential of all individuals through an inclusive and supportive environment that fosters mental health and well-being.”* Vision statements need to portray an image of an “ideal future” that reflects the Shared Values to which the organization should aspire. A good vision statement needs to recognize and respond to needs that are pressing, appeal to long-term interests of stakeholders, and be translated into measurable strategies. The above draft vision statement articulates this.
- 3. Communicate Regina Public Schools’ Strategic Priorities.\*** Regina Public Schools to consider immediate re-messaging; “connecting the dots,” so all employees can see how their actions make a difference to the stated goals in the current Strategic Plan (2017-20). All Regina Public Schools’ leaders need to be accountable for repeating the message and “bringing to life” the Shared Values at every opportunity so that all employees have a sense of responsibility for living the values of Regina Public Schools. All employees need to see how they are part of a “community” and the value of working together in an integrated team approach.

- 4. Strategic Plan Going Forward (2021-2024) to Encompass Employee Well-Being Focus.\***  
Regina Public Schools to consider involving employees through a consultative process in the creation of the next strategic plan. Strong consideration be given to making employee well-being a strategic goal through making a bolder statement in the Strategic Plan document. Referencing the work of Graham Lowe, it is best practice in people management and organizational performance to place a high value on treating employees as a “core business asset” (Lowe, 2010, p. 21). Reinforce the Shared Values and communicate that these values are not just intended for students or those in educator positions, but for all employees. The Shared Values are simple yet powerful. This system change of strategically prioritizing employee well-being will demonstrate the Regina Public Schools’ commitment which will go a long way in improving culture.
  
- 5. Communicate Message of Balance.\*** Regina Public Schools to make a concerted effort to encourage employee work-life balance and protection of personal well-being through purposeful and meaningful messaging of the importance of disconnecting at the end of a work day. Role modelling of “leave it at the door” will be important.
  
- 6. Promote Value of Collaborative Practices.\*** Regina Public Schools to build on the existing strength of promoting collaborative relationships and connections amongst employees, students, parents and community members as a key to a positive workplace culture. The concept of collaboration to be viewed not as a mandatory practice, but as an opportunity for healthy and productive interactions that can lead to innovative idea sharing, problem solving, and sharing of resources. Regina Public Schools to “look within” to see schools, departments, and teams who model this practice well. Collaboration to be broadened to include an interdisciplinary and cross-departmental integrated approach which sets the stage for knowledge transfer and capacity building, as well as leads to more efficient project planning and improved risk mitigation.
  
- 7. Policy and Administrative Procedures to Include Psychological Health and Safety/ Mental Health and Well-Being of Employees.\*** Regina Public Schools to consider embedding mental health/psychological health language and concepts into the existing Health and Safety administrative procedure or, alternatively, consider having a bolder policy statement which outlines Regina Public Schools’ commitment to protecting the mental health and well-being of employees. When developing or revising policies and administrative procedures, and/or making program or organizational changes, consider using the lens of, *how might this impact psychological health and safety?* Efforts need to be sustainable and should slowly be integrated into the way the organization thinks, makes decisions and reviews procedures and policies.

- 8. Expand the Scope and Concept of Health and Safety.\*** Regina Public Schools to leverage existing platforms to increase opportunities to discuss mental health. Consideration be given to incorporating more mental health or psychological safety information into existing “safety talks” at staff meetings, and include psychological health and safety as a standing agenda item in the existing Occupational Health and Safety quarterly meetings.
- 9. Develop an Aftercare Procedure or Pathway to Support Employees Following a Traumatic Event.\*** Regina Public Schools to consider developing a pathway, based on guiding principles, for the organization to follow to ensure that all employees receive the appropriate level of support following exposure to any traumatic event. “Right care at the right time.” The current resource guide following a tragic event focuses heavily on student needs and not so much on needs of those staff who are intended to support students. Developing an aftercare pathway that infuses a human element into the process via checking in with an employee in the days, weeks, and months following a traumatic event will positively impact employee mental health and well-being.
- 10. Begin Dialogue About the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.\*** Regina Public Schools to begin dialogue about the psychosocial factors and use the *Guarding Minds at Work* survey tool to evaluate actions one year from implementation of improvements. This will provide insight and assessment of the organizational culture and assist in determining what may be the most realistic and meaningful focus for the years ahead. The National Standard has been championed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The National Standard is an evidence-informed framework based on continual improvement. The National Standard is 100% focused on mental health. There are 13 interrelated organizational psychosocial factors that help organizations identify the hazards and assess and control the risks, and reduce the stigma around psychological health and safety in the workplace: *Psychological Support, Organizational Culture, Clear Leadership & Expectations, Civility & Respect, Psychological Competencies & Requirements, Growth & Development, Recognition and Reward, Involvement & Influence, Workload Management, Engagement, Balance, Psychological Protection and Protection of Physical Safety* (Samra, 2012).
- 11. Mental Health Awareness and Training.** Regina Public Schools to commit to a goal of *improving understanding and sensitivity of mental health* in the workplace.

  - a. This can be achieved through **promoting** events such as, *Canada Mental Health Week, Bell Canada “Let’s Talk” Day, Healthy Workplace month.\**
  - b. Regina Public Schools to *model and encourage open conversations* about mental health and well-being through **providing resources and information** on self-care, positive coping skills and resilience.\*



- c. Regina Public Schools to consider **inviting people with “lived experience”** to share their stories as part of improving awareness and understanding.\*
- d. Regina Public Schools to commit to having leaders and employees receive **training** with the goal of reducing stigma, increasing mental health literacy and resilience, and providing information to assist with identifying early signs of stress, anxiety and depression. Mental Health training programs such as *Mental Health First Aid* and *The Working Mind* are evidence-based programs and are both endorsed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

*Mental Health First Aid* (MHFA) is a 2-day training program. It is recommended to implement a phased approach to the training starting with all senior leaders, all in-school administrators, and Chairs and Co-Chairs of Occupational Health and Safety committees. Participation from those in formal leadership positions is required so they can increase awareness and be a support and resource for staff. This will send a powerful message of commitment and “walking the talk.” Following completion of the MHFA training, participants receive a certificate and can “post” on their door a “flag” that is visible to those who may require assistance. Employee training in MHFA needs to be done through an expression of interest process versus mandatory training. Size of school and department will determine the appropriate number of employees who should have the training.

There are on-line courses that are free and available through the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS). Topics include:

*Mental Health: Awareness*

*Mental Health: Communication Strategies*

*Mental Health: Health & Wellness Strategies*

*Mental Health: Psychologically Healthy Workplaces*

*Mental Health: Signs, Symptoms, Solutions*

**12. Respectful Workplace Policy.** Regina Public Schools to strongly consider developing a *Respectful Workplace Policy* that outlines a commitment to providing an environment that is vibrant, respectful, caring, inclusive, and professional. The policy needs to be aligned with the Regina Public Schools Shared Values, and outline accountabilities where both employee and leadership have responsibilities. Regina Public Schools does have an Employee Harassment administrative procedure and a Sexual Harassment administrative procedure; however, these don’t specifically define what appropriate workplace behaviours are, nor do they make a distinction between disrespectful workplace behaviors and discrimination or harassment that are prohibited by the

Saskatchewan Human Rights code. A psychologically healthy and safe workplace is a respectful workplace.

- 13. Prioritize Investment In Leadership Development and Training.** Regina Public Schools to prioritize the development of leaders best equipped to promote positive well-being in the workplace, effectively respond to employee behavioural changes, and best support employees who are emotionally distressed or struggling with mental health issues. To foster a more resilient workforce, skilled *people leadership* is required. Leadership development that starts with self-awareness is important. Education and training on emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, diversity, and inclusion is recommended. Training that encompasses topics of critical or courageous conversations, and conflict management will also be beneficial. Leadership development needs to be viewed as a process of capacity building, for example, learning “how” and receiving practical coaching versus reliance on one-time classroom or on-line training. The ideal goal is to have all Regina Public Schools’ leaders be transformational leaders, as this will pave the way for inclusive leadership where everyone has a shared responsibility in making workplace improvements.
- 14. Promote Health and Lifestyle Services through Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) and Communicate Entitled Health Benefits.** Regina Public Schools’ leaders to consider using various channels of communication to ensure that employees fully understand the health benefits they are entitled to and how to access the array of support services available through the Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP). This is of particular importance in situations when an employee is experiencing emotional distress.
- 15. Grow Human Capital.** Regina Public Schools to consider looking at how workforce renewal can be linked with workplace improvements to ensure it reflects the organizational capabilities and values of Regina Public Schools. Growing human capital will ultimately contribute to positive school system performance. View the development of emerging leaders as a mentoring obligation as well as for succession planning. The existing performance evaluation process does not provide opportunity for more timely and purposeful feedback on strengths and weaknesses, critical conversations, or the opportunity for individuals to receive proactive coaching and support. Be intentional with the focus on the Shared Values and embed this in all processes; for example, job postings, interview questions, reference checks and performance evaluations. Regina Public Schools to identify leadership competencies that are important for fostering healthy values, behaviours and working relationships. Regina Public Schools to consider reviewing/revising the existing *Leadership*

*Competencies* document to ensure there is a connection between leadership and culture.

**16. Continuous Improvement Focused on Work Design.** Regina Public Schools to consider the benefits of having a continuous improvement focus on overall work design that will positively influence employee work-life balance. This includes involving staff members in decisions around changes that will impact their work, making expectations and duties clear, regularly reviewing workload and resources, supporting opportunities for professional and skill development, creating safe and private spaces in the workplace where employees can find “quiet”, and strengthening communication systems. Requesting regular and continual feedback from employees and having a mechanism to let them know how their feedback is being used for improvements to the Regina Public Schools will be of benefit.

**17. Develop or Adopt a Mentorship Model to Support New Employees.** Regina Public Schools to consider having a mentorship model in place; specifically, for employee groups that may be of greater risk of experiencing stress or a mental health condition, new hires for example. The mentorship model needs to be distinctly separate from the supervision and evaluation model. Importance to be placed on engaging employees in the process design. Ask employees for ideas of what this could look like. Consider the value of pairing staff members for regular check in times. The goal needs to be focused on broadening connections and building capacity of support.

**18. Support Education and Training that Addresses Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma.** Regina Public Schools to use a proactive approach to professional development for employees deemed to be at a greater risk of experiencing compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma. Goals of education and training should focus on early identification of the signs of common mental health issues, reducing the burden that is carried by employees who work with vulnerable children and youth, or those who are exposed to traumatic situations, building resiliency and learning the value of setting healthy personal boundaries.

**19. Support Education and Capacity Building to Address Complexity of Student Needs.** Regina Public Schools to consider avenues of capacity building for employees who work with students who have mental health diagnosis and complex behavioural needs (for example, autism, anxiety, depression). Through existing intersectoral relationships in the Regina community, work with partners to build capacity. To enhance capacity long-term, leverage the partnerships with post secondary institutions (for example University of Regina, First Nations University of Canada, Saskatchewan Polytechnic) to highlight the need for Pre-Service education for students in the Faculty of Education and need for

focused class content in certificate and diploma programs including Early Childhood Education and Youth Care Worker that more appropriately reflect the current reality of student presentation. To ensure sustainability of any capacity building, an ongoing coaching model is important.

**20. Determine Key Performance Indicators and Develop Metrics to Measure Progress and Desired Outcomes Prior to Implementation.** Regina Public Schools to monitor progress through performance management, where goals, objectives and targets are outlined, and key performance indicators are tracked. This will enable Regina Public Schools to continually improve and make decisions based on the tracked data. Improvements take time and persistence. Measuring progress on absenteeism or Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) usage, for example, may require several years to show financial return on investment. Despite there to be a predicted lag time in seeing the return on investment with the strategic focus on workplace mental health and wellness, the importance and value of supporting a mentally healthy workplace versus doing nothing at all cannot be over stated.