

MANAGING STAFF FROM A DISTANCE

MENTAL WELLBEING FACT SHEET

April 2020

Due to increasing restrictions and social distancing requirements as a result of COVID-19, management of your staff as remote employees is becoming the rule rather than the exception. This tip sheet has been prepared to help you understand how to reflect on, and think about your management style with staff to support both your own, and your staff's transition to this environment.

There is risk that employees working remotely may experience lower engagement with the workplace. Reduced productivity, and increased stress on the whole team can result. Staff may feel anxious, worried that their work will be questioned, or that they are not fully across what is being asked of them.

The following tips can help you manage this transition with your staff.

Generosity of spirit.

Most of your staff want to do their job well for you, our key stakeholders, and the community that we serve. Be generous in your assumptions about people. If staff appear to be disengaged, or having trouble meeting the demands of their role requirements, don't assume this is because they are lazy, or slacking off. Take the time to think about who is best placed to offer support and be curious about what their needs may be, not punitive and dismissive.

Don't become spam mail!

If you are sending copious emails, think about how effectively you are communicating. Ensure emails are warm, professional, but succinct, otherwise this may lead to confusion. Up to 70% of communication is non-verbal so access to videoconferencing is really important.

Ensure people know you are engaged, and listen carefully.

Know what your staff are doing and planning. Ensure your staff have what they need to succeed in the remote environment. Review important documents together and make changes as you go. Doing this generates mentoring interactions, and maintains communication. Take the time to thank your staff for their continued engagement in the workforce under difficult circumstances.

Good boundaries in your groups.

Maintain appropriate work boundaries. If you are sending non-urgent emails at 11pm because it suits you, ensure people know they do not need to respond. Be clear about how you will communicate urgent requests. Maintain professional boundaries – being allowed by technology into our employees personal environments is not by their choice. No one needs to see you in PJ's during a videoconference. Equally they may not want a tour of your home.

Other ways to work

Walking meetings via phone:

Encourage staff to stay physically active.

Stand-up Meetings:

Make sure you regularly connect with all staff in the mornings who can be on line just as a "touch point" and check on people's wellbeing. Are their basic needs being met or are there things your staff need to be effective?

Staff Safety:

Do not assume that staff's homes are safe environments for them. Give staff a 1:1 opportunity to let you know if this is unsustainable for them.

Braving Trust

Working remotely requires you to trust your employees and for your employees to trust you. Below are the core components of trust adapted from Brene Brown Braving Trust Worksheet.

Boundaries – I respect your boundaries and you respect mine. When you are not clear about what is okay and not okay, you ask.

Reliability – You do what you say you are going to do. Be aware of your limitations and competencies so you can deliver on commitments and balance competing priorities.

Accountability – You own your mistakes, apologise, and make amends.

Vault – You don't share information or experiences that are not yours to share.

Integrity – You choose to do what is right over what is fun, fast, or easy.

Non-Judgement – I can ask for what I need, and you can ask for what you need, and we can talk about this without judgement.

Generosity – interpret others words, actions, and intentions with kindness and compassion.

Seek additional support early where needed

If you feel that the stress or anxiety you are experiencing as a result of COVID-19 is impacting your ability to function at home seek extra support.

Support services include:

MEMBER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
(Benestar)

1300 360 364

CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
(CISS)/PEER SUPPORT

1800 049 933

CHAPLAINCY AND FAMILY SUPPORT
1800 049 933

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