



SUICIDE AND MENTAL HEALTH CRISES IN THE WORKPLACE

1. Preventing a crisis

- Work on creating and maintaining a safe work environment so that members feel comfortable admitting that something is wrong.
- Advocate for regular and ongoing union/management training to identify early warning signs and triggers.
- Reduce the stigma associated with tool removal so that members don't feel they have to hide a problem to avoid feeling marginalized.
- Actively work at eliminating gossip, rumours, and cyber-bullying (Facebook aggression) in the workplace.
- Touch base with your members and ask them how they're feeling if you suspect someone is experiencing undue stress or anxiety. Don't be afraid to address the issue of mental health head-on.

2. Preparing for a crisis

- Work on developing a Critical Incident Stress Management plan (CISM) with management, ideally through an OHS subcommittee.
- Insist that any plan include grief and trauma specialists, not just EAP providers.
- Make training on mental health issues accessible to all union representatives.
- Compile a list of resources you can access in the event of a crisis.

3. Death by Suicide

- Plan to be onsite for several days to be available to members in distress. Ask for union leave so that you can focus on the needs of our members.
- Make information on EAP available to all members and encourage them to speak with someone about how they are feeling. Use local WhatsApp, FB, social media to communicate with reps and members, keeping in mind the privacy of the family.
- Connect with EAP professionals on site and develop a common approach to dealing with the crisis.
- Make efforts to bring members together, trying to include members from other ports if appropriate.
- Identify one person to liaise with the family (members will want to do something for the family after the immediate crisis is over).
- Debrief post-crisis with management and identify ways to improve the response in the future.
- Be aware that EAP is only temporary. Members may continue to need support over time, particularly at triggering events such as anniversaries.
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed. Take care of your own needs and ensure that you also have someone to talk to.