

# **Engaging Frontline Managers and Supervisors to Promote Mental Health and Psychological Safety in the Workplace**



## **Final Report**

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## Executive Summary

In section (ii) **Project Introduction and Overview**, we provide context for Vital Life Inc.'s project "Engaging Frontline Managers and Supervisors to Promote Mental Health and Psychological Safety in the Workplace and note some of the research which has motivated it, while also providing an overview of the project's core objectives. Specifically, an overview of objectives is provided for the delivery of manager trainings in workplace psychological safety and addictions, including the accompanying resource guide for managers and supervisors. An overview of objectives is also provided for the corresponding employee lunch and learn sessions in workplace psychological safety and addictions, including the Fact Sheet and tent card for employees. Our knowledge transfer objectives are also briefly outlined here.

In section (iii) **Work Completed**, we describe the our approach and method to carrying out the core project objectives. In this section, we describe

- the project launch and hiring phase, including the formation of our Project Advisory Committee
- the content development phase for manager training and resource guide, the content development phase for employee lunch and learn sessions and accompanying Fact Sheet and tent card, as well as program evaluation design and questionnaire content
- the training and evaluation phase, including critical information concerning who participated, representation from the three target sectors of construction, manufacturing, and service, and other relevant information concerning participation, and
- the knowledge transfer activities undertaken, with emphasis on the Leaders for Workplace Psychological Safety Conference held on May 3 2017.

In section (iv) **Program Evaluation Results**, we provide a summary of our findings. We focus, first, on data gleaned concerning prevalence of mental health and psychological safety conditions in our three target sectors (construction, manufacturing, and service) as perceived by participating managers, current accommodations practices in the target sectors as perceived by participating managers, and current psychological health and safety climate in participants' workplaces as perceived by the participating managers. Second, we briefly describe the measurable skills, knowledge, and insight participants gained as a result of their training. Finally, we outline the feedback participants offered regarding their perception of training usefulness and design. Quantitative evaluation data and commentary are provided in a comprehensive report in **Appendix B Complete Program Evaluation-Kaplan & Associates Inc.**

In section (v) **Proposed Recommendations**, we discuss some of our conclusions and recommendations based both on observations made throughout the course of the project and our program evaluation findings. Several of the six core recommendations offered in this section provided the entry-point and motivation for our proposed 2017 to 2019 RWIP project: "Engaging Managers in Workplace Psychological Safety" targeting the oil, gas, mining, agriculture, and healthcare sectors.

In addition, **Appendix A : Knowledge Transfer: "Leaders for Workplace Psychological Safety Conference"** found in the current report outlines and summarizes the planning and execution of the May 3 2017 "Leaders for Workplace Psychological Safety Conference"/Knowledge Transfer Event.

**Materials developed over the course of the project are appended in Appendices C-H.**

## (i) Acknowledgments

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**Joel Gervais**, Adv. BA Psych. CCAC Addictions and Training Specialist  
**Michelle Paterson**, BA, RRP, Project Coordinator, Workshop Facilitator  
**Emily Walker**, B.A., J.D. Workshop Content Developer

### Members of the Project Advisory Committee

Members of the project advisory committee provided feedback on the workshop content and format, reviewed the draft questionnaire, and participated in a field-test of the form. Committee members were:

**Brad Boehm**, Environmental, Health and Safety Manager, DeFehr Furniture (2009) Ltd.  
& Perimeter Industries Ltd. & Triple D Developments Ltd

**Janice Desautels**, Director, WRHA Regional Laundry Services

**Dave Erl**, CRSD, CHSC, Director of Occupational Health and Safety, Safety Services Manitoba

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## (ii) Project Introduction and Overview

### **Engaging Frontline Managers: Workplace Psychological Safety and Addictions Training Program**

Supported by the Research and Workplace Innovation Program of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Mental illness in the workplace results in increased disability and insurance costs (Caveen et al. 2006), accounting for more than 30% of disability claims in Canada (MHCC 2014). The direct costs of mental illness for the Canadian economy are over \$40 billion per year, with substance abuse and addictions alone costing the Canadian economy \$24.3 billion in lost productivity (Rehm et al. 2006). Employers have recently begun to recognize the economic and human costs of neglecting these ‘invisible disabilities’ (Irvine 2011). Employers in the construction, manufacturing, and service sectors not only face direct losses due to mental health related absences, but also indirect losses: chronic-onset stress and associated illnesses result from such workplace stressors as long or irregular work hours and systemic bullying and harassment<sup>1</sup> while psychological factors and harmful substance use contribute to heightened risk of accidents and injury. While the links between promoting psychological health and safety in the workplace and preventing illness and injury are well-established in the current literature, Manitoba’s education and training efforts in workplace mental health promotion and mental illness prevention lag behind.

Research shows that promoting a supportive and effective approach to mental health issues and addictions in the workplace begins with a commitment from organizational leaders to improve measures for psychological health and safety awareness and prevention (MHCC National Standard 2013). While employers are increasingly aware of their duty to accommodate and the consequences of a failure to intervene, managers and supervisors remain fearful of initiating workplace mental health and addictions intervention due to concerns around confidentiality, liability, and interpersonal discomfort resulting from ignorance of correct roles and procedures. A 2011 National Survey of 1,010 workers and frontline managers carried out by the Conference Board of Canada indicates a felt lack of self-efficacy among frontline managers and supervisors due to a lack of training in effective mental illness and addictions related policy, prevention, intervention, and accommodation (Conference Board of Canada 2011). With the recent release of the *National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace* (CSA Group & BNQ 2013, MHCC 2013), Vital Life Inc. judged that education and training experts are well-positioned to deliver consistent and effective content in accordance with best practices.

## **OVERVIEW**

In what follows, we provide a description of the essential components of our project to deliver psychological safety training to managers and employees in the high-risk manufacturing, construction, and service sectors under the Research and Workplace Innovation Program of the Workers' Compensation Board of Manitoba. Vital Life Inc.'s 2015-2017 Research and Workplace Innovation Program project consisted in:

- 24 manager training sessions in workplace psychological safety and addictions (with an additional pilot training session)
- 25 employee lunch and learn sessions in workplace psychological safety and addictions
- Resource Guide for Managers and Supervisors offering resources, tools, and supports.
- Fact Sheet and Tent Card for employees
- Detailed program evaluation
- Knowledge Transfer Activities, including a half day conference

### **Workplace Psychological Safety and Addictions Training for Managers**

#### **-1 pilot session and 24 half day sessions-**

The Workshop's content was designed to be consistent with the guidelines and best practices identified by the 2013 ***MHCC National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace***. In keeping with these recommendations, it focused on prevention, early identification and recognition, early and appropriate intervention or action, and assessment and planning. The workshops followed an evidence-based approach, integrating two models:

A **fact-based model** to increase managers' and supervisors' knowledge of mental health and addictions issues, common signs and symptoms, and the impact of mental illness and addictions in the workplace.

An **interactive model**, with interactive case studies emphasizing group processes, to increase managers' and supervisors' self-efficacy in appropriately identifying mental health issues in the workplace, approaching an employee with performance-related concerns, and providing appropriate resources and assistance.

Specifically, these manager trainings were designed to:

- Engage managers and supervisors in developing knowledge and facility with organizational strategies, policies, and procedures to support awareness and prevention, which includes:
- The importance of an effective workplace policy and action plan with regards to mental health issues, drugs and alcohol, bullying and harassment and workplace violence.
- The importance of strategies to communicate policy and procedures to employees in promoting respectful workplace.
- The importance of a supportive policy in setting the parameters for appropriate procedures from early identification and structured intervention to return to work plans if needed.

- Enable leaders to identify signs and symptoms of psychological health and safety issues in the workplace, and to provide initial assistance
- Dispel managers' and supervisors' apprehension that expertise and counseling skills are a requirement of successful workplace intervention.
- Show leaders how discussions regarding performance can direct and facilitate supportive intervention and the manner in which drop in attendance, behavioural changes, lateness, poor performance, and other such markers may indicate a mental health or substance abuse problem.
- Providing cross-training for co-occurring disorders and for harmful substance use in the workplace.
- Emphasize the well-established link between psychosocial factors (stress, substance abuse, bullying) and illness and injury from musculoskeletal injuries due to falls and other accidents.
- Prepare leaders to support employees with psychological issues stay at work or return to work in a safe and sustainable manner.
- Increase leaders' intentions to promote psychological safety by conveying the impacts of management **practices on preventing injury and illness**, which includes:
  - Discussing the importance of managers and supervisors creating a climate for workers to feel safe and to ask questions and speak up; improving adherence to safety standards.
  - Emphasizing the special significance of this climate for new workers (young workers and new immigrants).
- Train managers and supervisors in the correct documenting process.

### **Awareness-Raising ‘Lunch and Learn’ Session for Employees**

#### **25 one-hour sessions**

The one-hour employee awareness sessions emphasize that an effective communications strategy is required to convey that leadership regards psychological health as important to the sustainability of business and as consistent with its mission and values. This recognizes that awareness is the key driver in prevention. Awareness-raising sessions are particularly important for young workers and new workers who may have no prior exposure to such information, and who are highly represented in the three target sectors. These sessions were provided on-site over lunch hours, along with a fact sheet. The awareness-raising Lunch and Learn was designed to:

- Provide employees with on-site, accessible information on addictions and mental conditions in the workplace from a health and safety standpoint.
- Emphasize the importance of asking questions/voicing concerns about psychological safety.
- Raise awareness among employees concerning services and resources both within and outside of the organization, which includes a one-page fact-sheet with links to resources for employees

- Key message centers on speaking up, making use of an easily remembered **T.A.L.K.S** This stands for: Talk to coworkers about stressors and mental health concerns. Ask supervisors for resources. Learn your employer's mental health policies and procedures. Know the risks of not speaking up. Seek out the help of your own medical professional if you have concerns about your own mental health.

### **Resource Guide for Managers and Supervisors**

Vital Life Inc.'s Resource Guide for Managers and Supervisors is a glossy stock tri-fold brochure offering key resources for psychological safety, addictions, and mental health in a digestible format. The resource guide summarized key workshop content, provided tools for assisting struggling employees, and offered a list of resources and supports, including links and contact information.

### **Fact Sheet and Tent Card for Employees**

Vital Life Inc.'s tent card for employees is a glossy stock resource guide for employees, offering key resources for psychological safety, addictions, and mental health in a digestible format. The tent card summarized the T.A.L.K.S mnemonic, provided a recap of workplace signs and symptoms and offered key resources and links. It was translated into Tagalog, Hindi, Cantonese, French, German, and Russian.

### **Program Evaluation Study and Knowledge Transfer**

The project was designed with the intent to carry out a carefully designed pre--post program evaluation study to assess program effectiveness along key measures, and to share the results of the evaluation with key stakeholders both during and beyond the funding period. The approach to our program evaluation is outlined in Section iii Work Completed, including Vital Life Inc.'s initiatives to share the findings of the study, while the results themselves are summarized in Section iv Program Evaluation Results below.

## **(iii) Work Completed**

### **Project Launch:**

Vital Life Inc.'s project, **Engaging Frontline Managers and Supervisors to Promote Mental Health and Psychological Safety in the Workplace** was launched in the spring of 2015. The first six months of the project were devoted to hiring the project team and carrying out the development of effective training content and resource guide material in addition to focusing on the development of an effective and feasible program evaluation study. Upon project launch, Jolen Galaugher was appointed as Project Manager to manage timelines, budget, reporting, and ensure quality of deliverables. Michelle Patterson was then hired as Project Coordinator and employer liaison to coordinate key project tasks and book all manager and employee training sessions, and was also hired as training facilitator responsible for program delivery. Emily Walker was hired as Content Developer, and Gerry Kaplan of Kaplan and Associates Inc. was hired as program evaluator.

With guidance from the WCB of Manitoba, a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was formed to ensure a mechanism by which leaders in the target sectors and other relevant stakeholders could provide input on training content and format, as well as feedback on program evaluation design. The PAC met several times over the course of the project, at key junctures where feedback or updates were required. Committee members were:

- Brad Boehm, Environmental, Health and Safety Manager, DeFehr Furniture (2009) Ltd. & Perimeter Industries Ltd. & Triple D Developments Ltd
- Janice Desautels, Director, WRHA Regional Laundry Services
- Dave Erl, Director of Occupational Health and Safety, Safety Services Manitoba
- Jim LeBlanc, Occupational Abilities Coordinator, Canada Post
- Joanne Machado, Project Coordinator, Research and Workplace Innovation Program Of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba
- Devan Mackin, Project Planner, FWS Group of Companies
- Amie Membreño, Manager, Employment Services, Immigrant Center Manitoba Inc
- Yvette Milner, President, Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba
- Veronica Suszynski, Portfolio Leader, SafeWork
- Michelle Walker, Senior Consultant, Health and Wellness, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries
- Barry Warrack, Data Scientist, Business Intelligence Unit, Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba
- Christine Webb, Manager, Compensation and Benefits, Manitoba Public Insurance
- Shannon Weiss, Case Manager, Manufacturing and Voluntary Sectors, Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba.

### **Training and Resource Guide Content Development and Program Evaluation Design:**

In consultation with the PAC and subject matter experts, materials for PowerPoints slideshows were developed by the Content Developer both for the manager training and employee lunch and learns. With a view to accessibility and best practices, the training slideshows and resource guide were revised in consultation with Vital Life Inc.'s mental health and addictions training expert Joel Gervais, Addictions and Training Specialist and Lynn Hiscoe, Regional Manager--British Columbia, selected for their expertise in developing programs in workplace mental health and addictions including manager training. The Content Developer ensured EAL and adult education principles were observed.

The final manager training workshop content included:

- An introduction to Mental Health and Addictions
- Costs of Mental Health Problems and Addictions in the workplace
- Workplace Signs and Symptoms
- Why Should Employers Care?
- 13 Workplace Factors Known to Impact Mental Health
- Stereotypes and Stigma
- Key Questions for a Manager/Supervisor
- Interventions in the workplace
- What You Can Do
- What You Shouldn't Do

- Your responsibilities as an employer
- Toolkit for Managers
- Reasonable Accommodations
- Promoting mental health and psychological safety
- Resources
- National Standard of Canada: Psychological Health & Safety at Work
- Tips for Improved Mental Health

The final resource guide for managers included:

- a list of organizations and associations which offer mental health and addictions resources and programs
- a summary of the 13 psychosocial workplace factors for mental health
- a list of some of the signs of addiction or mental health problems in the workplace
- recaps core training material on possible accommodations for workers with a mental health problem, and
- a manager toolbox with checklists for "what you can do" and "what you shouldn't do" in intervening with employees

Once the manager resource guide was developed and revised, layout and design were executed by Pat Perka of Next Phase Multimedia Inc.

The final lunch and learn content for employee sessions included:

- Definitions--mental health, mental illness, addictions
- Workplace behavioural, physical, and performance signs of a problem
- Workplace costs
- Why employees don't get help
- What to do: T.A.L.K.S:
  - Talk about stressors and mental health concerns
  - Ask supervisors for resources and supports
  - Learn employers policies
  - Know the risks of not speaking up
  - Seek the help of a medical professional if concerned about own mental health
- 13 psychosocial factors known to influence workplace psychological safety
- tips for improved mental health
- employee resources and supports

In addition to the lunch and learn training content, an employee fact sheet was developed along with a tent card including the T.A.L.K.S mnemonic, a list of workplace signs and symptoms, and key resources and links. These were translated into Tagalog, Hindi, Cantonese, French, German, and Russian languages strongly represented within the target sectors of service, construction, and manufacturing. Layout and design was executed by Next Phase Multimedia Inc.

### **Program Evaluation Design:**

Finally, a detailed questionnaire and tracking method was developed by Kaplan & Associates Inc. to measure the effectiveness of the manager training program, modeled roughly on study design proposed by Jolen Galaugher and revised to ensure valid data (the questionnaire is

appended in Appendix C: Program Evaluation Participant Questionnaire). Questionnaire format and content was revised multiple times in the light of feedback from the project team and PAC. Vital Life Inc. judges both the resulting study design and questionnaire design and content to have been highly effective. (In subsequent sections, it is noted that the original proposed study design to follow up with participants at several months post training to measure whether gains were sustained was abandoned largely for logistical reasons. Despite this limitation, program evaluation data are informative and highly indicative of program success.) Findings of the study are summarized in the following section, (iv) Program Evaluation Results and described more comprehensively in **Appendix B: Complete Program Evaluation--Kaplan & Associates Inc.** and the detailed questionnaire is appended in **Appendix C: Program Evaluation Participant Questionnaire**.

### **Facilitation of Manager and Employee Trainings:**

In February 2016, Vital Life Inc. launched the trainings in the form of an initial pilot delivered to a mixed audience of Vital Life Inc. managers and representatives from target sectors. Trainings were facilitated by Michelle Patterson. Following the pilot and review by the project team, Michelle revised training content to improve learning outcomes and attended a one day facilitation course to ensure appropriate activities and interactive methods were employed to amplify training content and improve retention.

Trainings were then advertised to employers through Vital Life Inc.'s website and conference activities, by Safety Services Manitoba to its membership, and by Merit Contractors' Association of Manitoba to its members, as well as through announcements at conferences, notably the Construction Safety Association of Manitoba which generated a high response. The Project Advisory Committee served as champions of the project and increased our reach in accessing employers in the target sectors.

From February 2016 to November 2016, Vital Life Inc. subsequently began to deliver a series of 24 trainings for managers in Workplace Psychological Safety and Addictions in the construction, manufacturing, and service sectors with corresponding awareness-raising lunch and learn seminars for employees carried out over the same period, with the final lunch and learn sessions being delivered in the spring of 2017. Training facility space was generously provided by Safety Services Manitoba and, in many cases, employers requested that training be provided onsite, which we accommodated. This reduced room rental costs and the costs of light snacks which could be provided at lower cost without obligating the team to purchase through a venue's catering services. As a result of opportunities to promote the trainings through various supporting safety associations and through the PAC, Vital Life Inc. did not encounter difficulty in attracting participants to the training program.

The following points are worth noting concerning manager training participants and target sectors:

- 360 participants attended the manager workshops with an approximate average of 15 participants per training . (Lunch and learn enrollments varied significantly between sessions with enrollments of 5-25+ per session for an estimated total of 250-300 participants.)
- the majority of participants were employed in the manufacturing sector at 54.5%, followed by the service sector at 25.7% and the construction sector at 12.7%. (The relatively low enrollment in the construction sector and feedback and observations throughout the project indicates reduced training length for managers in the construction sector,

elaborated in subsequent sections). 7.1% of participants were from 'Other' sectors, a number which results largely from participant confusion as to which sector they belonged to, and/or the assumption that they could not both belong to a 'senior manager' category and one of the three project sectors, an assumption which was corrected by the facilitator once it was recognized

- among participants, 46.3% were unionized and 52% were not, with the remainder being unsure.
- the largest percentage of participants were managers or directors at 46%, followed by supervisors and lead hands at 33%, participants in the human resource field at 12.4%, and health and safety specialists at 11.6%, and those in 'other' positions.
- almost two-thirds of all participants had ever been aware of an employee with mental health conditions, and just under half had been aware of an employee with addictions.
- approximately forty percent of all participants were currently aware of at least one employee experiencing a mental health condition, compared with one-fifth who were currently aware of at least one employee experiencing an addiction.

The project team and program evaluator are in agreement that the trainings were, along every relevant measure, highly successful. Between November 2016 and March 2017, Program Evaluation data were analyzed and a final report was generated by Kaplan & Associates Inc.

#### **Knowledge Transfer:**

Vital Life Inc.'s project team representatives attended various industry conferences over the course of the project to promote the trainings and convey program evaluation results, including CSAM's The Safety Conference in April 2016, the HRMAM's Human Resources and Leadership Conference in October 2016, the Manitoba Occupational Health Nurses Week Conference in October 2016, the Return to Work Conference: What's the Buzz in Disability Management April 2017. Most notably, Michelle Patterson (Coordinator/Facilitator) and Jolen Galaugher (Project Manager) attended the SAFE Work Manitoba conference: Psychological Health and Safety-Make it the Standard conference in November 2016, with a booth devoted to raising awareness concerning mental health, addictions and psychological safety, promoting the training project, and sharing initial results. A variety of informal conversations resulted and some of the individuals who interacted with the project team at these knowledge transfer activities received and accepted invitations to our "Leaders for Workplace Psychological Safety" conference on May 3, 2017. It is also worth mentioning that in March of 2017, Gerry Kaplan of Kaplan and Associates gave a detailed presentation of results and findings to the Project Advisory Committee.

Due to reduced costs of room rental and coffee/snacks and somewhat reduced printing fees, Vital Life Inc. submitted a proposal for the reallocation of remaining project funds toward a further knowledge transfer event: the "Leaders for Workplace Psychological Safety Conference" held on the morning of May 3 2017. Reallocation of funds was approved in January, 2017. The conference hosted 112 participants in the relevant training sectors (construction, manufacturing, service), in the sectors targeted for Vital Life Inc.'s 2017-2019 RWIP project (gas, oil, mining, agriculture, and healthcare), to PAC members, WCB representatives, representatives of other safety associations, and to other organizations identified by Vital Life

Inc. as likely to benefit from greater awareness of workplace psychological safety. The conference program included:

- a talk from a prominent Manitoba employment lawyer
- project results presented by the program evaluator and project manager
- an employer panel featuring 4 employers working toward greater workplace psychological safety and representing various stages of implementing the National Standard, and
- an inspirational talk by a professional speaker on workplace mental health.

The event was envisioned by the Project Team as a wrap up of the 2015-2017 project and a launch of the 2017-2019 project. A summary of the event-- its planning, execution, and result-- can be found in Appendix A of this report.

## **(iv) Program Evaluation Results**

Vital Life Inc. engaged a third party program evaluation consultancy, Kaplan & Associates Inc., to conduct a detailed, research-based program evaluation of the project. The design of the evaluation study involved measuring changes experienced by workshop participants based on their pretest and post-test responses to replicated questions delivered by means of a detailed pre and post training questionnaire. The data have empirically demonstrated statistically significant gains in knowledge, insight, and skills for workshop participants across the board.

### **RESPONSE RATE:**

Of the 360 individuals participating in Vital Life Inc.'s manager trainings, 355 pretest questionnaires were completed for an exceptional response rate of **98.6%**, and 343 post-test questionnaires were completed for an equally exceptional response rate of **95.3%**.

### **PERCEIVED PREVALENCE OF WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AND ADDICTIONS:**

- Almost two-thirds of all participants had ever been aware of an employee with mental health conditions, and just under half had ever been aware of an employee with addictions.
- About forty percent of all participants were currently aware of at least one employee experiencing a mental health condition, compared with one-fifth who were currently aware of at least one employee experiencing an addiction.
- This most frequently applied to one to three of their employees reported by each participant.

### **WORKPLACES ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EMPLOYEES WITH THESE PROBLEMS:**

- About one-third of the participants reported that their workplaces very much accommodate employees experiencing mental health conditions, and about one-fifth reported that this was case for employees experiencing addictions.
- When participants were asked what health and wellness policies their workplace have, this most frequently included policies related to harassment, respectful workplaces,

violence in the work-place. The policies least often reported related to addictions and psychological health and safety.

- There were significant correlations between workplaces accommodating employees with mental health conditions and addictions, and the existence of workplace accommodation policies, psychological health and safety policies, and addictions policies.
- Of the participants who were aware of employees experiencing mental health conditions, over half reported “having conversations with them” about this, while this applied to almost forty percent of participants who were aware of employees with addictions.
- The outcomes of participants’ conversations with these employees most frequently included, in ranked order: providing them with support and encouragement; encouraging them to seek help from their employee assistance programs; and encouraging them to seek medical help.

#### **ASSESSING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THEIR WORKPLACES:**

Participants were asked to assess their workplaces based on the **13 Workplace Factors** published by the **National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace**.

The factors most frequently identified as being ‘very much’ adhered to were:

- Providing physically safe working environments
- Protecting employees from violence, bulling and harassment
- Employees being treated with civility and respect

Factors least frequently identified were, in reverse ranked order:

- Employees feeling engaged at work
- Employees having control and influence at work, as appropriate
- Employees maintaining a healthy work/life balance
- Employees having manageable workloads
- Employees being recognized and rewarded for work well-done
- Workplaces providing employees with adequate psychological and social supports
- Workplaces providing employees with supportive organizational cultures
- Employees having opportunities for growth and development
- Workplaces providing clear leadership
- Workplaces providing clear job expectations for their employees

#### **MEASURING PARTICIPANTS’ GROWTH OVER TIME:**

An important component of this evaluation involved measuring changes experienced by workshop participants based on their pretest and post-test responses to replicated questions. The data have empirically demonstrated statistically significant growth for workshop participants across the board. The following areas of growth have been identified:

- Significantly greater identification of employees with ‘current’ mental health conditions and addictions over time.
- Participants were significantly more likely over time to feel that their employees were negatively affected by mental health conditions and addictions in their workplaces. This

is taken to indicate an improvement in their ability to identify when employees may be experiencing these conditions.

- Participants were significantly more knowledgeable about how to recognize and assist employees experiencing these conditions, as this relates to knowing:
  - When employees may have mental health conditions
  - When employees may have addictions
  - How to have a conversation with employees experiencing mental health conditions or addictions
  - The supports and assistance that may be appropriate to assist these employees.
- Participants were significantly more aware of the National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace over time.
- Participants were significantly more likely, over time to feel that they would assist employees experiencing mental health conditions or addictions.

#### **PARTICIPANTS EVALUATING THE WORKSHOPS:**

- Virtually all participants felt that each of the 18 topics provided in this half day workshop was useful for them.
- The topics most frequently identified as being *very useful* to participants included, in ranked order:
  - 13 Workplace Factors Known to Impact Mental Health
  - Why Should Employers Care?
  - Workplace Signs and Symptoms
  - Resources
  - An introduction to Mental Health and Addictions
  - Key Questions for a Manager/Supervisor
  - Your responsibilities as an employer
  - What You Can Do
  - What You Shouldn't Do
  - Promoting mental health and psychological safety
- Virtually all participants were satisfied with the quality of the information provided through the workshops.
- Virtually all participants felt that they received information relevant to their workplaces.
- Virtually all participants felt that the workshop presenters were knowledgeable.
- Virtually all participants felt that they will be able to apply the knowledge they gained to help their employees.
- Just over three-quarters of all participants felt that the workshops provided just the right amount of information. The rest were evenly divided between participants who wanted more information and those who wanted less.
- Virtually all participants felt that their participation in the workshops represented a good use of their time.
- Virtually all participants were likely to recommend the workshop to others in their sectors.
- When participants were asked to comment on what they liked most about the workshops, 213 responded. The most frequent comments related to:
  - The usefulness of specific topics and information
  - Receiving (unspecified) helpful information

- Those who liked the fact that everyone participated with positive interactions
  - The quality of the presenters
  - The positive workshop processes and setting
  - The role playing and interactive sessions
- When participants were asked to comment about the changes that they would make to the work-shops, if they could, 144 responded. The most frequent comments related to:
  - New and different topics to be considered, or making sessions longer
  - A large proportion indicated that no changes are needed

## **(v) Proposed Recommendations**

Vital Life Inc.'s training seminars meet the proven need for practical approaches to increasing capacity in workplace mental health and addictions prevention and intervention in accordance with best practices. On the basis of our comprehensive program evaluation and observations throughout the project's duration, Vital Life Inc. has the following core recommendations:

- 1. Existing training should be extended to new high-risk sectors.** Our program evaluation results showed success on all measures of training effectiveness. In addition, interest levels in our training were high and the project team faced few to none of the anticipated difficulties in attracting participants to the trainings. With a clear indication of interest and with several companies being declined due to not falling clearly within any of the identified target sectors, it is recommended that priority be given to ensuring that such training may be extended to other sectors and in making training content available beyond the period of Vital Life's funding.
- 2. Occupational Health and Safety content of trainings should be expanded.** There are a variety of occupational health and safety issues which directly or indirectly relate to workplace psychological safety and addictions issues. Vital Life's training content covered basic OHS material-- for instance, harmful substance use in safety sensitive positions and psychosocial workplace factors which contribute to bullying or violence-- but there is room to expand. (Interestingly, a significant number of participants were Occupational Health and Safety representatives.)
- 3. Existing training should be revised to increase appropriateness of content and training length for diverse audiences.** Training content and design were highly effective. However, Vital Life Inc. recognizes that the training needs and availability of frontline managers in high-risk sectors differ from those of senior managers, HR managers, and Occupational Health and Safety staff program participants. It is the recommendation of the project team that manager trainings be broader in scope, including information on the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace , the workplace psychosocial factors for mental health, and employer obligations. According to workshop feedback, it should also include elaborated content concerning policy and case law. Trainings for supervisor staff/frontline managers should focus more narrowly on a selection of the training topics already included in the existing manger training, with greatest emphasis on workplace signs and symptoms and toolkits for providing assistance and offering resources to employees.
- 4. A follow-up strategy should be devised to track whether gains are maintained and ensure momentum toward promoting workplace psychological safety continues beyond the project.** If at all feasible, a post-post assessment method should be employed, measuring

participant growth subsequent to training, but also at three to four months post-training to measure sustainability of program gains. In Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusions, under IV Future Research Opportunities (located on the final page of Kaplan & Associates Inc.'s program evaluation found in Appendix B of the current report), Kaplan notes that a follow-up strategy for a post-post study design was prevented due to lack of resources. It is the considered opinion of the project team, however, that despite its recommendation that a post-post study design be implemented, such an approach was prevented in the current case primarily by logistical obstacles in maintaining a high response rate and confidentiality while not burdening participant companies' administrative and HR staff. This is important to note, as it presents an obstacle that is not confined to lack of resources and which will need to be navigated in the subsequent funding cycle if the sustainability of training gains is to be measured.

**5. Education and training efforts should emphasize the importance of adequate workplace policies.** Emphasis should be placed on ensuring employers are educated on the advantages and requirements of workplace policies related to psychological safety, addictions, and workplace accommodations. Initiatives and programs to encourage employers to invest resources in communicating existing policy and procedures to staff, particularly in high-risk sectors, are recommended. (Our study found that high numbers of participants remained unaware of whether they had such policies in place, though our training participants were primarily senior managers, HR managers, and OHS representatives. When participants were aware of workplace policies, they reported having policies related to harassment (reported by 84.5% of all participants), respectful workplaces (83.1%), and violence in the workplace (76.6%) at much higher rates than policies concerning workplace accommodations (56.2%), addictions or drugs and alcohol (40.7%) and comprehensive psychological health and safety (34.2%). Both a lack of awareness of existing policies among managers and a lack of critical policies is risk to employees. Moreover, on inquiry/investigation our study found a statistically significant correlation between the willingness of workplaces to accommodate employees with mental health conditions and addictions with the existence of (and manager awareness of) the related policies. This is significant also in that the two policies least often reported concerned addictions and psychological safety)

**6. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring employer awareness of appropriate accommodations and modified duties for employees struggling with mental health and addictions issues.** Awareness of appropriate accommodations increases the likelihood of offering accommodation and reducing accidents, injuries, grievances, and disability claims. Our study shows that education significantly increases willingness and intent to intervene to assist employees with mental health and addictions issues. Among our 360 participants, 29.4% of all participants were unable to answer whether their workplaces accommodate employees with mental health conditions, and 40.4% were unsure whether their workplaces accommodate employees with addictions. This is a risk to employees.

**In closing, Vital Life Inc. concludes that, in partnership with various Safety Associations in Winnipeg, and with the support and guidance of an active Project Advisory Committee and the Workers' Compensation Board of Manitoba, trainings and accompanying resources delivered to managers and employees in three high-risk target sectors have been highly successful in increasing participant skills, insight, knowledge and intent to intervene to assist employees with mental health conditions and addictions. Vital Life Inc. thanks all who have participated to ensure the success of the project.**

## **List of Appendices**

**Appendix A-Knowledge Transfer: "Leaders for Workplace Psychological Safety Conference".**

**Appendix B-Complete Program Evaluation--Kaplan & Associates Inc.**

**Appendix C-Program Evaluation Participant Questionnaire**

**Appendix D-Workplace Psychological Safety and Addictions Training for Managers**

**Appendix E--Employer/Manager Resource Guide**

**Appendix F--Employee Lunch and Learn Training**

**Appendix G--Employee Fact Sheet**

**Appendix H--Workplace Psychological Health and Safety Tent Card**