

Employer requirements for notifying Workplace Health and Safety Queensland of a work caused psychological illness



Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

What is a work caused psychological illness?

A worker has a work caused psychological illness if they:

- (a) have a diagnosed mental disorder
- (b) work was a significant contributing factor to that disorder.

What is a psychosocial hazard?

Psychosocial hazards in the workplace can include workplace harassment, occupational stressors such as excessive work demands, exposure to trauma, or workplace aggression.

What are the risks if unmanaged?

If unmanaged, psychosocial hazards in the work environment can lead to a range of physical and psychological illnesses which can have a significant impact on a worker's performance.

What are some examples of psychological illness?

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Major Depressive Disorder and Adjustment Disorder with anxiety are some more common examples of clinical diagnoses of psychological illnesses.

Who makes a psychological illness diagnosis?

Clinical diagnoses should only be made by an appropriately qualified health professional, such as a psychiatrist or psychologist.

When do I need to notify Workplace Health and Safety Queensland of a work caused psychological illness?

You must notify Workplace Health and Safety Queensland when you first become aware that a worker is diagnosed with a psychological illness where the workplace and/or workplace activities were a significant contributing factor to the development of the illness.

Please note:

- The notification requirement under workplace health and safety legislation is separate to any decisions taken by the worker or employer regarding lodging or appealing workers' compensation claims. Notification to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland should be made irrespective of workers' compensation decisions.
- 'Workplace stress' is not a diagnosable mental disorder and therefore does not need to be notified to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.
- The notification requirement for serious bodily injury (i.e. injured person absent 4 days from employment) does not apply to work caused illness.

What actions will Workplace Health and Safety Queensland take following my notification?

When you notify Workplace Health and Safety Queensland of a work caused illness, you may be contacted by a Workplace Health and Safety inspector.

Generally the purpose of this contact is to clarify information received and enquire as to what measures are in place at your workplace to manage the risk of further psychological illness. An inspector may visit your workplace to review control measures in place and gather evidence in order to select the most appropriate enforcement decision in the particular circumstances.

How can I manage risks of psychological illness at work?

Your obligations in preventing or minimising the risk of psychiatric or psychological injury/illness can be best met by using a risk management approach, as described in Section 27A of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* and the *Risk Management Code of Practice 2007*.

As psychiatric or psychological injury/illness can be a potential consequence of unmanaged conflict or workplace harassment please refer to the *Prevention of Workplace Harassment Code of Practice 2004* for managing this hazard.

More information

Psychological health for small business

Further information about psychological illness in the workplace is available at www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or by calling the Workplace Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.