

Date: 2021-11-09

Subject: **Mental Health Benefits**

Contact: Michael Davidson, Commissioner, Corporate Support Services
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Report Number: Corporate Support Services-2021-1210

Recommendations:

1. The report from Michael Davidson, Commissioner, Corporate Support Services, in response to 15.3 - Notice of Motion re. Mental Health Benefits for City Employees, be received;

Overview:

- **The City of Brampton continues to invest resources to support the mental health of staff.**
- **The City's Psychological Health and Safety Program outlines the City's mental health initiatives, developed to promote the various components of a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.**
- **This report outlines the detailed offerings available to support the psychosocial factors prioritized in 2021.**
- **A thorough data gathering plan has been proposed for 2022, to further enhance mental health offerings, while building flexibility to support the needs of the City's diverse workforce.**

Background:

The City of Brampton understands the importance of good mental health and the toll mental illness has on employees, their families, and the workplace. In recent years, the City has taken positive steps in creating a workplace that supports psychological health and safety of employees. To continue this effort, a Psychological Health and Safety

Program (the Program) was developed in 2018 using the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (the Standard), stakeholder feedback, analytics, as well as aligning with the People Advantage plan initiatives.

By acting together, the Program can transform our workplace where all employees will have an opportunity to enjoy a psychologically healthy and safe environment and have timely access to effective promotion, prevention, intervention, and accommodation. The goal is to enable the City, leaders, and employees to continue to build and sustain a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.

Implementing the voluntary standard is an ongoing and flexible journey that takes many years, and it is different for each organization in Canada. At the City of Brampton, we are focused on selecting a few of the 13 psychosocial factors at a time, taking action and assessing the results.

Current Situation:

There is a growing need to support staff in coping with financial and/or personal struggles due to COVID-19. At the onset of the State of Emergency declaration, the use of benefits declined dramatically but has since normalized. Although cost savings have been realized, the lack of access to coverage may impact employees in the near term. The Corporation has taken preventative steps to reduce stress levels and mitigate the long-term negative impacts from this extreme change to employees’ work and home lives. The City currently provides a fulsome array of mental health benefits to staff to support the following factors:

1. Psychological and Social Support	
A work environment where coworkers and supervisors are supportive of employees’ psychological and mental health concerns, and respond appropriately as needed.	
Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), through LifeWorks	EFAP is a voluntary program available to all staff at no cost, ensuring employees and their dependents have a trusted place to turn to for immediate and confidential expert help and support for work, health or life concerns including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stress, mental health concerns, grief, and loss - Managing relationships and family - Dealing with workplace challenges - Tackling addictions - Finding childcare and elder care resources - Legal, financial, and nutritional advice EFAP is accessible 24/7 by phone, web, or mobile application.
Paramedical Services, through Manulife	Paramedical Services: Psychologist, Social Worker and/or Psychotherapists Coverage is outlined in each applicable Collective Agreement and corresponding benefits booklet.
Peer Support Network	Peer support offers employees the ability to seek help and support from their co-workers. It is provided by a team of fellow employees who have gone through a certification training program to develop their skills. They complement the more

	<p>formal services available to employees through our Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP).</p> <p>Peer Support teams are currently accessible by employees in Fire and Emergency Services, Transit and Recreation because of the higher risk of exposure to difficult and adverse situations with the public.</p>
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2. Civility and Respect

A work environment where employees are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients and the public.

Safe and Respectful Workplace Policies	<p>The Occupational Health and Safety, Respectful Workplace, Workplace Violence Prevention policies respectively set out roles and responsibilities that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the internal responsibility system – a partnered approach between the City, leaders, and employees to ensure a safe and healthy workplace. • Address <i>Ontario Human Rights Code</i> harassment and discrimination, OHS (Ontario Health & Safety Act) workplace harassment provisions and OHS provisions relating to sexual harassment. • Prevent workplace violence and ensure the protection of employees
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3. Growth and Development

A work environment where employees receive encouragement and support in the development of their interpersonal, emotional and job skills.

Mental Health Workshops	<p>Throughout 2020 and 2021, monthly all-staff learning days included live virtual sessions focused on the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power of the Mind to Cultivate Health, Healing and Happiness • Resilience, Mental Health and Wellbeing • Psychological Safety • Communicating with Empathy and Self Compassion <p>Participation in these sessions has reached almost 500 staff, though on average 300 staff participated in at least one session during these learning days.</p>
LinkedIn Learning	<p>LinkedIn Learning offers thousands of courses that are available to employees through our Learning Management System, including more than 200 on the subject of Mental Health (e.g., <i>Supporting your Mental Health while Working from Home, Managing Stress, Creating Psychological Safety for Diverse Teams</i>).</p>
People Leader Training	<p>Understanding and Supporting Mental Health for Leaders.</p>

4. Balance

A work environment where there is recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family and personal life.

Modern Workplace	<p>The Workplace Modernization Strategy (a Term of Council Priority)</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Flexible Work Administrative Directive and program will allow more flexibility for staff to balance their work, family, and personal demands • Flexible Work options include compressed work week, flex time, job sharing and remote work
Supportive Policies	<p>A variety of supportive policies and administrative directives are in place to provide staff flexibility in meeting their personal and work commitments and allow them to take time away from work when needed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bereavement Leave • Personal Leave • Emergency Leave • Pregnancy and Parental Leave • Short- and Long-Term Disability • Workplace Accommodation

5. Psychological Protection

A work environment where employees' psychological safety is ensured.

Policies and a Psychological Lens	<p>Policies are in place and regularly reviewed to create a psychologically safe work environment for all staff. Policies have been reviewed through a wellness lens to consider how principles and statements create a safe workplace. Below are some of the supportive policies in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful Workplace • Workplace Violence Prevention • Occupational Health and Safety • Employee Code of Conduct
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Corporate Implications:

Mental health benefit enhancements and the facilitation of virtual access should be considered for employees, to recognize their value to the Corporation as well as provide additional and flexible options to support the City's commitment to maintaining their health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Term of Council Priorities:

- This report supports the Term of Council priority of being a well-run city and strengthens the City's commitment to recognizing Brampton as a Mosaic.

Conclusion:

To continue strengthening the Program, additional data and information will be gathered to make evidence-informed decisions. The upcoming projects will provide a more comprehensive and holistic look at the City's current health and wellness strengths and opportunities to inform planning and programs:

- **Health & Well-Being Survey:** A survey identifying employee preferences is a useful tool to amplify the employee voice. The City requires current data on demographics, employee health and wellbeing preferences and opportunities for improvements within the organization. This new data from employees will provide insights into the psychological health and safety within the organization and provide meaningful data highlighting opportunities for growth.
- **Integrated Health Data Analytics:** Working in collaboration with People Corporation, metrics will be gathered and analyzed to inform evidence-informed planning and action. An integrated approach will be taken to look for synergies between different wellness supports and benefits to tell a more comprehensive story using the data. The analytics will highlight opportunities for further education, training and supports to strengthen the psychological health and safety of the organization.
- **Health Program Audit:** In collaboration with People Corporation, a review will be conducted of the current psychological health and safety program to determine areas of strength and priority projects. Literature reviews and environmental scans will be completed to help inform planning that is evidence-informed and aligned with best practices.
- **Strategic Promotion of Existing Offerings:** continue to promote the City's diverse set of mental health offerings through monthly newsletters, service cards, daily People Leader emails from CAO, and Spotlight features.

Using the engagement survey, data analytics, program audits and benefits review, an evidence-informed approach will be taken to continue building a psychologically healthy and safe workplace culture at the City of Brampton.

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