



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**



Managing mental health injuries, recovery and return to work

How to manage a mental health injury, support recovery and return to work.

Some people experience work-related distress, harm or injury that significantly impacts their health. These can be physical or mental health injuries.

Examples of physical injuries:

- musculoskeletal injuries
- chronic disease
- fatigue-related injuries.

Examples of mental health injuries and conditions:

- anxiety
- depression
- post-traumatic stress disorder.

What to do if you experience a mental health injury at work

If you experience a mental injury at work, you should seek professional help as soon as possible.

If you're in immediate danger or experience a serious injury at work, call 000 or ask someone to do it for you.

Depending on the injury, you may need to take some time away from work to access treatment or support.

The [WorkSafe Victoria website](#) provides detailed information about:

- how to make a claim
- compensation entitlements
- injury support.

You can also call the WorkSafe:

- health and safety and injury compensation advisory service at 1800 136 089 between 7.30 am and 6:30pm, Monday to Friday
- emergency line at 13 23 60, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What to do if an employee is injured at work

If someone in your team or workplace sustains an injury, you can follow these key steps:

1. Help your employee to find appropriate professional help or medical treatment.
2. Check the [criteria for notifiable incidents](#) and report it to WorkSafe immediately if obligated to do so.
3. Follow your organisation's reporting policies and procedures to make sure there is a record of the incident and injury.
4. Provide your employee with relevant support, recovery and return to work information.

Visit WorkSafe website for a [guide on what to do if a worker is injured](#). The guide has information on:

- what you need to do immediately
- what to do after a compensation claim is made
- how claims are assessed
- how to support an injured worker to return to work
- frequently asked questions.

You can find more information in the [Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013](#). The Act has information for Victorian workers on insurance, workers compensation, claims, rehabilitation and more.

Recovery and return to work

A work-related injury or illness can greatly impact your life and recovery should be your number one priority.

Returning to work after an injury can feel overwhelming for some people. But research shows that getting back to work can be good for your mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Employers are obligated to [support employees to return to work](#).

The WorkSafe Victoria website has [return to work guides](#) and information for:

- injured workers
- employers
- return to work coordinators.

Supporting your employees in recovery and return to work

Research shows that managers have the most influence in supporting a successful return to work.

The support you give someone should be tailored to their individual circumstances and needs.

The Victorian Mentally Healthy Workplaces Framework has a [guide for supporting the recovery-at-work and return-to-work](#) of an employee.

The same principles apply to people returning from work-related and non-work-related absences like parental, personal or study leave.

The guide includes:

- important information
- [a checklist for small to large organisations](#)
- [a checklist for sole traders](#)
- [additional tips and practical steps](#).

When planning your approach, you should reflect on your relationship with your employee.

For example, if you and your team member have issues communicating, offer an alternative contact person they feel more comfortable talking to.

Key things to keep in mind:

- Work with your employee to schedule time to check in with them while they're away.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of your team member at all times.
- Consider how someone's absence will impact the rest of the team.
- Work with people that specialise in return to work. This may include the treatment team, case manager and return-to-work coordinator.
- Plan and prepare for your team member's return.
- Remember that recovery and return to work isn't always linear. For example, if someone has an ongoing mental injury, they may need long-term support.
- Make adjustments to support your employee to return to work. For example, flexible work or reallocation of work.
- Check-in regularly to see how your team member is doing.

Resources you can use

- [Legal obligations for supporting staff to return to work](#), WorkSafe Victoria
- [Policy and procedures for supporting staff to return to work](#), WorkSafe Victoria
- [Guide for supporting the recovery-at-work and return-to-work](#) of an employee, Victorian Government.