



RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF ABERDEEN NO. 373			
Policy Title		Adopted by	
Mental Health Policy		Resolution No. 279 /24	
Origin/Authority	Jurisdiction	Effective Date	Page #
RM Council	RM of Aberdeen No. 373	November 14 th , 2024	1

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to address mental health issues that may affect employees of the Rural Municipality of Aberdeen (the “RM”).
- 1.2 Mental health is just as important as physical health. Mental illness may be detrimental to a person, as it impacts happiness, productivity, and collaboration. Mental health issues may affect companies, in the form of:
 - (a) Turnover
 - (b) Absenteeism
 - (c) Poor employee performance
 - (d) Substance abuse
 - (e) Workplace accidents
 - (f) Workplace violence or harassment
- 1.3 The aim of this policy is to address mental health issues within the workplace, and to ensure a safe workplace

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all our employees. The Chief Administrative Officer is primarily responsible for communicating this policy and overseeing its implementation. Councillors shall also, when appropriate circumstances arise, communicate the commitment of the RM to this policy.
- 2.2 Notwithstanding anything in this policy, it applies to the Chief Administrative Officer. Where the person holding that position is a supervisor to another employee, this policy applies to the Chief Administrative Officer as an employee. Where the Chief Administrative Officer should be an employee with mental health issues, any reference to that person or that person’s supervisor shall be read as a reference to the Reeve.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

3.1 What are mental health issues?

Mental health issues in the workplace are any conditions that affect an employee's state of mind. These conditions may include mild depression, stress and severe anxiety which may result in burnout and nervous breakdowns. Substance abuse may also perpetuate mental health issues.

Some employees may suffer with no physical side effects, while others may experience physical symptoms (e.g., increased blood pressure, lethargy, changes in eating habits.)

3.2 Factors that cause mental health issues

Employees may experience mental health issues for various reasons that the RM cannot control (for example, hereditary issues, family conflicts, and general health.)

There are, however, work-related reasons for mental health problems, including:

- (a) Job insecurity.
- (b) Excessive pressure.
- (c) Work-life imbalance.
- (d) Lack of appreciation.
- (e) Hostile workplace conditions.
- (f) Unsatisfactory job or workload.
- (g) Unpleasant relationships with colleagues or managers.

The RM's goal is to recognize and address cases of workplace pressures that contribute to mental health issues.

3.3 Approach to Mental Health Issues

The RM strives to:

- (a) Treat mental illness seriously.
- (b) Identify issues proactively and resolve them.
- (c) Support employees who face mental health problems.
- (d) Identify and correct issues in the workplace in collaboration with Council, administration, and employees.

3.4 Internal Policies

Mental Health Policy

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The RM has enacted policies to address matters such as substance abuse and workplace harassment.

The RM provides to its employees the following benefits and assistance programs administered by SARM.

- Group Blue Cross Extended Health Coverage
- Short-term disability Coverage
- Employee and Family Assistance Program from Homewood Health

The RM is in the process of addressing an overall fit to work program to ensure a comprehensive approach to employee wellness.

3.5 Mental health awareness

In order to raise mental health awareness and combat the stigmas associated with them, the RM will provide as part of its safety education program, an annual session to discuss and to raise awareness of mental health issues, and resources available to its employees.

3.6 Job-related issues

Issues related to work, compensation, job insecurity and work-life balance can create mental health difficulties. In these cases, the RM encourages employees to speak with their immediate supervisor about how to handle their individual situations better. Where issues persist, employees may raise issues directly with the Chief Administrative Officer. Senior administration may also raise issues with the Reeve.

The RM encourages open communication between employees and supervisors. If employees have a work-related problem, they should speak openly to their supervisor. Supervisors are in turn obliged to listen to their employees and should search for a mutually satisfying solution together.

3.7 Supervisor's responsibilities

Supervisors should also proactively identify mental health issues among their employees. If they perceive that an employee is in a state of emotional or psychological distress, they should reach out to them.

Supervisors will endeavour to assist employees:

- (a) If an employee has work-related problems, the supervisor will work with them to find a solution
- (b) Where an employee has issues collaborating with colleagues, the supervisor should meet with concerned employees and serve as mediator. If the problem is severe (e.g., violence, harassment, victimization), the supervisor should immediately raise the issue with the Chief Administrative Officer.

- (c) Where an employee's problems are personal, where the employee refuses to discuss them, or where the supervisor believes that problems may affect workplace safety, the supervisor managers should encourage them to contact a mental health professional, and to support them in that process.

4. WORKPLACE SAFETY ISSUES

- 4.1 Where an employee is suffering from mental health issues that may affect their personal safety or that of their fellow employees, it is essential that they report the issue immediately to their supervisor, who shall discuss the matter fully with the employee and shall report the matter to the Chief Administrative Officer.
- 4.2 Where a supervisor identifies mental health issues that may affect an employee's personal safety or that of their fellow employees, it is essential that they discuss the issue immediately fully with the employee and thereafter, if it appears that safety remains an issue. report the matter to the Chief Administrative Officer;

5. LEAVE

- 5.1 An employee suffering from mental health issues that require absence from the workplace shall discuss the matter immediately with their supervisor, who will assist the employee in making arrangements to apply for leave, to permit them to obtain the treatment necessary to assist them with their difficulties. The Chief Administrative Officer shall assist the employee in applying for any applicable leave benefits provided by the RM.
- 5.2 Where a supervisor determines that an employee's mental health issues may affect their personal safety or that of fellow employees, the supervisor shall first raise the matter with the Chief Administrative Officer and then shall discuss the matter with the employee, following which, if the supervisor should continue to have concerns about safety, they shall communicate that conclusion to the Chief Administrative Officer who may place the employee on leave to ensure that the safety issues are resolved.
- 5.3 Where an employee is on leave for mental health issues, the Chief Administrative Officer may, to ensure the employee's well-being, and to satisfy the employer's right of the RM to ensure that continued leave is warranted or to determine the anticipated return date, if any, request updates from the employee, and may require the employee to furnish such medical reports respecting the employee's status as may be reasonably required.
- 5.4 Whenever an employee on leave indicates that they wish to return to work:
 - (a) The Chief Administrative Officer shall discuss with the employee whether a graduated return to work is proposed;
 - (b) The Chief Administrative Officer may, in their sole discretion, seek a report in writing from the medical practitioner treating the employee that they are cleared for work, and if a graduated return to work is proposed, providing their opinion on that graduated return; and/or

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- (c) The Chief Administrative Officer may, in their sole discretion, require the employee to attend before a mental health professional for the purposes of a report respecting the ability to return to work and/or engage a professional to advise on an appropriate return to work process.
- (d) The Chief Administrative Officer shall work with the employee and the professionals respecting a return to work but shall retain discretion to determine the structure of a return to work and may delay a return to work to ensure the safety of the employee and fellow employees.

5.5 Whenever an employee's return to work requires accommodation by the RM, either temporarily or permanently:

- (a) The Chief Administrative Officer shall discuss with the employee the nature of the proposed accommodation;
- (b) The Chief Administrative Officer may, in their sole discretion, seek a report in writing from the medical practitioner treating the employee respecting the proposed accommodation and how they relate to any disability suffered by the employee; and/or
- (c) The Chief Administrative Officer may, in their sole discretion, require the employee to attend before a mental health professional respecting the proposed accommodation and how they relate to any disability suffered by the employee; and
- (d) The Chief Administrative Officer shall work with the employee and the appropriate professionals respecting a return to work but shall retain discretion to determine the structure of a return to work and may delay a return to work to ensure the safety of the employee and fellow employees.

6. OTHER POLICIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

- 6.1 This policy shall be read harmoniously with other policies adopted by the RM from time to time.
- 6.2 Nothing in this policy limits the employer's rights to hire, supervise or discipline employees.