



# Policy resource kit

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Workplace mental health policies help set expectations across the business and establish shared goals. They also demonstrate a commitment to worker wellbeing. Documenting your organisation's approach to mental health is an important step in creating and managing a mentally healthy workplace.

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## Key information

- Workplace policies help set expectations across the business. They clearly define what psychological hazards are and what you will do to manage them.
- Businesses should have a mental health policy, an anti-bullying policy, an anti-discrimination and harassment policy, and a flexible work policy. This shows a commitment to worker wellbeing and positive workplace culture.
- All NSW employers are required by law to have a return to work program.
- There are resources you can use to create your policies.

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## Mental health policy

The aim of a mental health policy is to provide guidance on the responsibilities of both workers and leaders. It should be specific to your workplace.

At a minimum, a workplace mental health policy should include:

1. a description of the policy's purpose
2. who is covered by the policy
3. what is required by law

4. a clear explanation of psychological hazards, expectations and behaviour standards (e.g. what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour)
5. references to supporting and/or relevant procedures
6. how complaints or issues are managed and the consequences of not following the policy
7. a process for monitoring and reviewing the policy itself (and the supporting procedures).

You should also think about:

- creating goals for the policy and how it supports your organisation's broader goals
- how you will engage the workplace, giving everyone an opportunity to give feedback
- the way the policy is written – make sure it is in plain English and tailored to your workers
- how you will implement the policy and ensure that it is accessible – be sure to include it in your induction process for new workers
- how you will manage, review and update the policy, for example when a law changes.

## Anti-bullying policy

Workplace **bullying** (<https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/bullying>) is a serious issue and is a common workplace factor that can lead to mental ill-health.

It is important that businesses develop and implement an anti-bullying policy that clearly identifies the expected behaviours and consequences of not complying.

The policy should be developed in consultation with employees and should include:

- a clear statement that the organisation has zero tolerance of workplace bullying in any form and is committed to preventing workplace bullying as part of providing a safe and healthy work environment
- the standard of behaviour expected from everyone in the workplace
- the process for reporting and responding to incidents of workplace bullying
- the process for managing reports of workplace bullying.

Download the SafeWork Australia **guide to preventing and responding to workplace bullying** (<http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/guide-preventing-and-responding-workplace-bullying>) for an example of an anti-bullying policy. Then read the **SafeWork NSW code of practice** (<https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-of-all-codes-of-practice/codes-of-practice/managing-psycho-social-hazards-at-work>) to learn your obligations under NSW law.

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## Anti-discrimination and harassment policy

Everyone has the **right** (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/employment/mental-health-at-work/legal-obligations-and-rights>) to work in an environment free of discrimination and harassment and to be treated with dignity and respect.

Having an anti-discrimination and harassment policy can help your team understand what kind of behaviour will and will not be tolerated. The policy should cover:

- employer and employee rights and responsibilities
- the relevant workplace legislations
- accepted standards of behaviour
- the consequences for unacceptable conduct
- the process for raising and investigating complaints.

Download a free workplace discrimination and harassment policy [template \(https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/employers/workplace-discrimination-and-harassment-policy-template\)](https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/employers/workplace-discrimination-and-harassment-policy-template) from the Australian Human Rights Commission.

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## Flexible work policy

Giving employees flexibility with where and how they do their work can help create a mentally healthy workplace. This can include flexible start and finish times, job sharing or working from home.

A policy is a good way to show your business supports flexibility and achieving work-life balance. It should include:

- consultation with employees
- employee legal rights for requesting flexible work arrangements
- the types of flexible arrangements available in your workplace
- the process for making and responding to flexible work requests
- how agreed flexible arrangements will be monitored and reviewed.

Fair Work has a flexible working arrangements [guide \(https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/best-practice-guides/flexible-working-arrangements\)](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/best-practice-guides/flexible-working-arrangements) which includes tips for creating a flexible work policy.

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## Return to work program

A return to work program is a formal policy that outlines the procedures for supporting employees to return to the workplace after a physical or psychological work-related injury and illness.

This is a requirement for all NSW employers.

The State Insurance Regulatory Authority offers [guidelines \(https://www.sira.nsw.gov.au/resources-library/workers-compensation-resources/publications/help-with-getting-people-back-to-work/guidelines-for-workplace-return-to-work-programs\)](https://www.sira.nsw.gov.au/resources-library/workers-compensation-resources/publications/help-with-getting-people-back-to-work/guidelines-for-workplace-return-to-work-programs) to help employers and employees understand and comply with their legal obligations. It also has steps to develop and implement a return to work plan.

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