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CSA Z1011:20
National Standard of Canada

Work disability management system

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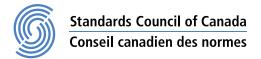
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Work disability management system

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Preface

This is the first edition of CSA Z1011, *Work disability management system*.

To facilitate its use and adoption, this Standard is aligned with the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) continual improvement model found in occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMS) such as CSA Z45001. This Standard is also aligned with the principles and best practices specified in all other publications under CSA Group's Z1000 suite of standards.

It should be noted that, while Federal, Provincial, and Territorial legislation, along with human rights codes and privacy legislation, were considered during the development of this Standard, CSA Z1011 is designed as a management system standard. It is therefore based primarily on best practices for organizations to achieve their goals of optimal workforce engagement, given the health needs of workers as they arise, in order to minimize the possibility or impact of work disability.

This Standard is considered suitable for use for conformity assessment within the stated scope of the Standard.

This Standard was prepared by the Technical Committee on Work Disability Prevention Management System under the jurisdiction of the Strategic Steering Committee on Occupational Health and Safety, and has been formally approved by the Technical Committee.

This Standard has been developed in compliance with Standards Council of Canada requirements for National Standards of Canada. It has been published as a National Standard of Canada by CSA Group.

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CSA Z1011:20
Work disability management system

0 Introduction

0.1 General

This Standard sets out the requirements for a work disability management (WDM) system, based on evidence-informed best practices. The objective of this Standard is to provide organizations with requirements and guidance on how to effectively manage workers' health needs as they arise in order to minimize the possibility, or impact of work disability, as well as effectively onboard workers with disabilities.

0.2 The case for a work disability management system

Effective management of disability in the workplace is more important today than ever before. As competitiveness in markets increases, the importance of an engaged and productive workforce becomes essential to an organization's survival. Yet there are developments that have presented new and/or more pervasive challenges. For example, the prevalence of chronic and episodic disabilities among workers is increasing (Furrie et al., 2016). Work disability associated with less-visible disabilities, such as mental health conditions, are on the rise and pose more complex challenges (Anema and Loisel, 2013; Schultz and Gatchel, 2016). Insurance coverage and service provision costs have also been increasing with time. All these changing factors point to the need for a strategic and proactive approach.

A proactive, coordinated, and organization-wide approach to WDM is needed to minimize risk and optimize operational outcomes. Effectively managing disability in the workplace requires a systematic approach where policies, processes, procedures, and practices are clearly defined, evidence-informed, and reviewed periodically to ensure they are relevant. Given the complexity of this policy area, there are a number of potential business advantages to adopting a management system approach, one that is integrated with other aspects of an organization's management system.

To ensure optimal performance, a WDM system needs to be evidence-informed and based on best practices and the principle of continual improvement. Organizations often turn to management system standards to assist with the process, both when adding new components to their management system, such as WDM, or seeking to enhance existing parts of their system. Hence, there is a clear case for an evidence-informed best-practice standard for a WDM System. For this reason, a national best-practice standard for a WDM system is an invaluable resource to help organizations across Canada develop and improve their WDM practices.

Currently there are Canadian and International standards for several areas of management systems related to worker health, including CSA Z45001 (on occupational health and safety management), CSA Z1003 (on psychological health and safety in the workplace), and CSA Z1004 (on workplace ergonomics), among others. This Standard fills an important gap in guidance for organizations in the area of WDM. It is designed to dovetail with existing management system standards such as CSA Z45001, CSA Z1003, and CSA Z1004.

An effective WDM system offers many spinoff benefits. There is a business case for organizations to focus attention and resources on adopting or advancing a WDM system (see Annex A). It reduces the

risk of costly disability-related human resource and financial losses, as well as ensures optimal engagement, workforce productivity, and business continuity. It can also positively impact staff morale and loyalty, and reduce the risk of human rights litigation (as well as other legal sanctions). In addition to the business case, impacts can extend beyond the workplace in terms of positive effects on workers' personal lives. Consequently, a national best-practice standard for WDM systems is an invaluable resource to help organizations develop or improve their WDM practices, as well as reduce their insurance costs.

0.3 Challenges and opportunities in effective management of work disability

WDM is a complex process with multiple stakeholders within and outside of the organization, including a range of insurance programs and support service providers. These can include workers' compensation insurance, private short- and long-term disability insurance, employment insurance, Canada/Québec Pension Plan Disability programs, and employee group benefit plans. Given the complexity of WDM, an organization's role in the WDM process can be unclear. Some organizations view their role as that of passive purchasers of insurance and support services; hence, their practices in this area are varied, piecemeal, and not based on an organization-wide approach. Conversely, taking a coordinated, proactive, organization-wide approach to WDM will ensure optimal performance and outcomes. Ideally, WDM is data-driven, using knowledge of the organization's past experiences and related performance in managing worker health needs to guide current policies and practices.

A well-functioning WDM system is worker-centred, takes a case-by-case, contextualized biopsychosocial approach, and focuses on accommodating a worker's health needs to maintain work engagement whenever possible. In cases of health absences, it targets safe and timely return to work (RTW) with consideration of the hierarchy that begins with return to one's own position, then own position with modifications, an alternative position and lastly, an alternative position, with modifications. Depending upon an organization's resources, efforts can also be directed at ensuring workers receive optimal care.

It is important to avoid viewing a disability situation exclusively through a healthcare lens because work disability is more than simply the worker's health condition. For these reasons, this Standard promotes a biopsychosocial approach (inclusive of work culture, work environment, and workplace relationships) to work disability.

Optimally, the WDM process considers the worker's role within the organization, their essential duties, and the physical and psychological demands of their job. Collaboration, trust, and effective communications build positive labour relations and are important elements in a people-oriented culture. A critical element to this process is respect for a worker's privacy. Consequently, while the worker can share medical information with the appropriate qualified parties as part of the assessment of benefit entitlement (see Annex B), the process should take into consideration the worker's right not to disclose the underlying condition giving rise to their need for accommodation (see Annex C).

It is a best practice for an organization and a worker with a health concern to take joint responsibility for the accommodation process, including ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure an optimal outcome. In some cases, a union or labour representative can be involved in a support role in the accommodation process or at the programmatic level. It is important to ensure that the individuals dealing with disability cases are competent — that is, qualified, trained, and experienced (see CSPDM *Occupational Standards and Competency Domain Areas*).

0.4 Work disability management system

A management system approach ensures that there is a framework of policies, processes, procedures, and defined practices used by an organization to meet its objectives. A documented and tested step-by-

step approach is important for the smooth functioning of organizational activities. Documentation of policies, processes, procedures, and defined practices is critical to ensuring clarity and consistency in management practices, as well easy access to information. Audits are a vital part of the management system approach. Ideally, organizations have such frameworks in place to address all the core aspects of organizational activities. WDM is best addressed through a management system approach, rather than simply designating it as a function within one area of an organization. A management system approach ensures that everyone in an organization has a clearly defined role in the system and actively participates in ensuring workers' health needs are proactively addressed. A systematic approach to WDM ensures clarity, consistency, and integration with other organizational activities.

This Standard is based on a continual improvement cycle that allows for customization and the flexibility to adapt guidelines to an organization's specific context. The Standard may be used by an organization when it is beginning to develop its WDM system or is looking to improve on an existing WDM system. The continual improvement cycle of this Standard is comprised of four modules, commonly known as Plan-Do-Check-Act. The cycle is undertaken on a periodic basis, with new management system targets being identified, implemented, evaluated, and assessed each cycle, following the successful achievement of previously set targets. Ultimately, a well-functioning WDM system can help ensure effective management of workers' health and other accommodation needs over the employment lifecycle that might otherwise compromise their work engagement and an organization's productivity.

The philosophy underpinning this Standard is that the health needs of workers should be addressed proactively, before the onset of work disability. This is sometimes termed "work disability prevention". This Standard uses a biopsychosocial approach to guide the development of work disability prevention and management principles (Anema et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2016; WHO, 2001). WDM can include accommodating workers in order to prevent unnecessary absences, or early and safe RTW when health absences occur. Proactive prevention of work disability versus reactive responses can ensure minimal disruption in workers' engagement and work productivity, workplace relationships, and workers' personal lives. Prevention efforts are best framed as a continuum from primary prevention (i.e., promoting workers' health by reducing adverse workplace exposures that can compromise health) to secondary prevention (i.e., addressing workers' health needs on a timely basis to ensure optimal treatment, recovery, and, in case of an absence, RTW), through to tertiary prevention (i.e., minimizing the impact of health conditions on functioning, work engagement and work productivity, as well as preventing further deterioration of workers' health).

WDM can also be framed as a continuum in terms of managing worker health over their time with the organization, from recruitment, hiring, and onboarding through to job continuity and advancement, and even to eventual departure (exit) from the organization. Table 1 provides a high-level view of some relevant considerations for WDM at each stage.

Table 1
Considerations for WDM at each stage of the employment lifecycle
(See Clause 0.4.)

Recruitment and hiring	Onboarding	Continuity and advancement	Employment exit
Individual factors: • Community relationships • Education • Functional ability • Work experiences • Worker preferences Job posting: • Essential skills • Location and environment	Preparation of job task and design: • Accommodation requirements • Cultural socialization • Readiness and fitness for work	Experience during time with organization: • Career development • Education and training • Episodic absences • Injury/illness/disease • Job displacement (related to business changes) • Leaves of absence • Onboarding in new positions • Ongoing fitness and work performance • Personal emergency/crisis • Short- and long-term accommodation requirements • Skills development	Organizational considerations: • Assurance of no discrimination • Obligations of duty to accommodate • Provision of guidance/assistance
	Review and address barriers: • Access and egress • Cognitive • Ergonomic/functional • Psychological		Financial considerations: • Financial support • Pension
Organizational factors: • Flexibility of business • Inclusive by design • Organizational culture • Person-job fit • Work environment • Workplace safety	Selection: • Accommodation • Orientation and training of new workers		Provisions for future employability: • Referrals and rehire assistance • Vocational support

0.5 Purpose of this Standard

Many organizations seek guidance on how to incorporate best practices in WDM into their day-to-day operations. As an aid to this goal, this Standard provides guidance on how to take a management systems approach to WDM. A well-functioning WDM system can help minimize work disability by targeting the cultural, social, healthcare, insurance, workplace, and individual barriers to recruitment, hiring, and onboarding; staying-at-work; absence management, RTW, and quality of life.

This Standard is a best-practices standard that is adaptable to the specific context of an organization of any size, private or public, for profit or not-for-profit, operating in any sector and in any jurisdiction in Canada. This Standard is based on the idea that WDM is a strategic and dynamic process, integrated into overall business practices and other aspects of the organization's management system. Implementation tips are provided in Annex D. There is merit in having all stakeholders involved in the WDM system read and understand this document, and for them to identify their respective role as described in the Standard. Although this is a general Standard, it cannot provide detailed guidance for each of those roles. The organization remains responsible and accountable for managing the WDM system. For guidance on specific roles, other professional resource materials may be consulted.

This Standard is a dynamic document, containing common language and terminology that will be revisited every five years.

1 Scope

1.1 General

This Standard specifies the requirements for a WDM system that can be used by organizations to systematically manage their WDM activities. This Standard includes a framework for the management of work disability at the organizational level. It is applicable to small, medium, and large organizations in the private, not-for-profit, and public sectors with at least ten workers.

1.2 Structure

This Standard provides a framework for organizations to prepare for and respond to work disability via a WDM system approach, which is described as a "WDM system". It includes policies, processes, programs, procedures, and practices related to the following:

a) a voluntary framework for WDM at the organizational/system level, including recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of workers with disabilities and the health and well-being needs of workers throughout the employment lifecycle;

b) direction on planning, developing, implementing and evaluating the WDM system within the framework (including implementation tips provided in Annex D); and

c) requirements for competencies of persons playing key roles in the management of work disability and training appropriate to their level of involvement.

1.3 Application

This Standard is intended for use by organizations of all sizes, in all occupational sectors, and across all regions of Canada in the private, public, for profit and not-for-profit sectors.

1.4 Guiding principles

The guiding principles that are the foundations for this Standard are

a) an evidence-informed, data-driven approach that is strategic in nature to ensure sound policies and processes;

b) a focus on inclusion and accessibility to promote engagement and belonging;

c) taking a worker-centred, supportive approach that is contextualized and case-by-case;

d) promoting accommodation and timely and safe RTW, in case of health-related absences, that consider the essential duties of the worker's role within the organization;

e) joint responsibility of organizational management, the worker/workforce, and worker representatives (where applicable); and

f) legal compliance (as applicable in the jurisdiction).

1.5 Terminology

In this Standard, "shall" is used to express a requirement, i.e., a provision that the user is obliged to satisfy in order to comply with the Standard; "should" is used to express a recommendation or that which is advised but not required; and "may" is used to express an option or that which is permissible within the limits of the Standard.

Notes accompanying clauses do not include requirements or alternative requirements; the purpose of a note accompanying a clause is to separate from the text explanatory or informative material.