

How many Mental Health First Aiders does a company need?

The reality is that this isn't a simple question to answer, however we do recommend that you have at least the same amount of Mental Health First Aiders in your workplace as you do Physical First Aiders (if not more).

A report from SafeWork SA in Australia, recommends that a workplace should have one physical first aider for every 25 workers in a high-risk workplace and one physical first aider for every 50 workers in a low risk workplace.

We also recommend a similar approach; however, the key difference is how do we first determine **what is a high-risk workplace for mental health?**

There are certainly industries in Australia where we know there are more instances of mental health problems such as construction, healthcare, oil & gas and even increasingly so in sporting organisations.

We often find that there is no formalised document or policy which gives clear guidelines to say that a specific industry, such as construction, would need a certain amount of Mental Health First Aiders on each site.

This is rather hard to believe, as we now know that 45% of Australians between the ages of 16-85 will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime, and the majority of these will be in some form on employment during this stage, meaning as an employer, you will also be affected!

We also recognise that the amount of mental illness cases reported in the workplace is rising across Australia. From cases of anxiety and depression to panic attacks and suicidal thoughts, mental health is very real, and needs to be addressed.

The benefits to being proactive in addressing mental health at work are far and wide, and include:

- Lowering absenteeism
- Reducing staff turnover
- Lowering company costs spent on workers compensation claims
 - Reducing potential litigation costs
- Enjoying the multiple benefits of a significant increase in productivity

Struggling with mental health at work is real, and it isn't going anywhere anytime soon!

By having an employee or team undertake a course or training such as Mental Health First Aid you are well on your way to creating a mentally well workplace and proactively looking to save your company time and money.

In the extreme case that an employee dies by suicide, the grief which extends fellow employees is substantial, and can have a drastic and far reaching effect on team morale, output and their own mental health for weeks, months and years to come. For some people, the effects of losing a friend or colleague can even last with them for a lifetime.