

APPENDIX D

Mental health issues: Dos and don'ts for assisting members

Do:

- sensitize union members about mental health disabilities
- ensure we have harassment-free workplaces
- listen carefully and respectfully
- recognize signs of mental health disabilities so that we can assist our members and direct them to appropriate resources
- find out what assistance and recourse routes are available in the workplace and community for members with mental health disabilities
- be sure that members know their rights
- find out if the member is competent and well enough to act – and if not, work with a health practitioner to get them there and ensure they are protected in the workplace
- help members to navigate the various systems and recourse avenues, including their obligations in this regard (i.e. medical certificates etc.)
- use union expertise to create accommodation plans that work
- seek time extensions where necessary for the member
- help the member accept the need for accommodation
- minimize conflict and stress for the member, however possible
- respect the confidentiality of the member, however possible (unless they are a danger to themselves or to others)
- be flexible
- assume the member knows what is best for them
- always respect the dignity of the member
- document every interaction with the member and the employer
- get assistance when we need it

Don't

- assume we know what is best for the member
- divulge information that is confidential
- label or stereotype members with mental health disabilities
- act like a counsellor / therapist or give advice on how to address the mental health issues in the workplace
- impose solutions or resolutions on the member
- look for quick fixes
- be inflexible
- talk down to the member
- tolerate “mobbing” or discrimination
- allow opportunities for sensitization to pass us by
- stop assisting the member because they are “difficult” or “uncooperative”