MAO DEAM WEBINAR, SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE, OCTOBER 21, 2026

Kenny Huynh: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the Manitoba Accessibility Office's Disability Employment Awareness Month webinar on the theme of “Supporting Mental Health and Accessibility in the Workplace.” So thank you for joining us today on this absolutely beautiful fall day. It's really sunny and warm here down in downtown Winnipeg so I hope it's warm and sunny where you are as well. My name is Kenny Huynh, and I'm a policy analyst here at the Manitoba Accessibility Office. I'm just going to give it a minute for folks to join in on the call. While that's happening, to access live closed captioning, click on the button at the bottom labeled CC. For ASL interpretation, click on the globe icon which is also at the bottom of your screen. I've pinned the interpreters on the screen and spotlit them as well. I'll leave the instructions in the chat if you're having technical difficulties with the interpretation functions. If you hear an echo or have any other technical difficulties, I will first suggest trying to disconnect and reconnect using the same link. That usually solves many of the issues. And yeah, so we have almost 300 people registered for this session today so I'm very happy and excited to see that many people take time out to learn about this very special and important topic. So please put your comments or questions in the Q&A function in the chat. We'll try to answer as many questions as we can during the webinar. Feel free to put your hand up as well, we'll see if we can get to it. If there's a natural spot for your question, I'll likely interrupt Orianne and then allow you to ask your question. But otherwise, we can handle questions at the end as well. It's also fine to have a conversation in the chat as well so feel free to think of your questions as we go along and add those to the Q&A function. I'm going to give it one more minute for folks to join. We have about 200 people joined so far so let that pick up a little bit. If you're having issues with sound, I see someone is having some issues with sound there, again, I suggest maybe disconnecting and reconnecting and then checking your sound settings as well. That usually solves the issues. And then, if you're still having issues, feel free to email us at mao@gov.mb.ca. And someone will try to assist you, that person might be me, so I’ll be doing double duty. But we'll try our best. In the meantime, I'm going to put the instructions in the chat for folks. You can also access live closed captioning through your browser, through the stream text link which I'll put in the chat as well. So, give me one second here, folks, and I will share that.

So before we get started, I'd also like to welcome my wonderful colleague Maria Ferraro to give us our land acknowledgement today. Maria, if you're ready.

Maria Ferraro: Yes, thanks, Kenny. Good afternoon, everyone. As Kenny mentioned, my name is Maria and I work with the Manitoba Accessibility Office. I'm so glad you're joining us today for our Disability Employment Awareness Month webinar, “Supporting Mental Health and Accessibility in the Workplace.” Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the land that I'm joining you from. I'm speaking to you from Winnipeg, on

Treaty One Territory in the homeland of the Red River Metis. I want to acknowledge the generations of First Nations, Inuit and Metis people who have cared for these lands, shared their knowledge and built strong communities here for countless generations and who continue to do so today. I often like to start my mornings with what I call a spark of the day. A spark for me is simply a small thought or insight that helps ground me and reminds me of what matters. Sometimes it's something I've learned from the people I meet, a moment of kindness I witnessed or a reminder of the strengths we all bring to our communities. As I was reflecting on today's webinar and on this land acknowledgement, I realized that my spark was already taking shape. I found myself reflecting on the importance of community, belonging and recognizing the unique gift that each person brings. This felt like a fitting reminder for today's discussion about mental health and accessibility in the workplace and reconciliation. So I thought I'd share this spark with you today to perhaps inspire you to be the spark that awakens others to shine. So today's spark is a reminder that everyone carries something we cannot see. Each of us experiences our own challenges, joys, responsibilities, and struggles that shape who we are. Because of that, kindness, understanding and genuine connection matter more than we sometimes realize. Taking a moment to listen, offer support or simply meet people where they are can make a meaningful difference. So as we talk about mental health and accessibility in the workplace today, I hope we can keep that reminder with us. We never truly know what someone else may be navigating and creating inclusive and supportive workplaces, and in any environment, really starts with empathy and compassion. Working in accessibility has taught me that inclusion is not only about removing physical or systemic barriers, but also about creating environments where people feel valued, supported, comfortable and safe to be themselves. When people feel safe asking for support and know that they belong, workplaces become stronger for everyone. So I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn alongside all of you today and I'm also mindful that this work is strengthened when we listen to diverse perspectives, build meaningful relationships and continue our commitment to reconciliation, respect, and inclusion. So thank you for taking the time to be here, and I hope you leave with new ideas, fresh perspectives, and inspiration, and perhaps, a new spark of your own.

Kenny Huynh: Awesome. Thank you so much, Maria. And, as her colleague, I can tell you that Maria does really embody some of the values that she spoke about there and, as I think we'll get to today, having a colleague, having a team that's supportive and understands and expresses those values is very valuable and I count myself to be in a very lucky position so thank you so much, maria, for those beautiful words.

So on the topic of Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Manitoba Government has officially proclaimed October as Disability Employment Awareness Month. This is a month-long celebration. It is part of a national effort with provinces across Canada also participating in the awareness celebrations, so Disability Employment Awareness Month otherwise known as DEAM, celebrates the positive contributions people with disabilities make toward developing a more diverse and inclusive workforce for all. During the

month, employers are encouraged to highlight the positive contributions that employees with disabilities make in their businesses and, as you may be aware, in Manitoba, we have the Accessible Employment Standard as a part of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. You can learn more about the standard and the act on our website at accessibilityMB.ca. And of course today, what we're really here for is we`re incredibly grateful to be joined by Orianne Donig Harder. Orianne has worked in mental health and supported employment since 2014 and is passionate about the role employment plays in recovery. I've had the privilege of hearing Orianne speak on a few occasions, so I'm very excited she agreed to join us today to share some valuable insights. With that, I'll **stop talking, I'll hand it over to Orianne.**

Orianne Donig Harder: Thank you, Kenny. That was very wonderful and warm and, thank you, Maria, for those inspiring words to start. It really made me feel warmed up. So I'm going to share my screen. I have a bit of a PowerPoint. I am going to maybe duplicate a little bit of the land acknowledgement, sorry, let me get this. Technical difficulties, folks, just give me one second. Can you see my screen?

Kenny Huynh: We're all good, yeah.

Orianne Donig Harder: Oh, you can.

Kenny Huynh: All good.

Orianne Donig Harder: Okay. I've lost everything. I can't see anything. I couldn't hear anything before, now I can't see anything. [laughter] Sorry, just bear with me.

Kenny Huynh: Yeah, no problem.

Orianne Donig Harder: I'm just going to stop for a second. I am so sorry, folks. What is happening here? Okay. I think I found the problem here. And I am going to share again. Okay, there we go. Sorry about that. It is never a webinar or an electronic presentation without some kind of hiccup so I think that's one thing that I've had to just learn and try to be as gracious as possible about that when I'm doing these presentations because I don't think I've ever done one without some kind of technology kind of blip.

So here we go, I'm going to talk today, not going to share a lot on the slides, but I want it to be more conversational. I'd love to hear any kind of questions or input you may have on your end. I think a lot of you folks have a lot of expertise in this material, so I'd love to hear from other folks.

So I'm going to just go over to our land acknowledgement. So this is our CMHA, as of April 1st, CMHA Manitoba and Winnipeg became CMHA Across Manitoba. We've integrated Across Manitoba, except Thompson, under one umbrella and we're working on getting Thompson under our umbrella. One of our missions is to have mental health for all, a universal right for all Manitobans. So, as part of that, we wanted to integrate everyone under our umbrella because we in Winnipeg have a wealth of resources that we want to share with our folks that are outside of Winnipeg as well. So we

acknowledge that the work of CMHA takes place on the Ancestral lands and traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, and Nehethowuk Nations, and on the national homeland of the Red River Metis. We also recognize the Inuit Peoples whose traditional territories extend into northern Manitoba. Our services and relationships extend across land covered by Treaties One, Two, Three, Four, and Five. In Treaty One Territory, where many of our programs are delivered, we recognize that our water is sourced from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation in Treaty Three Territory, and our electricity is largely generated through Infrastructure situated on Treaty Five Territory. We respect the spirit and intent of the treaties and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

So, some of the things we're going to talk about today, we're going to recognize what mental health means, what those needs are, respond appropriately and respectfully. We want to talk about supporting accommodations, which again I think a lot of folks within this group today know a lot about. We want to talk about building connection and inclusion so that goes back to what Kenny and Maria were saying, the more connected and the more inclusion we have, the healthier and more vibrant our workplace and our communities are. And then we want to talk about promoting psychological safety within workplaces. Just on that, just so maybe you kind of understand where I'm coming from, like Kenny said, I've been working quite a bit of time in supported employment and making sure we have that accessibility for all Manitobans to work in their employment of choosing. So part of that is, I manage the Employment with Supports Program. So we are a rapid employment program that helps folks return to the workforce after an interruption due to mental health issues. I know more and more we're talking about that and people are acknowledging their experience with that so that's something some of the work we do. And then another part of the portfolio that I work with is our Workplace Solutions, and that is going out and talking to workplaces and doing some psychosocial education, maybe some assessments, maybe looking at some policy development and practises to help you have greater psychological safety within your workplaces.

As you know, or you may or may not know, Bill 29 was passed by our Provincial Government which is essentially treating psychological health and safety the same way we would treat any other type of occupational health and safety. So our government is really committed to ensuring that workplaces in Manitoba are psychologically safe and workers are protected psychologically within those workplaces. So that gives you a bit of context of the work that I do.

So why does mental health matter? Obviously, you know, it's really important. We're a whole person, we're not just the person, the body that sits at the desk and does the work or the brain that thinks of things. There's a whole range of who we are as a person. So the World Health definition of Mental Health is “a state of mental well being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community.” So I really like this particular definition of

mental health because there's no deficits that are mentioned in there. It's all about being productive and people achieving what they want to achieve and belonging and connecting so to me, that's just such a really important way of viewing mental health because we often have a really negative view of mental health. So as you can see on the slide there, it obviously impacts how we are at work. We always like to say here at CMHA as well that everyone has mental health. Again, that's a bit of a newer concept for some folks when they hear that, but everyone has mental health whether it's good or bad. And then just like any other illness, we want to have an early intervention because that increases how well we do move forward and promotes that resilience. So I like to use diabetes as an analogy. So if a person has diabetes and they get an early diagnosis and they have early medical intervention, they're going to have far better outcomes than someone who is not going to the doctor, managing it, taking medication or making those lifestyle changes that they need to do in order to be healthy and well. And then that last bullet point, healthy workplaces benefit everyone. So the more we create an inclusive environment, the better off all our workplaces are, it's really funny, I was talking with one of my team members this morning, and we were just talking about how we try really hard here to be really inclusive in our hiring practises and we call it embrace the IDEA. So IDEA being Inclusion, D Diversity, oh, what is E? I'm blanking now. (a) is accessibility. Anyway, when they say D E I, we frame it as the IDEA.

So this is something that people always want to know, how do you recognize when someone is struggling with their mental health. So I always want to say, you know, we're not diagnosing people. People may show different signs and symptoms of different mental health issues. It does not necessarily mean that they have a full-blown diagnosis. We're not doctors or psychiatrists, so we don't want to be diagnosing people. But what we do want to look for are those changes in behaviour or performance. So if you think of yourself, you know, when do things start changing for you, what are some of those behaviours that you start to exhibit or some of those things that you feel inside that you know, oh, oh, things aren't going so well, the stress is getting to me or I'm experiencing anxiety or perhaps I’m experiencing some grief or depression, so you want to look for changes in what's happening. Obviously, withdrawal and isolation, we know more and more now that this is just a huge, huge problem, especially for our young folks, and the pandemic has really created a big isolation problem for folks. So we have more and more people working from home or hybrid. Hybrid's not so bad because folks are in the office more and more but there's more and more evidence coming out that people who are working from home strictly, they're really struggling with their mental health more. I know it's very controversial because many people love working from home. There are a lot of benefits from working from home. But there's also the other piece, not just the mental health piece, but also workplaces are struggling because there's not like I mentioned that impromptu conversation I had with one of my colleagues this morning about our hiring practises and how we value bringing people in with different ideas and backgrounds and pragmatic ways of doing things. And that's what's missing now in a lot of workplaces because those spontaneous conversations aren't happening. And then obviously we want to look for those visible signs of stress or

fatigue. You want to be catching stress before it reaches the burn out phase because then that's more of a medical issue. That's where you're going to see people needing to have long term disability or short-term disability which again always creates disruption in the workplace. And then our third bullet point there, you know, are people coming into work and not producing? That's what we call presenteeism or absenteeism, they're calling in sick every Monday or Friday or whatever that looks like and you're noticing they're making more and more errors in their work that's not typical. So maybe an employee who's been with you for a longer period of time, but you notice they start to make some mistakes they typically wouldn't have made.

So how can we help employees? If you're a manager, obviously, well, we're going to talk about that in a minute actually, so how can you help your colleagues? Check in with folks. Do you have a dynamic where you can say, hey, how are you really doing or, you know, I've noticed you seem a little tired lately, what's going on. Obviously, confidentiality and empathy and non-judgmental dialogue, that's going to be very important. But just checking in. That connection, again, that connection with human beings can make a huge difference. You personally using your EAP benefits or reminding people that they have EAP benefits. I don't know if everyone on the calls with the Manitoba Government, but if you work for the Manitoba Government, I know you have a good benefit program so you can use your therapy benefits through there. And I believe you also have a designated person who can help with that as well on your workforce. Also really important, you know, set boundaries for yourself. I know it's really important. I don't want to overshare any kind of personal details, but I will say when I was younger, I maybe struggled a little bit with setting boundaries and then I was always kind of feeling pressed and taken advantage of but then I had to learn that if I don't tell people, let people know who my boundaries are, then they don't know what they are and of course I'm going to feel taken advantage of because they're going to think it's okay to do that. So set your boundaries, let people know what's okay for you and what's not okay for you. As I mentioned before, getting that early help, very, very important. The sooner you seek help, the better your outcome will be.

For supervisors, how can we augment that? We want you to listen without judgment. I forgot to mention I have some links on the bottom; I can email or send the links. For supervisors, really important when you see an employee doing something that doesn't feel right to you or it's not what they should be doing, we want you to separate the person from the behaviour. So remember that this is a human being and they're doing something that isn't appropriate or that you don't like or needs to be changed in the workplace and that it's not just a bad person. By creating that boundary there and recognizing that they're a human being and they need that non-judgmental empathy, that kind of thing, that's going to help you to be able to manage the situation and help them to receive that information from you. So as I mention, connect staff to available resources, whatever that might be within your workplace. There's also community resources available as well. You can always call our service navigation hub at CMHA if you want more information about that. We have a mental health resource guide that's

available, we have a paper version but there's a link to that on our website and there's also 211 which is available free of charge to all Manitobans as well. And you can go on there and look for different community resources. Obviously, confidentiality. We don't want to be sharing people's personal information. And then number one, really important, have those consistent and regular check ins with people. So the reason I like to share that I'm also, that I manage teams here as well because I like to use some examples of how we do some supervision here for folks. So we do try to have those consistent and regular check-ins. For my clinical teams, I have two clinical teams I work with, I try to have at least biweekly check-ins with them so I'm always keeping on top of how things are going for them. Having these conversations, when there's issues and problems, we're working it out, we're being proactive instead of reactive in the moment. And that's more and more, a lot of the work we do is based on, I'll share some different resources, but this Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, that's through Canada Life, also through Amy Edmonson, a professor at Harvard University, has a lot of information how to continue to have check-ins and conversations in order to mitigate problems in the future.

So what is the role of employers? Some examples, having those really solid policies and procedures in place. It's really important for people, again, back to boundaries, to understand what they are, so an example might be respectful workplace policies that define what's acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in a workplace. It might outline reporting procedures, investigative processes, in the case of harassment or bullying or different kinds of situations like that in the workplace. Training and awareness, of course very important. So some examples of training and awareness that you can have within your workplace, there's things like Mental Health First Aid, ASSIST, which is the Applied Suicide Intervention Training. You can do some executive leadership training for your managers and your team leads. Things like having some mental health awareness training. So if you're interested in some of those, we do a lot of that here at CMHA, so if you're interested you can reach out to me and we can talk about what might be appropriate within your workplace and how we can provide those supports and training to you.

And then I mention those accessible supports. So again, back to the EAPs, we like to hammer in the EAPs. Folks are paying for benefits, employers are paying for benefits, so we want people to use them. That's something that's there, it's part of the package of what you get as an employee. So we really want people to be using those. And so for employers, we want to think about having EAP plans with mental health benefit coverage. Thinking about are their opportunities for flexible work arrangements for people, what accommodation supports look like and here we've got the whole, we've got a whole office in our Manitoba Government dedicated to those accommodation supports so that's quite wonderful, I love it. Again I go back to our supervisor support and check-ins.

Looking at what is a critical incident debriefing look like within your work environment? Sorry, I got another team's call coming in, I want to mute this, sorry, so I can focus on this conversation. So some workplaces are more prone to having critical incidents than others, but I think it really would make sense for every workplace to have something like that set up in the event that something happens and, again, being proactive instead of reactive. And our province, the world's facing tough times right now so there's a lot of situations that are happening that maybe we haven't experienced before. So having a way of talking about things when they happen and supporting our employees so that they feel okay coming back to work after that is really critical. And then the last thing I wanted to mention around that piece is the inclusive and culturally safe supports. What does that look like? I'm going to go back; I think I'm preaching to the choir here because it sounds like you have a lot of that set up within the Manitoba Accessibility Office. So just looking at how do you support folks who may have different perspectives and views and that's culturally safe for them and they feel comfortable accessing that. When we talk about inclusive culture, so that can be, again, when I talk about embrace the IDEA, so how are you embracing that when you're hiring? How do you support employee voices? So how do you give everyone an opportunity to shine and to have their voice heard and to contribute to the work environment? The other piece is you want to create a culture of compassion in your workplace. So being kind to one another. Allowing people to feel confident and to develop their skills and make calculated risks and mistakes because we know that happens and we learn a lot from our mistakes. And then the other piece is their accessibility needs for folks around cultural and religious things that they may need? So an example here, we have a holiday shutdown for Christmas. I think those three business days between Christmas and New Year's and that is for all employees. What we can do for some folks is if they want to take a different religious holiday off, they can work some of that time and take off the appropriate days for their cultural celebrations, cultural or religious celebrations. So it's an in-kind kind of thing. They can come in and work when other people are celebrating their more mainstream holidays and they can take time for theirs so thinking about what kind of workplace initiatives like that you may be able to offer people to be more inclusive. And then the last point here, our leadership commitment. We want to make sure that we're allocating resources for mental health initiatives as leaders. We want to lead by example. Seek out employee feedback and act on it. And then recognize and appreciate employees. So I haven't touched a lot on it. I will talk about it a bit, but most of this work we do is based on what's called the National Standard for Psychological Health and safety in the workplace. This was developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the CSA Standards back in 2013 and they developed this one-of-a-kind document, very unique in the world, called the standard, there are identified 13 factors that impact psychological health and safety in the workplace and then a number of psychosocial hazards so right now that's under revision. The documents under revision, and we are expecting an update on December 2nd, and we know there will be 15 factors and there will be more of an Indigenous lens to this document as well to help us be more culturally appropriate in workplaces for folks. But

one of the factors from the standard is that reward and recognition. So that is one of the 13 things that have been identified as an extremely important piece of workplace and helping folks feel like they belong and recognized and that continues that performance, right? The more they feel recognized and rewarded, the more they're going to give back. So it's a give and take relationship.

So I have a list of some accommodation considerations for employees with a mental health diagnosis. This list is not exclusive by any means. It is definitely some ideas. There can be a number of different ways that a mental health disability can be accommodated in the workplace. So before I read my list, I want to go to my points here on the slide, and this is right from the Government of Manitoba website. So again, a lot of you folks will be familiar with this. You want to talk about what those functional needs are for the employee. You do not need to know any personal health information as an employer or a manager. The employee may choose to share if they feel comfortable with that, but you are, that's personal health information, so obviously it's covered under the act and you do not need to know that information but just thinking about what does this person need in order to do the job in the same way as any other person. You want to work together with that employee to collaborate on solutions. And I also want to mention that often times, those accommodations cost zero dollars a lot of times, it's just around some flexibility. Or looking at what can happen within the environment and it will not cost the employer any money at all. And then of course you want to be documenting those solutions and reviewing regularly. Often times, accommodations for folks with mental health disabilities, it may be temporary, it may be for a short period of time, it may be to accommodate a period of illness or when the person's not doing well, and then they can go back to their regular duties.

So my list, again, this is not written in stone and there can be many, many, many other creative ways that you can go about assisting a person to fit in into the work environment. So we have, thinking about what some flexible start and end times might be. Is there an opportunity for reduced or modified work hours temporarily? Is there an ability to work a compressed work week? So I know some workplaces, I can't remember if Manitoba Government is one or not, but there are some opportunities to not work Fridays or to work from home on Fridays, those kinds of things. So again, just some flexibilities and different ways that we can approach the work to make it work for everyone. The idea of, instead of having two 15-minute breaks through the day, maybe you're having shorter breaks more often for that person. So maybe they need five or ten minutes a couple times in the morning to go and do something or just to be away from the actual work so how can that be accommodated, what does that look like? If there is a particularly complex task and the person is struggling, is there the opportunity to provide them with some extra time to complete that? I know sometimes with deadlines, that's not really possible. But again, it's all really a conversation about what can happen, looking at large projects and breaking them down into smaller, manageable steps. And when I share that one, I think for myself, like if I'm thinking about a big, complex task, I'm like, it just seems so big and unmanageable. But when I think, okay, let's just do step

one and step two and step three and I break it down for myself, it's easier. I think as human beings a good chunk, I'm not really a big picture person, a lot of us can do well with breaking things down into smaller, manageable steps.

Thinking about the stimulus that's happening in the workplace, so is their access to quiet workspace? Maybe I'm on the main hallway here and I have to close my door when I'm doing things like this because there's so much hustle and bustle and noise happening outside my office. You may even hear it occasionally even with my door closed. That won't work for someone who needs a quiet space in a corner somewhere, right? What is the lighting like? Fluorescent lights, that can be really harsh for some people. Again that sensory overload, too much stimulation. And what other factors are happening within that workplace, those environmental factors that may contribute to stress for our employees. We also want to think about, again, I always go back to frequent check-ins with your supervisor. Another reason why I like to suggest that, if you have a really good rapport and you know that employee well, you're talking to them regularly, that's going to help you to identify when they're struggling because you're going to see those behaviours a little bit sooner than if you only talk to them maybe once a month or you're not really having a lot of regular feedback and coaching with them, right? So the more you're having check-ins, the better you know them, the sooner you're going to notice when things aren't right and the sooner you can look at some solutions together.

The other thing is consistent scheduling and consistent expectations in the workplace. So some places, there's a lot of shiftwork which we know is really challenging for folks. One of my staff, I can't remember the exact details they were giving me, but something about doing shiftwork, like it reduces life expectancy, and I know it sounds terrible, they found were first responders who do regular rotation of shiftwork, they had that contributed to a life expectancy for folks, I'm not saying that they shouldn't work those shifts because obviously we need that, but it is challenging. So I do know of a large manufacturer here in Winnipeg that does have shiftwork, but they don't do rotating shiftwork, so they keep the person on that same shift consistently. So, for example, if someone was working the 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. shift, that's their shift the whole time so that they know consistently I work from late in the afternoon until midnight basically and that's my schedule and that's what I stick with. So it's not ideal, it doesn't work for a lot of people, but it is a little bit better than that constant rotation of shiftwork.

So another consideration we like to talk about is allowing for time off for medical appointments, treatment or therapy that the person may need. So we want to be making sure that folks are monitoring their medication levels, that they're taking it appropriately, that they're accessing the medical needs that they need. Perhaps they have psychiatrist appointments that they need to go to every four to six weeks or whatever, so how can you accommodate that within their work schedule? And then the last piece you want to think about having some wellness or recovery plans that are developed collaboratively, so sitting down with that employee and talking with them about what they need in order

to be well in the workplace and setting that up. Maybe that's done by an HR department, I'm not sure, again, dynamics are so different in each workplace, but maybe that's something your HR folks are doing for you.

To our connections, so important. I did a little presentation for the Public Service Commission first week in May, I can't remember the exact date, but it was the Canadian Mental Health Week, and I shared together our theme this week which was “Come Together Canada” and that was promoting stronger connections and better mental health within workplaces. We were also promoting in schools and other places as well, but I was really focusing on obviously the workplace for the Public Service Commission.

So we want to talk about how do we get people back involved? Historically, traditionally, people had a lot of workplace culture and for good or for bad, you know, you have friendships at work and went out after work together, kind of thing, that can get a little muddy sometimes, but if you are healthy and have good boundaries, that might work. But really, it was about connecting at work and creating friendships within the work environment and creating that sense of belonging and togetherness and working together cohesively as teams. So I think Manitoba Government, the Public Service Commission, sorry, I'm stumbling over my words, also has peer support programs. I think my information's a little dated but used to have some groups as well for employees who identified as having different types of disabilities so peer support, groups like that for people to connect and belong and to come together, it's all really great and really important for folks. You want to have some team norms that are agreed upon so those are those behaviours and operating principles that shape how your employees, your members communicate, how they make decisions together, how they coordinate tasks within the team, how they're sharing the work that is shared. Thinking that they're not it's not formal rules or policies but, again, it's those informal kinds of practises that we have in our workplaces that establish consistency, trust and accountability among our team members. And then, of course, having those inclusive meetings. Something I do with my teams is we rotate who's chairing so that it's giving everyone an opportunity to practice some leadership. They're responsible for, you know, setting up check-in activities, they're responsible for running the meeting, and then we also take turns taking minutes as well but I think that's pretty common in a lot of places, but giving people a bit of that leadership and inclusion, really helps to establish their voices are heard, their voices are important, we want them to be leading us a little bit, even if that's not necessarily their formal role. And then of course recognition and belonging, that's really important to build those workplace connections. And I've got a little link there that you can look at later, it's got that information about the things that we shared during the Mental Health Week. You may also have it somewhere in your archives as well.

So when we talk about psychological safety, we want to I mentioned the standard. This is where we get a lot of our information, and that first link there is for that. The second link is for DR. Edmonson, that is her DR. Edmonson, she is a business sorry, professor at the Harvard Business School. She's written a couple of books, the one that we use a

lot of material from is called "The Fearless Organization," and she created four zones of psychological safety within workplaces. She's kind of got it on a little bit of a quadrant with low psychological safety, high psychological safety and low expectations and high expectations. So if your workplace has high expectations and low psychological safety, it's what she calls the anxiety zone where employees, they don't feel safe so they're not going to take any risks, they're not going to create any kind of innovative ideas, they're not going to share anything like that because they don't feel safe speaking up and sharing those ideas. If there is low psychological safety and low expectations of output from employees, she calls that the apathy zone, so people are apathetic, collecting a paycheque, not doing much, not contributing, no one's really happy there and it's just very low key, low energy. If there is high psychological safety and low expectations, people are happy, they're collecting paycheques but they're really not contributing a lot, they're punching the clock and there's no real "I feel really psychologically safe here but there's no expectations for me to perform so, hey, this is good." And then the last zone, high psychological safety and high-performance expectations is what she calls the learning or high-performance zone. And that's where people feel safe to contribute. There's a lot of innovation in those workplaces so it's really important for profit places, but any place, you need innovation, you need people to look at a situation or problem and say, hey, have we tried this way to do something more effectively, more efficiently, maybe it's more psychologically safe for people, for businesses, for profit businesses, maybe it's a million dollar mistake saver, you know, there's lots of different ways we can look at that. So we want people to be learning from their mistakes. We want to normalize mistake making. I know in some work environments, mistakes can be a little bit more critical than other work environments but that's what training periods are for, right? You want to give people opportunities to learn from their mistakes as they're learning the new tasks. Of course always respectful communication. We want to make sure we're choosing our language carefully, that we're not hurting or offending people and we're communicating our needs for their performance in a respectful way so that they can hear that information and feedback and, you know, internalize it and to use it to output, for output, for production. And then zero tolerance for harassment. So I don't think that needs a lot of explanation but really any kind of behaviour that's considered harassment or bullying in a workplace, there should be zero tolerance for that. That should be covered in a respectful workplace policy. There should be procedures for dealing with that and there should be real outcomes for people who are perpetuating that kind of behaviour.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about reducing stigma. Stigma is either a view that we personally have or a view that society has that informs the way we think about people within certain categories. For example, so we think of racism, we think of discrimination, sexism, that kind of thing, there's stigma attached to all of those different thoughts and ideas. 60% of people who are struggling with their mental health will not disclose or seek out treatment due to stigma. So six out of ten people struggling will not seek out help because they're afraid of either their own perception of it, thinking lesser of themselves, like oh, that means I’m weak or I’m stupid, whatever that self talk is, or

they're afraid I can't seek out treatment, my employer's going to fire me because I have a mental health issue, or I'm going to get kicked out of school or my family going to kick me out, my family won't love me, my partner is going to leave me. That's the kind of thinking that happens with stigma. We as a society have gotten much better with stigma. We are certainly not perfect, we're not there yet, but I think a lot of us are trying really hard to reduce stigma and to understand what's happening for people and to be more compassionate to them so that they can seek out that treatment. So here's some of our keyways that we can reduce stigma. We want to use person first language. So an example might be I'm going to use a person living with schizophrenia so you want to use that kind of language instead of saying he's schizophrenic or, you know, he's autistic, she's, you know, that kind of thing, you want to not label the person. You want to, sorry, another call, I'm going to mute this. I should have just turned that right off. We want to again recognize they're a human being and they are not just a disorder that's happening to them. The other piece is we want to challenge myths. So any time you hear some kind of misinformation or a myth around mental health or anything really, to challenge it, to say, well, no, that's not true. Like, for example, lots of people think that people who are experiencing psychosis are going to be dangerous, when, in fact, people who live with schizophrenia or experiencing psychosis are far more likely to be victimized than to be the victimizer so that's challenging a myth. Maybe you don't feel comfortable quite with that. I feel comfortable saying that because that's what I know from my work here at CMHA but think of racism or any other kind of examples like that. You can challenge those with people by saying, well, in fact, this is the reality. And that's going to help reduce stigma. Sharing resources, of course, and again that can be an ally to people. As soon as you recognize something's happening for them and you start sharing your resources, you're creating a dialogue with that person and they're going to feel more comfortable with and that makes them more likely than to seek out help and then, of course, that leads to our last point, normalizing help seeking. Have you seen a doctor? How's it going, have you seen a doctor? Have you checked in with EAP, is there anything available there for you that might help? Using those kinds of normalizing conversations.

So some key takeaways and then we will open up the floor to some questions. So everyone contributes to an organizational culture on how mental health is viewed in the workplace so every single person. There is more of the onus on leadership to create that environment but every person brings something to the workplace so I really like to stress that regardless of what your position is or where you feel your power dynamic is in the workplace, you still are bringing something and you're contributing to that organizational culture. We want to support people early and respectfully. We want to remember that inclusion improves outcomes and, yes, I will say actually for the Manitoba Accessibility Office, we are here I think every workplace in Manitoba has to do it, but obviously we have done that accessibility training here as well and that's something we have all of our new staff complete. Just really from day one, saying we are an inclusive employer that really colours our work environment and it brings a richness and dynamics that you don't get where everyone's thinking the same way,

right, I go back to that innovation and problem solving. When you have people, when you have diversity in the workplace, you've got a number of different ways to think of how to solve a problem or how things can be done differently so it's just really, I get excited about that. I'm a bit of a nerd, I guess, but that really excites me and I really enjoy that. And then of course that leads to our last point then, psychological safety, enable success and innovation in the workplace. So my next slide here, it's a slide o, you can put questions in here. You can unmute and ask me a question, or you could put it in the chat. Anything like that, I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Kenny Huynh: Okay, so just while people are thinking of their questions, Orianne, we have a question in the chat here. I'll just read it out to you.

Orianne Donig Harder: Okay.

Kenny Huynh: This is something that our office gets a lot too and I'd love to hear your take on it. If requesting accommodations to the employer, would the employer need a medical note with the accommodation recommendations? Especially if the mental health barrier is not quote unquote diagnosed.

Orianne Donig Harder: That's going to depend on from my perspective anyway, maybe you have a different idea, Kenny. The employer can ask for a medical documentation. But you could also work with that employee and just say like what can we do to help you feel like you can achieve your role there. Kenny, actually, I would like to hear your perspective on this. I'm certainly not an expert on this.

Kenny Huynh: Yeah, so from the accessibility lens and principle, we typically do not ask for, you know, the diagnosis or the medical paperwork, for lack of a better word. However, you know, there are cases where, you know, Workers' Compensation Board is involved, there's a return to work plan so on a case by case basis, what I like to tell people is that, you know, sometimes providing that information or disclosing that information is helpful to your situation because then you can really have an open and honest conversation hopefully in a psychological safe way with your employer in order to accommodate. That said, you know, certainly like you touched on before, confidentiality is key.

Orianne Donig Harder: Absolutely.

Kenny Huynh: And respect, like, you know, addressing it respectfully is always a priority. But I think in principle, you don't have to disclose. But, you know, in practice, I've found we've found at least that, you know, it's sort of like a working relationship, right, you want to have a good relationship with your employer and they want to be empowered to be able to accommodate you so there's a little bit of that as well.

Orianne Donig Harder: Yeah, yeah. That's great. Good question, thank you. I see something on slido here. Why do employers treat medical providers request for accommodations differently when the issue is psychological rather than physical?

Ha, stigma. Misunderstanding. Not recognized. I think there's still a lot of barriers around recognizing that people with mental health issues can work just like anyone else. That's something that we deal with on a daily basis here. There's even psychiatrists in this province that tell people with mental health diagnoses that they shouldn't work, which just shocks me, but, hey, that's what some of our folks who come through our Employment with Supports Program talk about. So I can't answer why an individual thinks a certain way but I'm going to go back to say that the employer still has some stigma not really understanding what a mental health issue is and that it is a medical diagnosis as well. I hope that answers that. That doesn't really answer that question, but again, I can't really speak about what each employer is how they're viewing this.

Kenny Huynh: The next question, you spoke a bit about indigenous mental health. Can you expand on Bipoc mental health and how trauma and culturally appropriate care can be a support.

Orianne Donig Harder: Yeah, that's excellent. That's something we're working on here at CMHA. We've deposited a couple of different initiatives we are working on. We do have a director of, I'm really bad at remembering people's titles, I think she's Director for Indigenous Partnerships and Initiatives, so we do have a few different things. We have like a committee, it's called a cultural committee where we look at different cultural practises, we try to celebrate as many different practises as possible within the workplace, like recognizing Black History Month and Truth and Reconciliation, you know, Orange Shirt Day, Red Dress Day. We also have, I can't remember exactly what it's called right now, but we developed what's called a tool kit and that's for Black Canadians, so for folks of African and Caribbean descent, it was developed specifically with them by our internal staff who are of black and Indigenous, people of colour. I don't know too much about that. I do know there is a bit of a group around that and there are some things that they can use for that to help address those mental health needs. If you want to put your email address in the chat, if you wanted more information about that, I could email that to you. Sorry, I couldn't oops.

I want to look at some of these other questions, I lost some of them. Sorry. I hope that answered that a bit. I lost some of my questions here. I'll go from the top and read what I can. I hope I capture all of them. Any advice for navigating psychologically unsafe workplaces when leadership and HR refuse to address this issue. With Bill 29 that I talked about at the beginning with our new mandate from our provincial government to address psychological unsafe workplaces, I'm not quite sure of the mechanism, nothing really has been published about that. I would reach out to Safe Work Manitoba. There is an assessment that does need to be done when an employee is requesting it for psychological practises in the workplace to ensure that that is happening. So I know where the assessment is, I know how to do the assessment but I'm not sure what that mechanism is to get that employer to do that assessment. So again, if you want to put your email in the chat, I can follow up with you and share those resources with you and

help to get you connected to that. You can also reach out to our Workplace Solutions Portfolio here. I can connect you with them, and we can talk about how we can get that going with your workplace.

I was surprised to hear that the presenter used autism as an example of people first language. Yes, this was true for many years, but many autistic adults and autistic led groups or pushing back on this approach, any autistics view autism as an inseparable part of identity rather than a condition someone simply has.

I don't know anything about that. We here, we do try to use that person first language, and I wouldn't use the word Autist, that's not I don't feel comfortable with that. I've been told that that's not something that was acceptable, so no one's personally told me to change that perspective. So I would still continue to use person first language because I feel that's a respectful place to come from but if someone told me otherwise, then I would change that. So again that's a personal thing. Yeah. Just like I wouldn't call someone who lives with schizophrenia a schizophrenic. Are you personally being told now? Well, no, I'm not being personally told now, someone's typing this in the chat and I prefer it to be a face-to-face conversation just so I knew who I was talking to and that I wasn't addressing that to everyone. I would like that to be something about a face-to-face conversation, person to person conversation so I understood where that was coming from instead of in a group of 200 people unfortunately, yeah. Any advice we did that one. Sorry, my little screen has lost the earlier questions.

Kenny Huynh: Sorry, if I can jump in with one of the questions we received earlier, I think it kind of touches on a lot of themes of the questions and something that we get a lot in this office as well. Some perspective, you mention you do manage teams and employees as well. How can employees and managers balance the need for flexibility in responding to individual mental health related accommodation needs with the need for consistency and fairness so some managers, as we know are very policy driven and by virtue of some of the questions we're receiving, you know, very risk averse while others are willing to go out on a limb for their direct reports and sort of foster that safe environment to get the best out of their team, right?

Orianne Donig Harder: Yeah.

Kenny Huynh: But they're often stuck between a hard place so this might be a little out of your wheelhouse, but I know you do have experience managing folks and as an employee as well, so I'd love to hear some of your perspective on that.

Orianne Donig Harder: Yeah. So I think when you said that what I first what first jumped to mind is my perception of fairness, right? Someone's getting an accommodation and it might look unfair to another person, is that where you're coming from?

Kenny Huynh: Sure, yeah. We've had that as well. Or, you know, the same accommodation might not be extended to everyone.

Orianne Donig Harder: right.

Some of them are preferences, some of them are, you know, other types of things as well, so it's kind of tricky in that regard.

Kenny Huynh: Yeah. So I actually kind of have seen that a bit. Reminding people that we may not know, because of confidentiality, we may not know everything that's happening for our colleagues, if they choose not to share, so someone may have an accommodation and it may look like they're getting treated differently but it really is a legal accommodation we want to do to ensure that people are able to do their jobs in a way that's respectful, right? I have reminded folks of that in the past. But again, you're right, there is that difference between managers, too. Like you said, some managers are really policy driven and they may be a little less flexible how people are doing their jobs kind of thing. It's really interesting and that's where I go back to the leadership and leadership training. Are all leaders equipped with the ability to have these conversations with folks. And how do you equip your leaders with that. Do they all have the same training of how to have conversations about accessibility and accommodation with employees. I know for a big, big body like the Manitoba Government where you've got thousands of employees and probably hundreds and maybe even thousands of managers that could be really challenging, but if it's something that is important, obviously, it's something to invest in.

Orianne Donig Harder: Yeah, definitely. I'll make a comment on sort of the language, the autism person first language. From our experience, it's really oscillated between preferences for different groups so my advice to folks out there is to really just treat the individual as they would want to be treated. So consult with them, ask them respectfully, like it's okay to ask those questions in a respectful way, just so that it shows that you're showing empathy, it shows that you care. So there's no, you know, right way to do it.

Kenny Huynh: Yeah.

But in our experience, working with different equity groups and different folks, preferences really do vary between groups. And of course our office is located in social services department so there's other factors and other sort of information that we can share. So I know we're coming up we're one minute over.

Orianne Donig Harder: it's just a couple more things I wanted to share if that's possible. If anyone is hiring, and I will say the Manitoba Government has hired folks from our employment with supports program but if anyone is hiring and you're looking at some inclusion in your workplace, you can scan this QR Code or if you're looking for a job and you want some help with that, you can come through our employment with supports program. So we have a team that helps folks find jobs that are appropriate for them. We always connect with employers as well to help folks get jobs. The Public Service Commission has been wonderful to us through the years over different changes and, like I said, there may be some folks on the call today who were a part of our program at one time or you may have colleagues that were part of our program so we're

really happy and proud to have our folks that are working for the Public Service Commission now as well.

The second piece I wanted to share, and then I will leave, I just wanted to share with you this is I talked about our Workplace Solutions. We do have a two-day certified psychological health and safety training that might be of interest for folks out there so you can scan that. The next one is running tomorrow and Friday so it's probably way too short notice for anyone within this call to jump on and join us for that. We don't have any future ones scheduled quite yet but they will be coming up, and if it's something you're interested in, you can always email me and let me know and if there's large enough demand, we can set up as cohort and get folks going. They're small classes, classes of 20 because its very group oriented and a lot of hands-on work, so we like to keep the groups small, so everyone has opportunity to share their experiences. So yeah, please scan that. Let me know if you're interested. And then as Kenny is closing up, just give me a little bit of a rating how I did today just so that I know how I can adjust things a little bit. And I will give folks a second to scan on that and then I'll just put on the last slide which has my contact information for anyone who may be interested.

Kenny Huynh: Sure. While everyone is doing that, I want to thank Orianne for putting on a wonderful presentation. I know there's lots of questions and comments we didn't get to today so I'll try to collect all of them and we'll see if we can come up with some cogent answers for folks. This recording will be shared; the slides will be shared on our website at accessibilityMB.ca. Also shout out, coming up, we have some very exciting speakers as well. On November 19th, we have "Rhythm and Resilience, Indigenous Musicians on Disability and Connection." I'm very excited for this one because we'll have a panel discussion with Don Amero, Mattmac and Catie St. Germain, local luminaries, so sign up for that. And for International Day for Persons with Disabilities on November 30th, we are welcoming Haben Girma, keynote speaker and the first Deaf-Blind graduate of Harvard Law School, so that's very exciting and a big get for our office and I know my colleagues have worked very hard to organize those events so I would encourage folks to go to our website, sign up for those events as well. And then you see Orianne's contact information on the screen there, so I hope she's okay with you reaching out to her and asking any questions, of course we are the Manitoba Accessibility Office. It's mao@gov.mb.ca. We're always here to help. We're not experts on any matter, but we will try our best to direct you to either the CMHA or other experts depending on the issue that you're dealing with. So again, thank you all 200 people that stayed till the very end. Just by virtue of being here today, you've taken the first step. You've really encouraged me in my daily work putting these things on and reaching out to folks. So thank you again. Thank you, Orianne. Thank you to our ASL interpreters. Thank you to our live captioners always doing a great job as well, shout out, Rhonda and thank you at the MAO team for always helping as well. With that, I'll let everyone sign off. Orianne, if you have any parting words, feel free.

Orianne Donig Harder: Thank you for everything and thank you, audience, for participating and being there. Thank you for those great questions. And Kenny, if you wanted to send me some of those questions, I could try to answer them as well if you want to put something together. Happy to do that. And yeah, folks, feel free to reach out to me if you wanted. I always welcome connection with folks and having an opportunity to chat. And to the person who didn't like my person first thing, my apologies. I do try to just treat every person as they want to be treated and if you want to have a conversation face to face about that, I will welcome that as well and I can hear your perspective.

Kenny Huynh: Okay, awesome. Thanks, everyone. Have a wonderful rest of the day and happy Disability Employment Awareness Month. Bye now.