



## Building Health, Safety and Wellness in Every Workplace



**Chris Gardner**  
ICBA President

This edition of the *Monitor* is devoted to perhaps the most important workplace issue facing contractors – mental wellness. Construction employers can be proud of how effectively they've enhanced commitments to worker safety

leading up to and through the COVID-19 pandemic. But as we know, avoiding accidents and injuries is only part of the task.

The demands and unique working conditions of our industry can create some particular strains where mental health is involved. And that's compounded by a widespread hesitancy to talk about this openly, and a tendency for mental health

issues and solutions to be obscured by a cloud of stigma. Mental health is an issue running very deep, but very silent, throughout Canadian society, and the statistics on its relative prevalence among construction workers are sobering – tragic when you consider the heightened frequency of suicides.

Addictions also often hit the construction demographic particularly hard. Every construction contractor wants to see the men and women working on their job sites physically and mentally well. There are a lot of resources to help safeguard and improve mental wellness, but not many of them are tailored to construction workplaces and workforces.

That's why at ICBA we are so proud of our new ICBA Workplace Wellness Program ([icba.ca/wellness](http://icba.ca/wellness)). The urgency of this workplace challenge in the wake of



COVID-19 is why ICBA is offering its new Wellness Program free for ICBA members over the next 12 months.

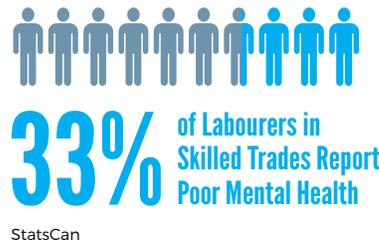
Please take the time to consider adopting this innovative Wellness Program in your workplace and on your job sites – however you make it happen, a wider focus on health, safety and wellness is one of our sector's most important priorities.

## Mental Wellness in the Construction Industry

**Mental wellness issues are common and afflict people in all walks of life. In fact, one in five Canadians experience a mental health challenge in any given year. But some industries involve stress factors that create an even greater risk. Statistics clearly indicate that construction is one of those industries.**

**The Construction Industry Involves:**

- Seasonal and sometimes irregular work
- Strenuous physical demands and long hours
- High performance expectations within often tight timelines
- Sometimes remote work and isolation from family and friends



# Mental Health is a Bottom Line Issue



Creating workplaces where both physical and mental wellbeing are prioritized, protected and promoted is not only the right thing to do for your team - but is also important from the standpoint of a healthy business. When mental health challenges impact a workforce, the knock-on effects can be devastating.

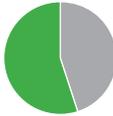
- Greater absenteeism
- Increased disability claims
- Reduced productivity
- Increased turnover
- Increased safety incidents
- Reduced employee satisfaction

## Common Signs of a Mental Health Challenge

- Feeling sad or down
- Confused thinking, difficulty concentrating
- Excessive fears, worries, guilt
- Extreme mood changes
- Withdrawal from friends, family and activities
- Poor sleep, low energy, significant tiredness
- Problems with alcohol and drug use
- Major changes in eating habits
- Excessive anger and hostility
- Suicidal thoughts

# Addiction Issues are a Particular Vulnerability

Substance use and addiction are a common outcome of mental health challenges. The physically demanding nature of construction work - with the possibility of injury and ongoing pain management - creates some particular vulnerabilities. The ongoing opioid crisis has hit the construction sector especially hard.

**55%**  **OF OPIOID OVERDOSE DEATHS**

Among Employed British Columbians were People in the Construction Trades



**That's More Than DOUBLE**  
the Second-Most Impacted Group of Workers  
**Sales and Services at 21%**

Source: Business in Vancouver, July 15, 2020

# Getting Help Starts with Getting Past the Stigma

One of the biggest hurdles when dealing with mental health is often a reluctance to ask for help. This is likely driven by negative and skeptical views about the reality of mental health challenges. The stigma that is widely associated with mental health may be particularly deeply rooted in male-dominated sectors, where workers are often reluctant to talk about “feelings”.

A UK Construction Industry Survey Found:

**29%**  of respondents had taken time off due to mental health/stress

**60%**  of them did not tell their employer that the issue was mental health

Source: Construction News Mind Matters Survey, 1,140 respondents, 2017

**82%**   
believe there is stigma around  
**MENTAL HEALTH** in the industry

Mental Health Stigma Can Originate With:

And Can Play Out in Many Harmful Ways:

**Ourselves**  
**Our Co-Workers**  
**Supervisors/  
Employers**



**Isolation** – Avoidance of a person with a mental health challenge

**Denial** – Downplaying a mental health challenge

**Stereotyping** – Assuming they are weak, incapable or even dangerous

**Gossiping** or **joking** about them or treating them in a **discriminatory** way

## Resources for Mental Health

Employees of ICBA Benefits Services client companies can access counselling services through an Employee and Family Assistance Program. ICBA has also launched a new and holistic Workplace Wellness Program tailored to the construction sector (see back page). Many other resources are also available to anyone with a mental health concern.

[Mental Health 101](#) – Tutorials from the Canadian Centre for Addiction & Mental Health

[Canadian Mental Health Association](#) – Information and Resources, including “Finding Help”

[Here to Help](#) – Mental Health and Substance Use Information

[Bounce Back Program](#) – Materials and Resources from the Canadian Mental Health Association (BC)

For links to the resources above, please visit [icba.ca/mentalhealth](http://icba.ca/mentalhealth)

**Crisis Line Association of BC:** 310-6789 (no area code needed)

**Suicide Prevention Line:** 1-800-SUICIDE

**Online Chat Service (for adults)** [www.CrisisCentreChat.ca](http://www.CrisisCentreChat.ca)



# ICBA's New Workplace Wellness Program

Offered free-of-charge to ICBA members, our new Workplace Wellness Program is designed to promote individual wellbeing and to foster healthy culture change in construction workplaces, through engaging information and resources. The program is scalable to companies of all sizes, and features ongoing client support and self-paced online courses and other delivery tools.

**Holistic** – Addressing diverse, inter-connected themes that include but extend well beyond mental health

**Informed by Expertise** – The program was developed and is delivered with the support of leading experts



**Ongoing and Inclusive** – Companies sign on for a full year, and make the program available to all employees

**Purpose Built** – Designed for the construction sector, the program delivers actionable, easy-to-access and relatable information



For more information on participation in or sponsorship of this important new construction industry initiative, please contact [wellness@icba.ca](mailto:wellness@icba.ca) or call 1-800-663-2865.

## Lincor Wins 2020 ICBA Safety Award

Lincor Enterprises Ltd. has been recognized for its outstanding commitment to safety. Its Industrial Athletes Injury Prevention Program won the 2020 ICBA Gord Stewart Safety Award, presented annually by ICBA and WorkSafeBC.

Lincor's program uses technology to connect employees with a unique set of personalized physiotherapy services. This includes initial and ongoing screenings and surveys, and physio on demand through Zoom, phone or text during regular working hours.

The program provides an alternative to going home or working through the pain. It instead transforms construction workers into industrial athletes, who like any elite performers have the tools and resources to understand the causes of pain and to take better care of their bodies. Read more: [icba.ca/lincor](http://icba.ca/lincor).



ICBA's Chris Gardner presents the ICBA Gord Stewart Safety Award to Jon Walker, President of Lincor.

The BC CONSTRUCTION MONITOR is an ICBA publication providing ahead-of-the-curve information and statistics on the B.C. construction industry and issues relevant to it.



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