



## Member Wellness Position Statement

### ***Why wellness?***

As self-regulated professionals, paramedics routinely engage in professional development activities that support the advancement of clinical knowledge, skills, and judgement. The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics believes that the best patient care is provided when strong clinical skills are combined with overall practitioner health and wellness.

Practitioner health in this context refers to overall physical and mental health, not merely the absence of disease or illness. Wellness is an even broader concept. It reflects a condition of optimal mental and physical health in which a person is aware of their wellbeing and takes action to protect it.

### ***The Challenge and the Evidence***

Extensive research into the health and wellbeing of paramedical professionals has clearly demonstrated that daily exposure to difficult (and sometimes traumatic) situations can cause harm to the individual, sometimes resulting in varying degrees of incapacity.

Further, workplace culture has also been linked to personal health and wellness. A 2015 psychosocial factors survey of EMS workers by Alberta Health Services revealed the following:

- 52% (vs. 33% in Canadian workplaces<sup>1</sup>) of staff identified significant or moderate concerns with psychological protection in the workplace<sup>2</sup>
- 9.2% (vs. 5.5% in Canadian workplaces) of employees reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace because of cultural/ethnic background, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or age.
- 18.7% (vs. 6.7% in Canadian workplaces) of employees reported being bullied or harassed, either verbally, physically, or sexually in the workplace
- 3.4% (vs. 1.3% in Canadian workplaces) of employees reported being treated unfairly in the workplace because they have a mental illness

From the College perspective, environmental factors are important to acknowledge when considering provider incapacity and its impact on practice. Incapacity does not necessarily equate to incompetence or negligence, which creates challenges in terms of regulatory processes that emphasize these factors.

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1

GM@W. (2015). *EMS December 2015 GM@W Overview Report*. Alberta, Canada: Alberta Health Services.

<sup>2</sup> a work environment where employees' psychological safety is ensured



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### ***The Position...***

The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics (SCoP) believes that members who are challenged with incapacity, whether temporary or permanent, should be supported in their effort to become well. This position is based on a number of overarching factors:

- The protection of the public remains paramount to the College;
- Practitioner health and wellness is a key factor in delivering optimal patient care;
- Public confidence in regulation and provider competence is essential;
- Non-punitive measures should be available where appropriate, to address situations relating to incapacity;
- Incompetence and misconduct may exist concurrently in situations where incapacity is evident;
- Practitioner supports should consider mechanisms for rehabilitation where appropriate; and
- Incapacity created through provider intent should not become an opportunity for preferential treatment.

### ***The Opportunity...***

The College of Paramedics believes that it has a unique opportunity to create a regulatory environment that supports and encourages healthy members while meeting the duty and objects of the College as defined in *The Paramedics Act*.

With that in mind, SCoP has assembled a “Member Wellness” working group to begin developing a framework to support this important initiative. Some of the first issues that this group will tackle include:

- Defining incapacity to the extent possible;
- Define a process for dealing with incapacity that includes consideration of:
  - Risk and urgency;
  - Privacy considerations;
  - Collection of information/data/evidence;
  - Process for evaluation of information;
  - Desired outcomes and appropriate consequences;
  - Impact on practitioners; and
  - Other factors as identified.