



## Wellbeing Policy

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### Purpose

Milk Crate Theatre recognises that our ability to achieve our objectives successfully depends on the health and wellbeing of our workers. We acknowledge that the key elements of workplace health and wellbeing include the culture and physical environment as well as the policies, practices and procedures that guide our work.

Moreover, we acknowledge the unique significance of staff health and wellbeing within the context of the communities we serve, and the complex challenges faced by our Collaborative Artists. It is essential that our team members are equipped with good health and resilience to effectively support vulnerable individuals.

We respect the privacy of our staff regarding their personal health matters and this policy does not remove any personal responsibility around ensuring they are fit and well to attend work and perform their duties. Rather, it speaks to our commitment to cultivating a healthy workplace culture that prioritises and enhances the wellbeing of all team members by integrating health and wellbeing initiatives into our operations and systems and stating the supports Milk Crate Theatre is able to offer our team.

### Background

Milk Crate Theatre operates at the intersection of the arts, homelessness, mental health, and disability, engaging a community of Collaborative Artists who typically have experienced or are at risk of homelessness, mental health challenges, disability, domestic violence, or come from First Nations and/or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities.





Acknowledging the complexity of these lived experiences and the potential stressors associated with funding uncertainties and external events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and their potential impact on our team, the organisation places a priority on the health and wellbeing of its staff.

Through ongoing discussions with the team and board, this policy has been developed to provide a proactive approach in providing staff with the support and tools to manage their health and wellbeing.

## Scope

This wellbeing policy applies to all staff of Milk Crate Theatre, including contractors and casual staff and aligns with supporting policies including workplace health and safety and leave policies.

The policy inclusions have been brainstormed with the core team and as such some benefits around leave and office work are specific to office-based staff. However, the intention is for a broader organisational focus on wellbeing.

## Goals and Objectives

This work health and wellbeing policy provides the foundation for developing interventions and modifying work organisation, work practices and procedures, and the work environment to support the health and wellbeing of all workers whilst ensuring that service delivery and the wellbeing of our Collaborative Artists are at the core of all we do. Milk Crate Theatre will enhance its work health and wellbeing by:

- building and maintaining a workplace environment and culture that supports good health and wellbeing;
- increasing staff knowledge and awareness of health and wellbeing issues and behaviours;
- reducing stigma around mental health and provide supports to manage good mental health;
- facilitate the active participation of staff in a range of initiatives that support mental health and wellbeing;
- supporting workers to adopt and maintain healthy behaviours;
- empowering our staff to develop resilience and coping mechanisms, an awareness of their mental health and knowledge and skills to develop their own support network to ensure emotional wellbeing.



## Policy Initiatives

### 1. Office Culture

We recognise that office culture has a key impact on staff wellbeing. Our office culture is informed by our values:

- **Belonging:** we appreciate diversity and work collaboratively to provide a safe and accessible environment for all staff.
- **Artistry:** we encourage creative expression and open dialogue in our work.
- **Collaboration:** we work in a transparent and collaborative manner across the team to deliver our work;
- **Respect:** we respect the experiences, feeling and rights of everyone;
- **Challenge:** we have a learning culture and operate in a transparent and dynamic way where everyone has the right to speak their mind and have open discussion around decisions.

We are also guided by the Creative Space Guidelines, which apply to all staff, contractors, volunteers and participants working in any Milk Crate Theatre Space.

### 2. Wellbeing Focus

The key intent of this policy is to enhance and support staff's ability to take preventative actions and proactively manage their mental health. As such we will increase our day-to-day focus on wellbeing by:

- Incorporating wellbeing check-ins to one-on-one and team meetings to help team members and managers manage workflow and work-related stress.
- Schedule a minimum of two wellbeing focused sessions annually with topics/focus to be agreed by the team.
- Establish wellbeing channel on Slack where staff can share tips and ideas to improve overall wellbeing.

### 3. Work Life Balance

A good work life balance is crucial to being able to manage our overall wellbeing. Milk Crate Theatre provides the following opportunities to assist team members to balance their personal and work responsibilities.

#### a. Flexible working hours

Permanent staff have the option to establish their own working hours to meet their contractual obligations. This should be done in consultation with your direct line manager, so they are aware of when you are available.

Weekly hours can be adjusted to accommodate meetings, events, or personal commitments, though team members cannot assume attendance at meetings scheduled outside agreed-



upon days without prior agreement. To communicate ad hoc changes in working hours, staff are encouraged to use the Slack #where-am-I channel.

Staff are expected to adhere to their contracted hours fortnightly, utilising flexible hours when feasible. Time-off in lieu (TOIL) is an option for permanent staff but requires approval from the manager before accruing significant TOIL. Recognising that excessive work hours conflict with work-life balance, TOIL should not be used as a solution to workload overflow.

### **b. Working from home**

All permanent staff have the option to work from home during part of their standard working hours, with provided laptops and access to online drives. It's the individual's responsibility to ensure they can fulfill their duties while working remotely. For instance, working from home isn't suitable if it conflicts with facilitating programs. Staff must inform their team of their location through Slack and remain reachable via email or phone during working hours.

Working from home isn't a substitute for personal leave during illness; staff should use appropriate leave to rest and recover.

### **c. Uninterrupted focus time**

Milk Crate Theatre values collaboration and maintains an open-plan office environment. While teamwork is essential for productivity, we recognise the importance of focused work and the impact of the busy noisy office on this type of work.

To address this, staff are enabled to establish periods of uninterrupted focus time. During these periods, individuals are not expected to respond to emails or engage in collaborative discussions. They simply need to inform their team and set a schedule for check-ins.

Uninterrupted focus time is meant as a short-term solution, typically lasting no longer than 2 hours, although full days with scheduled check-ins are permissible. It's important to note that this time should not be used to avoid collaboration, and excessive use may prompt discussions with management.

### **d. Right to disconnect**

Staff are not expected to respond to emails and calls outside of standard business hours except for production periods when business hours are changed to meet the production needs. If staff choose to work outside of standard business hours, they may send emails during this time but should not expect a response until the recipient is next working.

All staff are urged to respect this boundary and limit work-related communication outside of work.

It is recommended that Slack be used for work-related messaging instead of direct SMS to minimise interruptions.

Work products should be saved on the Milk Crate Theatre SharePoint drive for accessibility and to reduce the need for after-hours inquiries.

This policy does not override any social connections outside of work, but it emphasizes that no one should feel obligated to respond to any contact outside of work hours.



## 4. Leave & Breaks

One of the key tools we have available to manage our own health is leave allowances. Our contracts and leave policies detail entitlements and processes around leave and this policy does not override that but rather provides additional information around use of these allowances to support personal wellbeing.

### a. Personal/Carer's Leave

Formerly known as sick leave, this allowance can be used for one's own or a dependent's ill health. Milk Crate Theatre treats both physical and mental health equally for this leave, with no requirement for support information for short periods (1-2 days). Longer leave may require additional information at the manager's discretion.

### b. Annual Leave

Also referred to as holiday leave. Employees are encouraged to utilise their annual leave allowance each year. This time off is crucial for rest and rejuvenation, enhancing productivity throughout the year. All reasonable and timely requests for Annual Leave will be approved.

### c. Unpaid Leave (Career Breaks/Sabbaticals/Project Breaks)

The management team is open to discussions regarding longer unpaid breaks for permanent staff members. They aim to accommodate such requests whenever feasible.

## 5. Physical Health

Milk Crate Theatre understands that good physical health is intrinsic to overall wellbeing. Whilst the employee retains responsibility for their physical health, Milk Crate Theatre encourages the following activities to support staff in maintaining their health.

- Encourage walking meetings where suitable.
- Use of flexible work hours to accommodate exercise.
- Use of flexible work hours to accommodate medical appointments.
- Encourage staff to take a stretch break hourly when spending long periods at your desk.

## 6. Mental Health

Milk Crate Theatre acknowledges the challenges of working with people who have complex lived experiences. We emphasises the importance of maintaining good mental health for staff to ensure they are able to safely work in community and focus on providing our Collaborative Artists/Participants the support and experiences they deserve. We offer the following supports to help staff manage their mental health:

### a. Mental Health Allowance

Replacing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services and to ensure staff can benefit from a more personally tailored approach to their mental wellbeing, staff can claim up to \$300 for mental health support, including doctor and therapist fees, by submitting invoices for reimbursement of gap payments.



If you do not have contact with the supports you need, we recommend that you speak to your GP. Alternatively, our Social Worker may be able to provide you with referrals to services that can help.

In some instances, management may choose to offer reimbursement higher than the \$300 gap. Staff should speak to their manager about significant challenges, to have the payment level reviewed.

## **b. Crisis Support**

We understand that even with the best supports in place that sometimes staff experience a crisis that leads to periods of deteriorating mental health. This crisis could be predicated by an event inside or outside of the workplace.

For crises that occur in the workplace, staff should follow the incident reporting procedures to make sure that management is aware and can provide support. Our Social Worker is available to all staff to debrief complex situations that happen in our spaces and can provide referrals. Where appropriate we will also debrief as a team to establish learnings so we can try and prevent incidents in the future.

In a period of crisis, it may not be appropriate for you to continue working with people who have complex lived experiences. If you are a permanent staff member (either full time or part time) you may have access to paid or unpaid leave in this period. You should discuss your circumstances with management to see if time away from work would be beneficial. Alternatively, management may be able to make workplace accommodations for you and provide referrals. This will be ascertained and agreed on a case-by-case basis.

If you are a casual staff member and do not have leave available, please discuss your circumstances with management to establish what supports can be made available.

## **c. Accommodations**

During a crisis period or prolonged period of mental ill health, Milk Crate Theatre may be able to make short term accommodations to your position to assist you through this period. These accommodations may include changes to your work, workload, days of work or hours of work.

If you feel you need accommodations to assist you through a period of ill health, please speak to your manager or the CEO. It should be noted that we may need to seek medical advice with regards to suitability of duties and/or suitability of accommodations as opposed to leave in instances where there is concern that attending work could cause additional harm or ill health to yourself or others.

## **7. Responsibilities**

All staff have a responsibility to:

- take reasonable care of their own physical and mental health and wellbeing.



- take reasonable care that their actions do not affect the health and safety of other people in the workplace.
- make their manager aware as soon as possible of health and wellbeing issues that impact their ability to perform their position.
- support and contribute to Milk Crate Theatre's aim of providing a healthy and supportive environment for all staff and participants.

Managers have a responsibility to:

- ensure that all staff and volunteers are made aware of this policy and have access to the initiatives incorporated into this policy.
- actively support and contribute to the implementation of this policy.
- act as a role model.
- manage the implementation and review of this policy.

