

Policy Brief: Workplace Wellbeing

Workplace wellbeing and organizational culture standards for Content Moderators and Trust & Safety professionals

CORE MESSAGE

Repeated exposure to graphic and traumatic content should be managed as an occupational risk using prevention-first work design, supportive culture, appropriate care and ongoing evaluation.

WHY WORKPLACE STANDARDS ARE NEEDED

Content moderators review child sexual abuse material (CSAM), violent abuse, exploitation, hate speech, graphic content and other disturbing material to protect users—especially children—and shield the wider public.

Risk is shaped by exposure intensity, task type, organizational support, coping resources and working conditions.

Prevention > individual resilience alone

EVIDENCE SNAPSHOT



More frequent/intense exposure is generally linked to worse outcomes.



Supportive colleagues and feeling valued can buffer risk.



Remote work can add isolation and blur work-home boundaries.

THE WORKPLACE SAFETY OPERATING SYSTEM



01

Define & assess psychosocial risks

Document risks and controls; include outsourced and globally dispersed teams rather than treating harm as unavoidable or individual.



03

Build supportive leadership & culture

Train leaders to own wellbeing as an organizational responsibility; reduce stigma, validate the role and create protected peer connection.



05

Ensure appropriate care & support

Provide accessible care from clinicians trained in graphic-content exposure, plus peer coaching, helplines, family resources and post-employment support.



02

Worker protections and response pathways

Use honest onboarding, exposure limits, micro-breaks, task rotation, realistic targets, adequate staffing, supervision and technology supports.



04

Access to support & care

Offer accommodations, redeployment, non-retaliation, grievance/safeguarding routes and structured return-to-work planning.



06

Monitor, evaluate & improve

Track exposure, break compliance, supervision, support use, sickness absence, turnover, incidents, grievances and worker feedback, never for discipline.

Use this six-part system to translate evidence into daily operations, contracts and culture.

IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAY

Integrate standards into occupational health and safety systems, HR policies and vendor contracts. Outsourcing should not dilute protections: in-house and vendor-operated teams need equivalent standards for exposure management, supervision, access to care, confidentiality and worker voice.

Start with baseline risk assessment + controls, then layer culture-building, monitoring and enhanced supports. Collaborate with researchers and worker representatives to refine what works.

EXPOSURE

Time in high-risk queues

SUPERVISION

Ratios + training hours

SUPPORT

Uptake + access

RETENTION

Turnover + absence

VOICE

Grievances + feedback

LEARN MORE



istss.org/istss-policy-brief-workplace

Source: ISTSS “Workplace wellbeing and organizational culture standards for Content Moderators and Trust & Safety professionals.” Selected resources include Spence et al.; DeMarco, Watson & Norman; Steiger et al.; Riedl et al.; Bourke & Craun.