Safety huddle

Workplace loneliness

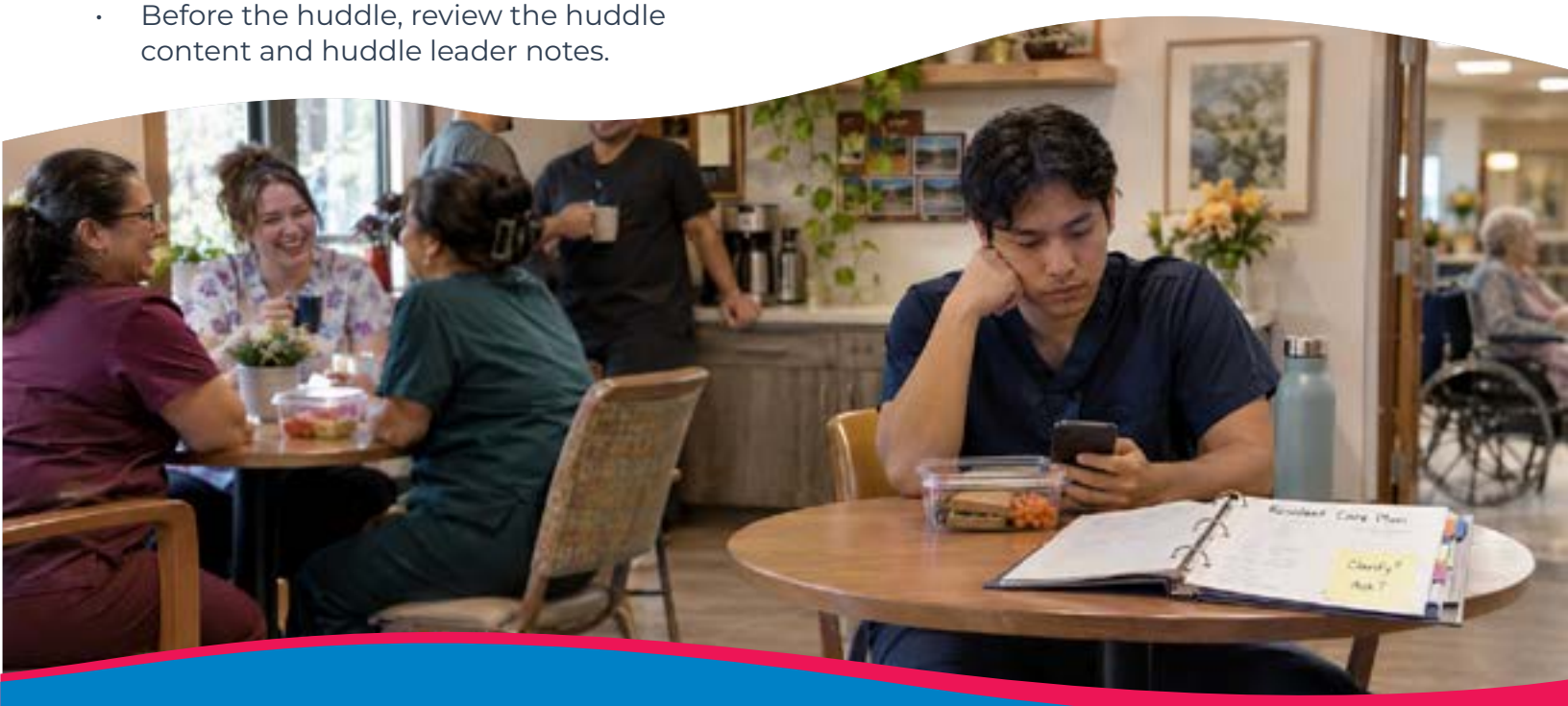
After this huddle, staff should be able to:

- **Explain** that being around people in person or virtually does not always mean feeling connected at work
- **Identify** one practical change to support workplace connection and the support needed to put it into practice.

How to run the safety huddle

As the huddle leader, do the following:

- Before the huddle, review the huddle content and huddle leader notes.
- Have resources ready, such as policies, employee assistance programs, or SafeCare BC resources.
- Choose a scenario that fits your workplace and read it aloud.
- Use the guiding questions to lead the discussion.
- Use huddle leader notes as support while leading the discussion.
- Keep the discussion short to about 5-10 minutes.



Definitions

Workplace loneliness is the feeling that the connection, support, or sense of belonging you need at work is missing. A person can feel lonely in a busy workplace, while someone working independently can still feel connected to their team.

When people feel alone at work, they are more likely to feel stressed, burnout, or not ask for help. That can affect their wellbeing and safety, as well as the safety of the people they care for.

Scenario for long-term care

Alex joined the long-term care team three weeks ago. On a busy shift, Alex talks with residents, families, and coworkers, but almost every conversation is about tasks. At break, the other staff sit together in groups they already know.

Alex usually eats alone and scrolls on their phone. Alex has a question about a resident's care plan but isn't sure who to ask. Alex says, "I'm around people all day, but I don't feel part of the team yet."

Guiding questions for long-term care

1. What connection or support might Alex be missing, even with other people nearby? Listen for:
   - *Time to talk that isn't about tasks.*
   - *Being welcomed or invited, for example to a break.*
   - *Knowing who to ask for help.*
2. What could coworkers offer, and what would need the supervisor's time or support? Listen for:
   - *Coworkers: invite Alex to break, introduce Alex to other staff, check in during a shift, say thanks for specific help.*
   - *Supervisor: name a buddy, set up regular check-ins, give time on shift to learn the routines.*
   - *If the group is quiet, ask: "What helped you feel part of the team when you started?"*
3. What helps people feel connected here? What other ideas could we try? Listen for:
   - How support happens when people feel most on their own, for example on breaks, at shift change, or on nights and weekends.
   - Identifying who might be missed, such as new, casual, or part-time staff, and how they can be connected at work.
   - Small ideas the team can try in the next few weeks.
   - Ideas that need the supervisor: write them down and agree when the team will hear back.

Scenario for home care

Jordan works alone in clients' homes and drives between visits. Most days, Jordan eats lunch in the car. Messages from the office are about schedules and tasks. This morning, a client was upset and yelled at Jordan during a visit.

Jordan felt shaken but had no one to talk to before the next visit. Jordan rarely sees coworkers, and the supervisor usually calls only when a shift changes.

Guiding questions for home care

- What opportunities for connection are missing from Jordan's workday? Listen for:
  - *No shared break time or place to meet.*
  - *No one to talk to after a hard visit.*
  - *Messages are only about schedules and tasks.*
  - *Rarely seeing coworkers or the supervisor in person.*
- What could the supervisor and coworkers put in place so connection does not

depend on meeting in person?Listen for:

- *Short, regular phone, or video check-ins with the supervisor.*
- *A buddy to call or text between visits.*
- *A team chat for more than schedules (joining in stays optional).*
- *A quick call to talk through a difficult visit.*
- *Occasional team meetings or get-togethers.*

- What helps people feel connected here? What other ideas could we try? Listen for:
  - *How support happens for those who work alone the most, or when someone might feel most cut off.*
  - *Whether people know who to call for support during the day. A team chat for more than schedules (joining in stays optional).*
  - *Small ideas the team can try in the next few weeks.*
  - *Ideas that need the supervisor: write them down and agree when the team will hear back.*

Huddle leader notes

1. Create a safe space:
   - Listen, respect all views, and be mindful of others' challenges.
   - Guide the discussion to focus on what participants can control. Move the conversation from complaints to solutions, strengths, and helpful actions. Invite anyone with specific concerns to talk with you after the huddle.
2. Key discussion points: Use the objectives and key discussion points below to guide the huddle if needed.
   - Loneliness at work isn't only a new -worker problem. Long-time staff can feel disconnected too, for example, after a change in team or shift.
   - Being around people does not guarantee meaningful connection.
   - Offer personal invitations and different ways to connect. Keep social participation optional.
   - Leaders need to make time for connection and provide access to support.
   - Examples: A named support person for a new worker; a regular supervisor check-in; a personal invitation to a shared break; or a sincere thank-you for a specific contribution. Choose what fits the work and the people involved.
3. **Close the huddle:** Agree on one change, who will take it forward and when the team will hear back. If support contacts are unclear, confirming them can be the first action.

Additional resources

SafeCare BC | Workplace loneliness: Use the topic page for more ideas on connection, onboarding, leadership and recognition.

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health | Loneliness and social connection: Loneliness is directly linked to health, life and work satisfaction outcomes. Learn strategies to address loneliness and build social connections.

Huddle leader: _____

Date: _____

Attendance:

Name:	Initial

Notes