

Step 3. Needs assessment

Protecting employee privacy and confidentiality

Personal information about the health of an employee is confidential. This includes details of medical conditions, treatments and test results.

Disclosing any personal information without that person's written consent is unethical. In some cases, it also may be illegal.

When collecting workplace information through a survey, you can use the data you collect to identify common health problems. However, you must not use the data to identify individual health issues.

Trained professionals must conduct individual health assessments in a confidential environment.

Make sure you can't identify individuals through survey questions. For example, questions about gender and business unit could identify an employee who happens to be the only male/female in a particular business unit.

Ways to protect employee privacy:

- › consider the need to collect information
- › remove identifying information from data
- › report only grouped results
- › store data securely
- › restrict access to information and require anyone with access to sign a confidentiality agreement
- › dispose of confidential information in locked disposal bins
- › assure employees about confidentiality on surveys and within any policies
- › don't ask health professionals to disclose personal information about an employee.

For more information on privacy, see Office of the Australian Information Commissioner <www.oaic.gov.au>.