



FIVE STEPS TO AN
EFFECTIVE JHSC



SAFETY



What is a JHSC?

(Why should I be involved?)

The Joint Health and Safety Committee (or JHSC) is an advisory committee of employees and employers who work together toward a common goal: to establish and maintain healthy and safe workplaces. Its members are dedicated to strengthening the health and safety culture to prevent workplace injuries and occupational illness. Through regular monthly meetings, the JHSC seeks ways to improve health and safety awareness and provides guidance and recommendations on health and safety issues arising in the workplace. The JHSC is an integral team, supporting the health and safety of New Brunswick workers, just like you.

The JHSC is not a policy-making body and cannot violate the organizational process of authority in the workplace.



Employee and employer representatives make up a JHSC.



STEP 1

Develop your TOR

Know who you are, your purpose, what you want to achieve, and set a plan to get there

The Terms of Reference (or TOR) is an integral document that guides every JHSC. It answers basic questions about the group's purpose and objectives. It also details its operations – when, where and how often it will meet, how many members it will have and what their roles are. This helps ensure the group runs efficiently and meets its overall goals.

Some items in your TOR:

- What are our goals?
- How will we accomplish these goals?
- Who or what departments will be represented on the committee?
- How do we involve the workplace?
- What do we need to do to meet legislative requirements?

No two committees operate alike. Your committee's TOR must be customized to reflect your organization's specific needs.

Your TOR should be simple and easy to understand. Avoid using names and dates in your document and update as necessary. Every JHSC member should be familiar with the TOR, and the document should be reviewed annually.

IMPROVEMENT



Getting it all together

Every group needs a purpose and direction. By setting a mandate, goals and objectives when your JHSC begins, all team members can better understand exactly what's expected. They can ensure their planning and actions align with the group's overall needs and purpose.

MANDATE describes the JHSC's purpose, commitment and scope of responsibility. It is developed and aligned with the organization's goals. It often includes five to six statements.

Sample mandate:

Company ABC's JHSC is a proactive group that addresses matters of health and safety. The JHSC exercises skill, diligence and confidentiality when dealing with matters of health and safety, and considers, evaluates and offers recommendations to the employer on health and safety issues. The JHSC activities align with the company's strategic goals for developing an effective health and safety management system. The JHSC is responsible in the workplace by meeting all legislative requirements set out by New Brunswick's Occupational Health and Safety Act and provides assistance on health and safety matters to the workplace as they arise.

GOALS are high-level statements outlining what the JHSC aims to achieve. They are not hands-on specific tasks, but rather an overview of the committee's commitment to creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace culture.

Sample goals:

Company ABC's JHSC has set the following goals to meet its mandate:

- *Comply with the legislative standards defined for JHSCs*
- *Create a culture in which all employees view workplace accidents as preventable*
- *Help create an injury-free workplace*
- *Support health and safety initiatives set by management*



OBJECTIVES are specific, tangible strategies that help the JHSC achieve its goals. Objectives are not procedures, but rather measurable targets. They can be evaluated by both the committee and the workplace.

Sample objectives:

Company ABC's JHSC will:

- *Establish a communication tool to increase the JHSC's visibility in the workplace*
- *Monitor effectiveness of all health and safety processes in the company*
- *Recommend appropriate health and safety actions to management. Evaluate and follow up on any JHSC recommendations to management*
- *Respond, in writing, to all health and safety concerns brought forth by the workplace no more than two weeks after learning of the concern*
- *Review and assess all workplace inspections completed by departmental supervisors*
- *Audit annually and update, if necessary, the company's WHMIS program*
- *Conduct bi-monthly inspections of all departments throughout the company*
- *Follow up on all recommendations to management and communicate response from management to the workplace*
- *Review injury analysis data monthly, looking for trends*
- *Review all accidents/incidents reported by the workplace and provide recommendations to management to eliminate workplace hazards.*

See a sample [TOR](https://worksafeneb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/) (worksafeneb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/).

In New Brunswick, sections 14-18 of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act lists the requirements and areas of possible participation for a JHSC and/or health and safety representative.

Objectives are not procedures, but rather concise, measurable targets.

In addition to mandate, goals and objectives, a TOR should define operational details such as rules, member representation, meeting location and times and member roles and responsibilities.

Management and both co-chairs must sign and date the TOR. In addition, the parties must review the TOR annually.

Member set-up/rules

- Size and representation (consider number of employees, number of departments, unions or work groups, shiftwork, etc.)
- Will the JHSC have alternates and/or quorum?
- How will the JHSC elect the two co-chairs?
- How will the JHSC choose committee members?
- Will the JHSC elect a recorder*? How?
- How long will the members keep their terms? (avoid members leaving at the same time)
- How long will the recorder and co-chairs keep their terms?
- Will co-chairs share task of preparing agenda?
- How long before a meeting should the co-chair provide the agenda to members?

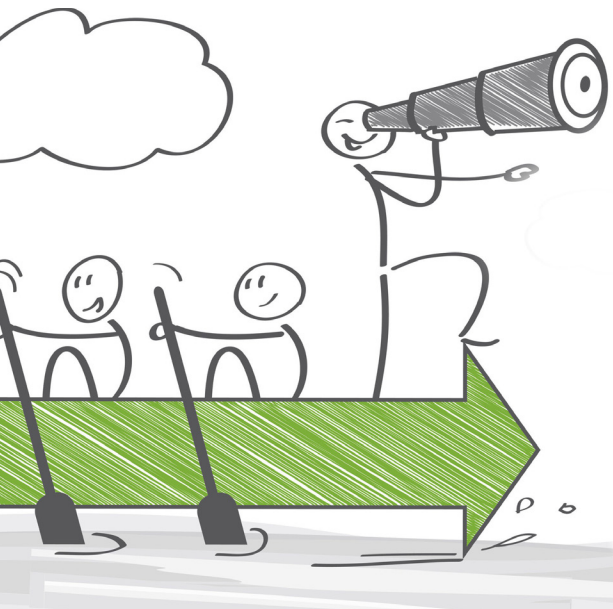
When and where you'll meet

- When? (day of week, time)
- Frequency? (How often?)
- Where?
- How long will each meeting take?

Workplace inspections details

- Who will accompany the health and safety officer?
- Who will be involved in the monthly inspections?
- How long will it take?
- Who will cover which areas?
- Which checklist(s) will be used?
- Who do we forward recommended corrective actions to? By when?
- Who will follow up to ensure corrective actions were taken?
- What do we do if corrective actions aren't taken? What's our next step?

* The recorder may also be called a "recording secretary" or "clerk."



Accident/incident investigation procedure

- Is there a written procedure? Is it up-to-date?
- Who gets involved?
- How long does it take?
- Who forwards the reports? Who do they forward it to?

Work refusals and health and safety concerns

- How does the workplace forward concerns to you?
- Do you require documentation before you take action and respond?
- Will only the co-chairs participate in work refusals?

Member roles

Each TOR should list, in detail, each member's roles and responsibilities. Roles and responsibilities must reflect the specific needs of your organization. The following is a guideline only.

Co-chairs (two)

- Guide the meeting
- Keep the meetings on track
- Seek participation from everyone
- Sign the minutes form
- Prepare the agenda
- Listen and is objective even when points differ significantly
- Sign JHSC recommendation forms
- Addresses work refusals*

The co-chairs often alternate chairing the meeting and creating and distributing the agenda.

Roles and responsibilities
must reflect the specific
needs of your organization.

Recorder (or recording secretary or clerk)

- Helps prepare the agenda
- Takes meeting minutes and distributes to appropriate people
- Reads the last minutes at each meeting
- Posts a copy of the meeting minutes in the workplace
- Sends (by fax, email or mail) copy of the minutes to the appropriate WorkSafeNB regional office
- Posts the committee members' names in the workplace
- Ensures both co-chairs have signed the minutes

The recorder may not be a JHSC member (company administrative assistant, for example)

* Other JHSC members may address work refusals.

Members

- Attend all JHSC meetings
- Develop a TOR and review annually
- Help raise awareness of JHSC committee and its functions in the workplace
- Regularly review all internal policies and procedures; review and make written recommendations to management for changes or improvement when appropriate
- Analyze injury reports provided by the employer
- Review legislation and communicate to workplace any changes, interpretations and clarifications
- Invite external experts to present seminars and safety talks
- Contribute to committee discussions, offering experience and ideas
- Address work refusals (right to refuse)
- Complete tasks assigned by the JHSC
- Annually distribute JHSC health and safety inspection audit to the workplace
- Listen to concerns and suggestions by employees and employers outside the JHSC; relays to supervisor or committee, as appropriate
- Learn about workplace health and safety
- Complete workplace evaluation each year and shares results with the workplace

In addition, JHSC members may:

- Conduct/review monthly workplace inspection reports
- Oversee special tasks (such as providing information on legislation or safety weeks)
- Plan wellness initiatives
- Accompany health and safety officers on inspections
- Meet with experts during air quality, noise level or other workplace health and safety test to ensure concerns are addressed
- Review accident/incident statistics for injury analysis
- Develop, with the employer, a procedure for monthly inspections
- Prepare with the employer a list of toxic substances in the workplace
- Check for any changes on legislation, processes and procedures
- Produce a monthly or quarterly health and safety newsletter for the workplace
- Invite external experts to share health and safety information at meetings
- Invite co-workers to attend meetings

See a sample [Workplace Inspection Form](https://worksafenb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/) (worksafenb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/).

STEP 2

Train members

Effective JHSCs start with informed, knowledgeable members

In New Brunswick, all JHSC members must attend JHSC training. According to law, employers must ensure each JHSC member attends an educational program prescribed by *Occupational Health and Safety Act* regulations or attends an educational program prescribed by the regulations within 12 months after being designated (except for project sites*).

This training ensures members understand the purpose of the committee, workplace legislation and how to work together to best meet the organization's health and safety goals and objectives.

Depending on the goals of the organization's JHSC, additional training may be required.

Training ensures members understand the purpose of the committee and workplace legislation.

* Refer to sections 14.2(1)-14.5(7) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.



STEP 3

Host effective meetings

JHSCs discuss critical matters that affect the health and well-being of workers. It's important that you plan wisely. Choose a meeting room with a layout that supports conversation. The meeting should have minimum distractions (no knocks on doors and phones ringing). Be familiar with the technology in the room (if you need technology). Technical problems can steal valuable time, distract members and be an annoyance.

An organized agenda is critical

A carefully prepared agenda helps set expectations. It keeps a meeting on track and ensures members are accountable for tasks. Without an agenda, or with an unorganized, ineffective agenda, the meeting's purpose falls by the wayside and participants come unprepared and uninformed.

The co-chairs should approve the agenda, then distribute to all members, preferably at least one week before the meeting. The co-chairs should allow enough discussion time for each agenda item. If an agenda item cannot be resolved during the meeting, make it a priority for the next meeting. Members who want to add items to the agenda should give the co-chair sufficient notice.

Include:

- Date, time and place for meeting
- Minutes of last meeting
- Review of unfinished business (from previous meeting, business carried forward)
- Regular reports (workplace inspections, accident investigations)
- Special reports (sub-committees, training, education)
- Response and followup (committee inquiries, recommendations, employer's responses)
- Education session (if the committee has adopted this practice)
- New business (all employers – managers, supervisors and workers should be encouraged to submit items for the agenda)

See a sample [JHSC Minutes Form](https://worksafenb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/) (worksafenb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/).

See a sample [JHSC Agenda](https://worksafenb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/) (worksafenb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/).

Start and end on time

JHSC meetings starting or ending late, or wasting time in between, send the message that health and safety is not a serious topic. You can change your organization's health and safety culture simply by starting and ending your meeting on time. Members will be much happier going to a meeting and more likely to participate if their time is respected and work is accomplished.

Leave technology at the door

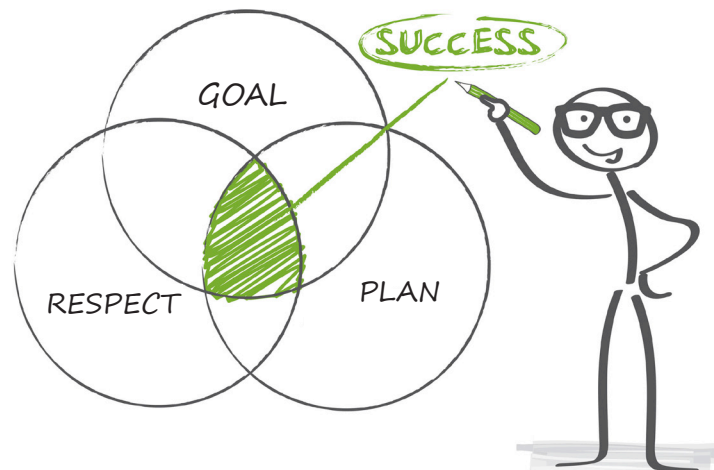
Unless needed for the meeting, leave technology out of the meeting. Avoid the 3D monster: distractive digital devices, such as cellphones, tablets and laptops. If you have pressing items you must address with a digital device, politely excuse yourself and send your regrets.

Encourage participation

Promote communication by asking for collective thoughts and ideas from the group. Avoid putting individuals on the spot. Ask open-ended questions. "Is everyone OK with this recommendation?" closes the door to discussion as it only allows for a yes or no answer. Instead, encourage others to speak up by asking, "How do you feel about this recommendation?"

No side conversations, off-track topics and other disruptive behaviour

When members are not fully present or off track, the entire group may become disengaged. Boring, lengthy speeches, whispering, cellphone glancing and other disruptive behaviour send this message: Your time isn't valuable and the issues at hand aren't important. At times, a co-chair may need to take control and bring the meeting back to topic. In extreme cases, the co-chair may need to speak to people in private about this behaviour. We all deserve respect and consideration while attending JHSC meetings.



When meetings aren't effective

Not all JHSC meetings run smoothly. At times, you may feel like you're wasting your time. If this happens, review some of the common reasons why meetings fail and make corrective actions as necessary:

- Not everyone who should be present is present
- Not everyone is prepared
- Participants are unco-operative
- Participants come with hidden agendas (health and safety meetings should only be focused on health and safety topics)
- The agenda wasn't distributed (or it was distributed late)
- There is no agenda
- Not everyone has reviewed the agenda (members are unprepared)
- The agenda is not followed
- Minutes are not taken
- Purpose of meeting is undefined
- Meeting starts late or ends late
- Topics are discussed with no resolution or carried forward
- No one has relevant information on topics (moving items forward to next meeting)
- Committee gets stuck on one topic, overshadowing the meeting
- The location is inappropriate (poor layout or multiple distractions)
- Meeting is controlled by one or two people – little participation from others
- Items brought forward are dismissed as "not really a health and safety concern" (Every topic requires a sincere discussion)
- Members are distracted by devices (cellphones, etc.)
- Meetings go off track, lost in unrelated conversations

Summarize information and end the meeting on a positive note

At the end of each JHSC meeting, summarize the topics discussed and review any recommendations to ensure accuracy of the information to be captured in the minutes. Never assume that, during the meeting, all points of interest, details and concerns were properly recorded.

In addition, be sure to thank participants for their involvement, contributions and interest. Always end on a positive note. How you end your meeting sets the tone for the next meeting.

STEP 4

Take action

Improve workplace health and safety

Any issue brought to the committee is an issue unresolved. The JHSC must address all concerns. Some items presented to the group may not be health and safety concerns. Don't dismiss them, however, until they have been discussed and investigated. If you determine it's not a JHSC topic, move on to the next agenda item.

After thoroughly reviewing each health and safety concern, the JHSC can:

Address it immediately.

If a management representative on the committee has the power to resolve the matter immediately (assign the task for completion, change a process), then the matter may be resolved at the committee meeting.

Recommend resolution.

If a management representative cannot resolve the issue immediately, then the JHSC should prepare a written recommendation to management identifying possible solutions. Make your recommendations in writing so it is viewed as formal, not "off the cuff." Recommendations must be doable.

See a sample [JHSC Recommendation Form](https://www.worksafenb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/)

(<https://www.worksafenb.ca/employers/health-safety/joint-health-and-safety-committees/>).

Make your recommendations in writing so it is viewed as formal, not "off the cuff."



Prepare your recommendation

Recommendations have **five key parts**:

- 1 Statement of concern:** Explain the issue. Indicate any urgency. How severe is the concern? What department is involved? What area does it affect?
- 2 History/Background:** Are there associated past incidents or accidents? Near misses? Is this a new or recurring issue? Include any lost-time and no lost-time injuries (numbers) relating to the issue and why incidents may be reoccurring (root cause analysis). Ensure all information is factual – not based on opinion.
- 3 Legislative requirements** (*if applicable*): State if recommendation is related to legislation.
- 4 Possible solutions and options:** Who has the expertise to complete the work? Will we need internal or external support? Is there a need for a contractor or other service provider? If so, request quotes and timelines, and forward as an attachment with the JHSC Recommendation Form.
- 5 Reason why JHSC is making recommendation:** Explain why you are choosing this option. How will it correct the problem? You may include industry standards, comments from experts or technical consultants and industry statistics supporting the recommendation. You may also refer to legislation in other provinces or countries.

Ask for a **reasonable response date** (usually within three to four weeks) Provide enough time for management to receive, review and consider the JHSC recommendation.

*Do not state that the JHSC would like to “see change.” Indicate the “need.”
All information should be clearly written and understandable.*

Don't just forward a recommendation that sends the message: “There is a problem – fix it.” Explain why it's important!

Submit your recommendation

Correctly identify who should receive the JHSC recommendation form (may be more than one person). The recipient must have **authority** and be **able to take action**. Ensure all information is included, proofread and assemble any attachments (such as quotes or letters). Co-chairs then sign and forward the form by email, mail or fax or in person.

What if the recommendation is rejected or dismissed?

No response doesn't necessarily mean "no."

Why you may not get a response:

- Employer is absent (medical time, personal time, vacation)
- The recommendation was not forwarded to the appropriate person
- The employer doesn't understand the severity of the situation
- Manager assumes someone has already fixed the problem
- Safety or other department is working on the issue, but manager hasn't communicated this to the JHSC

If an employer does not respond to the JHSC recommendation, the JHSC may:

- Ask if the employer has received the form
- Ask if the employer has any questions about the recommendations
- Resubmit the recommendation

If an employer rejects the JHSC recommendation, the JHSC may:

- Request the employer attend the next JHSC meeting for further discussion
- Request a personal meeting with co-chairs to discuss

Return to the committee to determine your next steps.

Remember – stay positive and stay on top of the issue until it is resolved!



STEP 5

Learn more

Being a JHSC member is a big commitment. It shows you care about the safety and well-being of yourself and others – enough to take action. WorkSafeNB is here to help. We encourage you to talk often with co-workers and managers about health and safety. Make it an ongoing priority in your workplace. If you have any questions, call our toll-free line at 1 800 222-9775 or email our Compliance and Regulatory Review team at compliance.conformite@ws-ts.nb.ca.

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- [Google Play](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ca.worksafenb.ohsguide) (play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ca.worksafenb.ohsguide)

Related resources:

whmis.org

ccohs.ca

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