



STARLING MINDS CASE STUDY

Administrative Leaders Use Starling to Manage Stress & Prevent Absenteeism

Catholic Principals' Council | Ontario



“You can tell an organization’s commitment to the well-being of their people by the amount of budget they provide for it. Our Principals and Vice-Principals see that we have committed the full cost of this program without any additional costs to them or their family members.”

— Joseph Geiser, Executive Director at CPCO

ABOUT CPCO



Founded in 1998, **Catholic Principals’ Council | Ontario** represents 2,100 Catholic Principals and Vice-Principals across the province of Ontario. The Association works to advance the cause of Catholic education, to maintain and improve terms and conditions of employment, and to provide Associates with leadership support and development. With mounting workload intensification for school leaders, stress management and mental health support have become a key focus for CPCO.

The Challenge: Increasing Absenteeism due to Stress

In 2015, the Ontario provincial government was very focused on student mental health and well-being. Joseph Geiser, Executive Director at CPCO shares, “significant funding was being allocated towards getting mental health supports into schools for students.”

CPCO’s Executive Director, a former Principal and Superintendent of 25 years recognized that mental health attention was needed in equal force for school leaders. He recalls, “We were seeing that our Principals and Vice-Principals were increasingly needing to take more time off because they were pushing themselves to the limit both mentally and physically.” He adds, “Workload intensification has become a huge issue for Catholic school leaders.”

With increasing workload and responsibilities, the work part of work-life integration is taking up more and more time. As a result, Catholic school leaders have stress-levels so high that mental and physical health is being impacted. Knowing this, Geiser and his counterparts began to actively look for preventative solutions to help their leaders build up resilience to pressures both at work and at home.



“I am finally starting to become aware of the events that are triggering my emotions. It is helping me to reduce the amount of time I overthink my current situation and all the scenarios that go with it.”

— CPCO Starling Member

The Solution: Starling Minds for Mental Health & Stress Management

In the fall of 2015 Starling Minds rolled out for Principals, Vice-Principals, and their families across Ontario.

After learning more about Starling, it became clear to Geiser and his team that the program had the potential to positively impact the mental health and well-being of all CPCO Associates. He shares, “the program deeply spoke to our group, especially the characters and stories used to communicate mental health concepts.” He adds, “Specifically, the storyline of ‘Virginia’ resonated with our female Vice-Principals and Principals as they too face the pressures of taking care of their families and their schools. So many of the mental health case studies in Starling personalize the experience for them.”

Starling also proved to be an effective solution for Catholic school leaders on stress or mental health leave. Some are off for long periods of time and need something to focus on daily to help them feel empowered. Geiser shares, “When we implemented Starling we didn’t think it would be widely used by some of our high-risk cases but we’ve learned these people actually report the greatest benefit from the program.”

Starling Minds has become a valued solution for many Principals and Vice-Principals and is used as a tool to generate discussion and understanding at monthly leadership meetings. Leaders value that Starling offers them:



Evidence-based mental health programs based on **cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** techniques that teach strategies to build mental fitness and decrease stress.



24/7 mental health support for times of need especially for those who live in remote communities, who are on stress leave, or who do not have access to EAP programs.





A **private and confidential tool** that removes the concern of stigma as members can get help from the comfort of their homes.



Leading mental health education that would only otherwise be taught in **one-to-one sessions** by a licensed psychologist who has been trained in CBT.



A proven program that **builds resilience** and decreases mental health symptoms such as anxiety, worry, and sadness so that members can be more effective at work and at home.



Additional support for their family members who can also access the Starling program.

CPCO's Executive Director shares, "You can tell an organization's commitment to the well-being of their people by the amount of budget they provide for it. Our Principals and Vice-Principals see that we have committed the full cost of this program without any additional costs to them or their family members." He continues, "Our principals and VPs understand the value of Starling and they can feel the impact of reminding themselves to look after their health both physically and mentally."



"I've learned a great deal about mental health and in particular the impact of low self-esteem. Starling is giving me hope for my current work situation and my mental wellbeing."

— CPCO Starling Member

The Impact: Improved Work & Personal Lives

CPCO receives three data reports a year to understand engagement and where members are at along the mental health continuum.

Executive Director Joe Geiser proudly states, "In our most recent data review, we learned that 12% of our associates are engaged in the program which is over double the industry standard for other Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)." He continues, "Our understanding is that EAPs generally have anywhere from 3-6% usage rates so we're very pleased with the uptake of Starling."



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— Joseph Geiser, CPCO Executive Director

Furthermore, regular data reports show that Starling makes the following impact:

- ✓ **78% of CPCO Associates improve in sadness, anxiety and worry scores**
- ✓ **20% move up the mental health continuum to the healthy category**
- ✓ **Mental fitness challenges improve member anxiety scores by 18%**
- ✓ **Workplace absenteeism improves by 12%**



Data reports and Starling's responsiveness are integral for Geiser and his team to remain proactive to help school leaders manage stress. With Starling's data reviews, they've discovered seasonal trends wherein Principal and Vice-Principal mental health declines. To combat this, they implement mental fitness challenges before stressful times so school leaders remember to take care of themselves.

Besides the success of the program, Geiser finds additional value in the genuine partnership his team has built with Starling. He shares, "Starling's team is extremely responsive to suggestions and collaborative in how they work—even on separate sides of the country, there are always open lines of communication."

"I have been diagnosed with PTSD. Some of this makes sense to me specifically the goal setting. I have always set lofty goals but lately my lofty goals have been unachievable. Starling has helped me set myself on the path to small successes."

—CPCO Starling Member



About Starling Minds

Founded by Dr. Andrew Miki in 2013, Starling Minds is a diverse group of people unified with a common mission: to improve the well-being of others by making evidence-based mental health support available for everyone. Today, over 150,000 people have access to the Starling platform through their organization so they can build mental fitness and learn new skills that help them become more resilient and confident.

Starling Build
Resilient
Minds.

131 Water St, Unit 103
Vancouver, BC
Canada V6B 1A7

info@starlingminds.com

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www.starlingminds.com