



Now and Tomorrow
Excellence in Everything We Do



NATIONAL TRENDS REPORT FOR THE MONTHS OF OCTOBER, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2017

**Prepared by: the Office of Informal Conflict Management (OICM),
Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)**

***NOTE:** The following information provided herein is solely the opinions and observations of OICM Practitioners and Coordinators. If any of these trends observed is occurring in your branch, we invite you to contact OICM to explore how we could be of assistance.*

CONTEXT

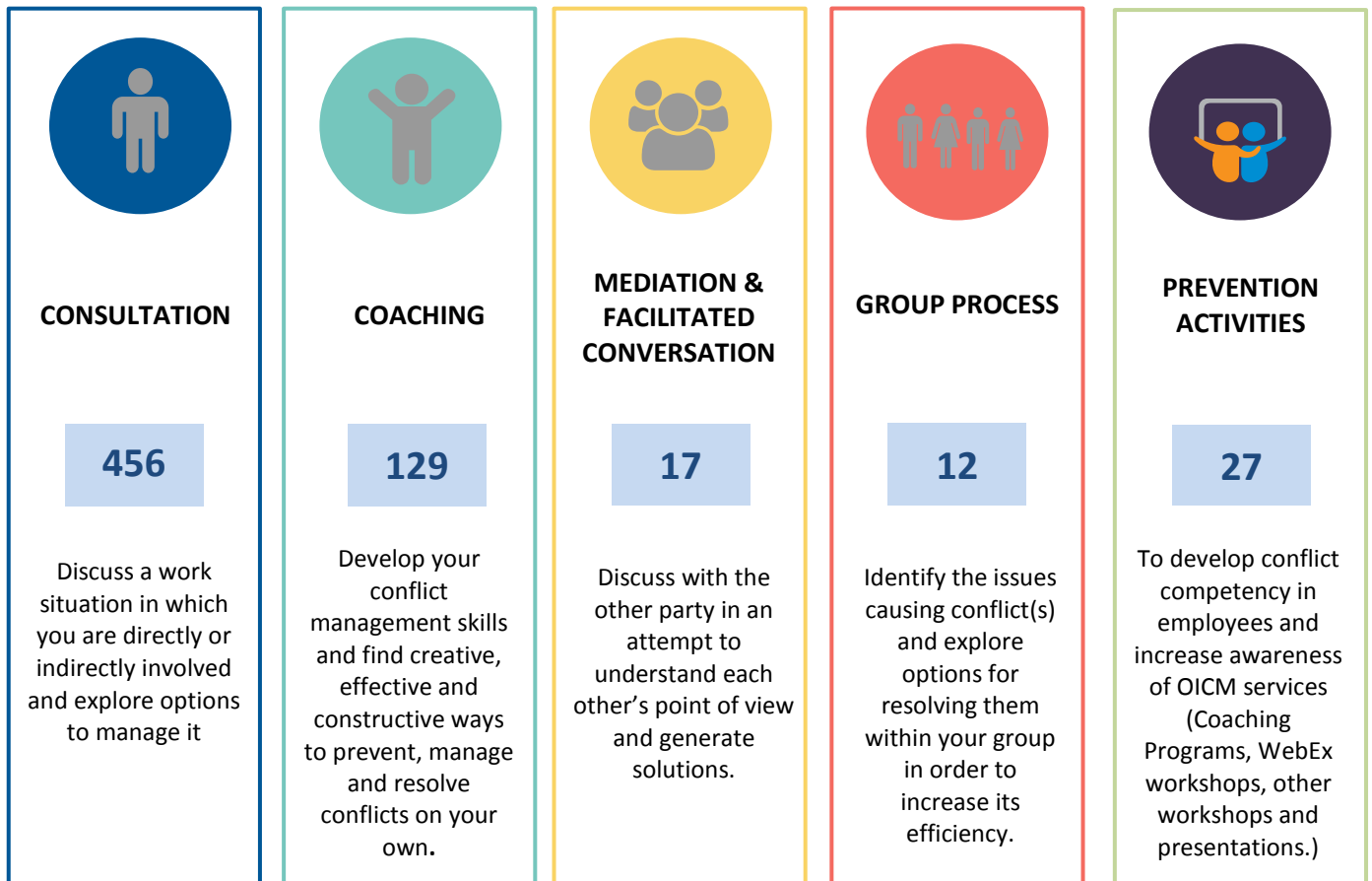
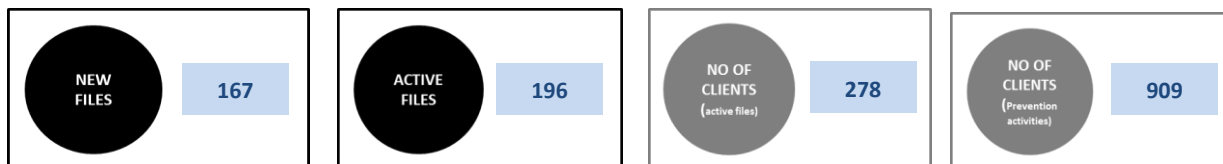
In 2005, the new *Public Service Labour Relations Act* (PSLRA) came into effect, whereby every Deputy Head of the core public administration must, in consultation with the bargaining agents, establish an Informal Conflict Management System (ICMS).

At Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the Office of Informal Conflict Management (OICM) provides ICMS services for all employees, including Service Canada and Labour Program. OICM's guiding principles include: neutrality, confidentiality, voluntary, timeliness, and good faith.

OICM has launched an initiative to gather information from its practitioners and coordinators in order to develop a quarterly trends report, identifying observed trends that have the potential to lead to conflict in various areas of the organization. This document provides the third quarterly report, being published in fiscal year 2017-18.

STATISTICS

2017-18 3rd Quarter (October 1st to December 31, 2017)



NATIONAL AND/OR REGIONAL TRENDS

Mental Health

Increased mental health-related issues being raised by managers, include:

- apprehension/anxiety around speaking about mental health;
- not knowing how to approach employees about possible mental health concerns affecting their work performance;
- unable to relay their concerns effectively during conversations related to duty to accommodate;
- wanting a better understanding of mental health and the manner in which a person suffering from mental health issues may react when they perceive something as a threat; reactions can vary among individuals, and;
- expressing concerns in dealing with employees with possible mental health issues, who are displaying behaviours that could be interpreted as harassment, intimidation or inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.

(Confirmed by all Regions)

Tension between Employees and their Managers

A certain level of tension exists between some employees and their managers. A factor that may exacerbate this includes managers having a lower classification level than their direct reports. In these situations, some employees may overstep authority and tell managers how to manage, using their accreditation, education and expertise as subject matter experts, to subvert their manager.

(Confirmed by all Regions)

OICM Requested to convey messages on behalf of Managers

Managers requesting services from OICM practitioners to attend meetings/sessions with their employees, to convey sensitive messaging on their behalf has recently been observed. As this responsibility lies within the manager's role, OICM Practitioners will offer to guide these managers through coaching; to help the manager identify the issues they want to raise and the approach they want to use with staff. All OICM Practitioners must, at all times, ensure that real and perceived neutrality is maintained with all clients.

(Confirmed by all Regions)

PATH FORWARD

By end of fiscal 2017-18, OICM will post and distribute a schedule of upcoming training sessions and program activities, with an overall objective to continue to better equip employees and managers in preventing and managing conflict, as well as preventing conflicts from escalating in the workplace.

Training and program offerings will include products and approaches that respond to trends observed nationally. For example, overall analysis of trends observed over the past 6 months suggests that communication challenges within teams are constantly at the heart of many issues. Therefore, OICM is committed to developing a holistic approach, to increase awareness and knowledge in how to have successful and effective conversations.

FOLLOW-UP ON PREVIOUS TRENDS

Supervisors in new/or acting positions

- Group service requests may be used as a way to address specific issues with an employee, in hopes that this employee will indirectly receive the message to behave differently.

Next steps: Given that one of the primary roles of OICM Practitioners is to assess service requests and determine the best approach to addressing an issue, Practitioners will remain mindful of this trend and continue to ensure that they use a consultative approach; ensuring that they obtain the necessary information by asking open-ended questions to align with the most appropriate service.

Front-end staff

- It is challenging for front-end staff to access training from OICM due to set hours in the Services Centers; this can contribute to limited opportunities for them to improve their communication skills.

Next steps: Following a more in-depth analysis of this trend by OICM management, the OICM will establish contact at the corporate or headquarters level to obtain data related to the challenges of frontline employees. OICM will also explore the possibility of providing services to front-end staff at alternative hours.

Business Expertise Advisor's

- Business Expertise Advisor's (BEAs) are frequently experiencing conflict when providing feedback to their client group.

Next steps: OICM will:

- identify a list of contacts who are responsible for developmental plans of BEAs;
- develop a promotional tool to be distributed to all BEAs, highlighting training that is currently available (WebEx training, Coaching Attitude workshops, etc.), and establish a conflict coaching program tailored specifically for BEAs. This will assist them in learning how to manage or prevent difficult situations from occurring while performing their duties.