Workplace Health and Well-being — Comprehensive Workplace Health and Safety Program Fact Sheet

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM?

How is anthrax contracted?

One way to achieve a psychologically safe workplace is to create and implement a Comprehensive Workplace Health and Safety (CWHS) Program. This program is a series of strategies and related activities, initiatives and policies developed by the employer, in consultation with employees, to continually improve or maintain the quality of working life, health, and the well-being of the workforce. These activities are developed as part of a continual improvement process to improve the work environment (physical, psychosocial, organizational, economic), and to increase personal empowerment and personal growth.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A CWHS PROGRAM?

Improved:

- creativity
- employee co-operation
- employee engagement
- employee retention
- loyalty to organization
- morale and employee satisfaction
- productivity, and
- recruitment

Reduced:

- absenteeism
- employee turnover (means reduced recruitment and retraining costs)
- grievances
- health costs
- medical leave/disability
- presenteeism
- workplace injuries and accidents, and
- work time lost

How do I establish a CWHS Program that supports mental health?

To develop and maintain your Comprehensive Workplace Health and Safety Program and the continual improvement process for your organization:

- **Lead** (management leadership and commitment)
- **Plan** (organize)
- **Do** (implement)
- **Check** (evaluate)
- **Act** (improve)

For example, the steps for your workplace could include:

1. Obtain Management Support — In order to begin the process of healthy workplace planning, all levels of the organization must support the concept
2. Consider creating a team or teams specific for each element of the program. The team(s) should report to the same entity — such as a manager or the overall health and safety committee — Get staff involved
3. Conduct a Situational Assessment — Get to the root of the problem
4. Develop a Healthy Workplace Plan — Plan what to do with situational assessment results
5. Develop a Program Plan (detailed work plan) and Evaluation Plan
6. Confirm Management Support — to implement the workplace mental health promotion plan
7. Implement the Plan — put the proposed program into practice
8. Evaluate your CWHS Program's Efforts
9. Continuously improve your CWHS Program based on the results of your evaluations

What are the components of a CWHS Program?

A Comprehensive Workplace Health and Safety Program has four main components:

1. Occupational health and safety (the physical work environment)
2. Psychosocial work environment (organizational culture and the organization of work)
3. Workplace health promotion (wellness)
4. Organizational community involvement

Note that these are not four distinct or separate areas. They overlap and must be integrated within the CWHS Program, and not addressed in isolation. Comprehensive programs must have multiple avenues of influence and integrate a combination of approaches to impact and reach employees at various stages of readiness.

We will look at each of these components in more detail below:

1. **Occupational health and safety**

Occupational health and safety (the physical work environment) encompasses the promotion and maintenance of the physical, mental and social well-being of workers. It includes reducing work-related injury, illness and disability by addressing the hazards and risks of the physical environment. Reducing physical job hazards can also reduce stress employees may feel in the workplace.

2. **Psychosocial work environment**

Psychosocial work environment (organizational culture and the organization of work) — a process to identify the real and potential hazards and risks in the psychosocial environment in the workplace must be developed, implemented and maintained in the

Comprehensive Workplace Health and Safety Program. The psychosocial environment covers two major groups of issues:

- organizational culture
- organization of work

Organizational culture is defined as the attitudes, values and beliefs that guide workplace behaviours and influence the work environment on a daily basis, affecting the mental and physical well-being of employees. Organizational culture focuses on factors that affect the interaction between people, their work and the organization. This element is the most interconnected with the protection and promotion of employee mental health and overall health.

Some key examples are:

- civility and respect shown by co-workers and managers
- fairness in the way people are treated
- appreciation and recognition
- honesty and transparency shown by management and workers
- support for work-life balance
- trust between management and workers

Organization of work covers aspects of the way work is designed, such as:

- demands or workload
- communication quality and quantity
- control, decision latitude or influence over how the work is done
- fairness in the way work is distributed
- clarity of roles and expectations
- support provided in terms of resources
- how organizational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organization
- psychological fit between the employee's interpersonal and emotional competencies, their job skills, and the position they hold
- opportunities for growth and development

When these factors are absent or handled poorly in the workplace, they become sources of stress, or "stressors", for employees. There is evidence showing many of these factors create two to three times greater risk of injuries, workplace conflict and violence, back pain, heart disease, some forms of cancer, depression and anxiety.

3. **Workplace health promotion (wellness/well-being)**

Workplace Health Promotion programs, also referred to as well-being or wellness programs, provide a proactive approach to healthy living for all employees at the workplace and cover a broad range of health issues.

Examples of workplace health programs include, but are not limited to, environmental, cultural and policy support for:

- active living
- healthy eating
- smoking cessation
- fitness
- immunization against influenza and other infectious disease

Evidence shows that the most effective workplace health programs are those that incorporate the stages of change model (personal readiness to make lifestyle

changes), address various levels of learning (awareness, knowledge and skills development, behaviour change), and make supportive environmental modifications.

Unlike health and safety programs, employee participation in workplace health programs must always be completely voluntary. Through needs assessments, the committee or employer should determine what workers' health needs and preferences are, and then plan programs and policies in response, but it is still the worker's choice whether to participate or not.

4. **Organizational community involvement**

Corporate involvement in the community is voluntary. Some of these interventions are considered to be "Corporate Social Responsibility" activities and typically address aspects of an organization's behaviour with respect to health and safety, environmental protection, human resource management practices, community development, consumer protection, business ethics, and stakeholder rights.

Within the community, a business may decide to support local charity events by sponsoring an employee team in a local fund-raising health event; allowing family members to attend employee flu clinics, or encouraging employees to volunteer in the community.