

WorkplaceWellness

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a healthy workplace is a great investment

This issue of Workplace Wellness is brought to you by York Region Health Services. It is available to any workplace in York Region. We encourage you to copy and distribute this newsletter. Our team of health professionals offers information and education on workplace wellness issues at no charge!

Hazardous or Healthy? Defining Your Workplace Culture

What would it be like to be given a project to do at work that has short timelines, requires connecting with multiple teams or individuals within a poorly constructed communication framework, and is not in your area of expertise? Add to that a distrusting manager who directs every step you take, who provides little positive reinforcement and values face time over output in the workplace.

While this is a reality for many employees in work settings across North America, companies are finally starting to recognize that a psychosocially unhealthy workplace can lead to unhealthy employees. In fact, recent research shows that inconsistent and unsupportive management styles create stress for employees leading to potential long-term health consequences. However, creating a healthy workplace culture is not the exclusive responsibility of the supervisory team. According to experts, when an organization values and respects the human assets in the workplace, the foundation upon which to build a healthy organization is established. Senior management can define or further enhance the workplace culture by obtaining feedback from staff and ensuring that trust and respect are threaded into the values and mission. If the values truly represent the personality of the organization, then as employees walk and talk these values, employee and customer satisfaction, as well as employee productivity will benefit in the long run.

A psychosocially healthy workplace is one which is free of harassment, bullying and intimidation. According to Glenn French, president of the Canadian Initiative on Workplace Violence, "workplace bullies create a tremendous liability for the employer by causing stress-related health and safety



problems and driving good employees out of the organization." Would you recognize the signs of bullying in your workplace? This edition of *Workplace Wellness* is dedicated to nurturing a psychosocially healthy workplace. Glenn French shares examples of bullying and identifies what can be done about it. Instituting measures to eliminate harassment and bullying is one step you can take towards developing a comprehensive wellness strategy for your workplace.

Organizational change and culture shift does not happen overnight. Whether your goal is a healthy workforce or more productive teams, creating a healthier workplace culture is a long-term strategy not to be overlooked. Is your workplace culture hazardous to the health of your employees? Read on for additional information and tips in *Research in Review*.

The York Region Workplace Wellness Program is available to provide Comprehensive Workplace Wellness information and consultation. For more information call *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.

Resources to help get you started:
www.healthyworkplaceweek.ca
www.ccohs.ca/healthyworkplaces/
www.greatplacetowork.ca
www.nqi.ca

did you know?

Providing healthy food and beverage choices at meetings and catered events is an excellent way to foster a healthier organizational culture and promote employee health. York Region Health Services has recently launched a brochure "Guidelines for offering healthy foods at meetings and catered events" to assist you in making healthier choices. A copy of this brochure has been included with this newsletter.

For more information or for a consultation with a Registered Dietitian, contact **Health Connection**.

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Workplace Wellness Program
Health Connection
1-800-361-5653

Research in Review

How important is workplace culture?

It is no surprise that the increasing speed of change, technological developments, globalization and the expanding work day have resulted in employees identifying different priorities in the new age. Although employees appreciate and often seek out employers who offer competitive pay and benefits, workers today are not drawn in solely by financial incentives.

Recent surveys by AON Consulting and Prudential Life have identified the following key drivers for employee retention:

- Management/supervisory quality
- Management recognition of work-life balance
- Opportunities for personal growth
- Keeping pace with skills needed for the job
- Open communication
- Satisfying customer needs
- Competitive pay

So, what does this tell us about employees in the new millennium? It tells us that the workplace culture is becoming increasingly important to today's workforce. In fact, in the 2006 Canadian Corporate Culture Study™ by Waterstone Human Capital, over 99 per cent of executives consulted believe that workplace culture influences organizational health as well as financial performance.

Workplace implications:

Research equates healthy workplaces with productive employees. According to Joan Burton, manager of Health Strategies, IAPA, the following steps support a psychosocially healthy workplace culture (Accident Prevention, Jan/Feb 2002):

1. Ask your employees for feedback and input informally or through an employee satisfaction survey. Listen. Then act on the results.
2. Encourage involvement from your employees in decision-making.
3. Support supervisors' skill building in the areas of: communication, providing positive feedback, consistency and fairness in management style.
4. Address work-life balance issues and promote flexible work options whenever possible.
5. Measure performance; institute a 360 degree feedback process.
6. Recognize that mutual trust and respect between employee and company/supervisor are invaluable.

WORDS AS WEAPONS: Workplace Bullying

Contrary to conventional thinking, workplace violence is not limited to physical acts, but includes a range of more subtle behaviours that can be just as damaging to the victim. Bullying, intimidation, threats, and stalking are just a few of the insidious behaviours creeping into Canadian workplaces. If we are serious about protecting employees from all forms of violence, we must also turn our attention to these behaviours.

Bullying & Intimidation

Bullying constitutes offensive behaviour through vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or groups of employees. These persistently negative attacks are typically unpredictable, irrational and unfair. Although commonly thought of as a school yard behaviour, it happens with great regularity within the workplace. Bullying and intimidation can happen at every level of the organization, often tolerated in managers who are relentless in getting results in a highly competitive market. Veiled threats of reprisals in the form of demotions or poor performance appraisals can characterize the bully in charge.

However, we must not think of the bully as only a manager; many employees are relegated to a workgroup in which a co-worker can be equally as intolerant. Demoralized over time, co-workers or subordinates of the bully, lose productivity, become depressed and feel the only option left is that of retaliation or simply resigning. As research is limited, it's difficult to determine the full economic costs associated with bullying and just how many promising employees have left their position prematurely. What we do know with certainty is that on those rare occasions, an employee's retaliation can be deadly.

Examples of bullying include:

- Punishing others by constantly criticizing them or removing their responsibilities or giving trivial tasks
- Refusing to delegate because they don't trust anyone
- Shouting at staff/persistently picking on people in front of others or in private



- Keeping people in their place by blocking their promotion
- Reprisals by overloading an individual with work and reducing time frames
- Insisting that there is only one way to do things right ... their way

Harassment and bullying often include patterns of behaviour that are displayed over a period of time. Because of this, and the sometimes subtle nature of the offensive behaviour, harassment and bullying can be difficult to recognize. What can you do about it?

- Be alert
- Consult with someone you trust regarding your observations and feelings
- Be aware of your organization's policies and procedures regarding workplace violence, harassment, respectful workplace or codes of conduct
- Become knowledgeable about your rights and responsibilities
- Most importantly...take action!

Submitted by: Glenn French, president,
Canadian Initiative on Workplace Violence

Creating Inclusive Workplaces

A new resource is available to help employers create workplaces that are inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

A Positive Space is a Healthy Place is a manual developed by the Public Health Alliance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Intersex, Queer and Questioning Equity. York Region Health Services is a partner in this alliance and participated in the development of this manual. The manual provides tools for assessing your workplace, sample policies and practices, and tips for planning training in your workplace, and can be found on-line at www.ophn.on.ca/workgroups/pha.html



For more information, please contact *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.

How are you celebrating Canada's Healthy Workplace Week?

October 22-28, 2007 is Canada's Healthy Workplace Week. This year's theme is "It's All About Valuing People." What can your workplace do to celebrate successes and recognize the contributions your staff make everyday? For activities, challenges and a list of actions you can implement to "change the world at work" go to www.healthyworkplaceweek.ca

Together We Can Stop Bullying

Any parent's nightmare is to have a child who is involved in the bullying cycle; as a bully, victim or bystander. According to a recent study by the Canadian Initiative for the Prevention of Bullying:

- 1 in 5 children who are bullied suffer in silence rather than seek help
- 28 per cent of children who are bullied endure the bullying for 2 or more years
- 85 per cent of bullying episodes are observed on school playgrounds and peers are part of the problem three quarters of the time
- 57 per cent of the time bullying stops within 10 seconds when peers intervene

Canadian experts Drs. Debra Pepler and Wendy Craig are advocating that in addition to having a whole school approach to bullying prevention, greater emphasis has to be placed on the development of safe and healthy relationships for the child as well as stronger connectedness within families, with teachers



and communities. Only then will our children be protected from the lifelong, hurtful effects of bullying.

Would you recognize the signs of bullying? How can you help your school-aged child? Link to www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/bullying.pdf for a resource guide for parents.

Additional resources:
www.york.ca click on **Services > Public Health and Safety > Healthy Schools**
www.voicesforchildren.ca
www.cayre.ca

Do you want to join our networking meetings?

Learn what other companies in York Region are doing to promote and sustain wellness. The York Region Health Services Workplace Wellness Program offers twice yearly networking meetings dedicated to:

- Human Resource Professionals
- Occupational Health Nurses
- Health and Safety Committee Members
- Wellness Committee Representatives

Our Workplace Wellness Team will provide you with education, practical resources and tools which you can bring back to your workplace. There is no cost to attend these sessions. Join us for the morning on Friday, September 28, 2007 and learn how to foster and support healthier eating in your workplace.

If you would like to be part of our e-mail invitation list, please contact us at workplace.wellness@york.ca

UPCOMING HEALTH DAYS

September

National Arthritis Month www.arthritis.ca

Sept. 17-23 Prostate Cancer Awareness Week www.cancer.ca

Sept. 16 Terry Fox Run www.terryfoxrun.org

Sept. 21 World Alzheimer's Day www.alzheimer.ca

October

Breast Cancer Awareness Month www.cancer.ca

Eye Health Month www.opto.ca

Influenza Immunization Awareness Month www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/influenza/index_e.html

Sept. 30-Oct. 6 Mental Illness Awareness Week www.cpa-apc.org

Oct. 22-28 Healthy Workplace Week www.nqi.ca/chww

November

Diabetes Month www.diabetes.ca

Osteoporosis Month www.osteoporosis.ca

Nov. 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women www.unac.org

December

Dec. 1 World AIDS Day www.cdnaids.ca

Dec. 10 Human Rights Day www.unac.org

what's on!

Annual Conference

Are you interested in learning more about workplace violence risk assessment and policy development for your organization? Join us for the morning on Wednesday, October 24th, 2007 for the Seventh Annual Workplace Wellness Conference titled "Bullying in the Workplace: What Every Business Needs to Know." Our keynote speaker will be Glenn French, president, Canadian Initiative on Workplace Violence. For more information contact Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.

Flu Shot Clinics

Keep your employees healthy this winter – encourage them to get the flu shot! Experts agree that getting a flu shot is the best way to avoid the flu and protect those around you. Health Canada recommends that people six months of age and older get the flu shot every year.

York Region Health Services will provide free flu shots at community clinics throughout York Region beginning in November.

Employers can also hold on-site clinics as part of their workplace wellness program.

For details about York Region's clinics or information about holding a clinic at your workplace, please call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653. For additional information visit www.york.ca

DRUG AWARENESS WEEK

NOVEMBER 18 TO 23, 2007

How do alcohol and other drugs impact your individual health and that of your organization?

Stay tuned for the winter edition of Workplace Wellness as we feature Substance Use in the Workplace.

Please call Health Connection for more information

1-800-361-5653

Workplace Wellness in Action at The Regional Municipality of York



The Regional Municipality of York is dedicated to supporting a healthy workplace environment for all employees. Why? Because it makes sense! Healthy employees help to create a healthy work environment, and a healthy work environment enhances the overall well-being of employees.

York Region's Employee Workplace Wellness Program *Wellness Works!* is a result of the *Employee Satisfaction Survey*. Wellness was identified as an area of opportunity to make York Region an even better place to work. Senior Management agreed and as a result, the development of a comprehensive Workplace Wellness Program began in July 2005. A thorough needs assessment was completed through a Health Risk Appraisal and an Employee Interest Survey. A resounding 54 per cent of employees participated in this initial needs assessment. Thus, we have an excellent foundation on which to continue to build our evolving wellness program allowing all programming to be driven by employee input.

Wellness Works! focuses on the key elements of a healthy workplace, including the physical environment, personal practices, social environment and personal resources. To date, several wellness initiatives have been offered including: Nutrition workshops, a Smoking Cessation Program, Cardiovascular Screening Clinics, Body Composition and Physical Fitness testing, Earth Week Pedometer Challenges, corporate wide Fitness Challenges, Work-Life Balance workshops, an Employee Health Fair, Back Care workshops and more! The greatest measurable success of the Wellness program thus far is the participation rate of the different initiatives offered and the enthusiasm of the employees who attended. All Wellness initiatives also have a formal evaluation component asking employees to provide their valuable feedback in order to improve the programming in the future.

The program is in the development stage, and baseline data is being gathered in order to measure the impact and effectiveness of the program in the years to come. Such things as absenteeism, employee turn over, WSIB claims, Long Term Disability claims, Extended Health Care claims and prescription drug use will be examined.

The Wellness Committee plays a vital role in the success of this program. This Committee is comprised of 15 individuals from different branches around the Region who act as 'Wellness Ambassadors'. The Committee meets bi-monthly to discuss upcoming wellness initiatives and to brainstorm creative programming ideas for the future. The committee also helps communicate the wellness message with their colleagues.

York Region is home to more than 2,800 employees, at over 50 different locations. One of the greatest challenges of this wellness program is providing accessible programming to all employees. Our new website, dedicated strictly to wellness, has helped to bridge the gap. This website is for York Region employees and their families and provides the latest information on different health topics, available resources and current and upcoming initiatives.

Ask the employees at The Regional Municipality of York and they'll tell you why York Region is one of Canada's Top 100 Employers. As Julie Amos in the Corporate Services Department says "The *Wellness Works!* program has made me evaluate my personal health goals and enabled me to participate in multiple wellness challenges that ultimately make me feel more balanced. This program has provided me with the tools to embrace wellness as a lifestyle change. It is clearly evident that my employer values my health."

"Workplace Wellness in Action" is a regular feature of the Workplace Wellness Newsletter. To find out how your workplace wellness program can be featured in a future issue of the newsletter, please call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.



We welcome your suggestions, ideas and comments. If you have a topic you would like to read about in a future issue, or if you would like to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter please contact us at workplace.wellness@york.ca