

Healthy Workplace Handbook

Ontario Workplace Health Coalition

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Acknowledgements

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Ontario Workplace Health Coalition (OWHC)

The Ontario Workplace Health Coalition (OWHC) is an independent, not-for-profit body, formed in 2005 to advance comprehensive workplace health in Ontario. Its membership comprises a broad cross-section of workplace health stakeholders.

The OWHC:

- Serves as a unifying structure across the province;
- Facilitates communication among workplace health stakeholders; and
- Promotes the importance of using a comprehensive approach to create healthy and safe workplaces in Ontario.

The OWHC vision for workplace health is:

All Ontario workplaces will:

- Value employee mental, physical, and psychosocial health as fundamental to organizational success; and
- Adopt and implement a comprehensive approach to healthy workplace as an integral part of their business strategy and operations.

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Introduction

The benefits of a healthy workplace are many. Healthier employees are good for business AND to society as a whole. A healthy workplace should be the aspiration of all Ontario employers and employees.

For organizations, there is strong evidence that healthy workplaces lead to improved employee engagement, which in turn leads to enhanced productivity and organizational performance.

This *Healthy Workplace Handbook* is intended for use in any Ontario workplace. It has been developed to support Ontario organizations in initiating and sustaining their own healthy workplace programs. The *Handbook* proposes a *Comprehensive Workplace Health Model*.

The *Comprehensive Workplace Health Model* provides workplaces with a basic framework and an easy-to-follow tool to implement their own workplace health programs. A resource guide provides links to the many workplace health resources that are currently available. Both the *Comprehensive Workplace Health Implementation Tool and Resource Guide* can be found in the Appendix.

Please take the time to review this *Healthy Workplace Handbook* and use it to create, enhance, and sustain your own healthy workplace.

Purpose of the Handbook

Prior to the first draft of the *Comprehensive Workplace Health Model* and this *Healthy Workplace Handbook* in 2009, there was no common model or guidelines for workplace health in the public domain in Ontario. The World Health Organization (WHO) developed a Healthy Workplace Model in 2011. The OWHC decided to update its CWH model in 2013 to align more closely with the WHO approach.

This *Healthy Workplace Handbook* includes a more dynamic model that incorporates the evidence-based “Plan-Do-Check-Act” process which organizations can follow to implement the comprehensive approach; and links to helpful resources.

Introduction

Goal and Objectives of the Handbook

Goal

The goal of this *Healthy Workplace Handbook* is to help Ontario workplaces integrate comprehensive workplace health into their business operations, with strategies addressing: occupational health and safety; health and lifestyle practices; a supportive organizational culture; and organizational social responsibility.

Objectives

- Improve the integration of workplace health into the culture, vision, and overall business strategy of an organization;
- Improve occupational health and safety, including a reduction in work-related injury, illness, and disability;
- Improve organizational outcomes, including: decreased absenteeism and injuries; increased recruitment and retention; increased productivity; increased customer satisfaction/loyalty; and increased employee satisfaction and commitment; and
- Improve individual outcomes, including: improved health status, work-life quality, increased job satisfaction, and commitment.

Business Case

The case for investing in a healthy workplace has effectively been made through many years of research.

A healthy workplace improves an organization's bottom line. Investing in people today builds the capabilities needed for long-term improvements in service and product quality, and overall organizational performance.¹

The bottom line for a workplace is improved through:

- Reduced absenteeism and injuries;
- Increased recruitment and retention;
- Improved employee health and well-being;
- Reduced grievances and disability time;
- Improved employee satisfaction and commitment; and
- Improved productivity and service quality.

Conversely, the cost of doing nothing is enormous. The negative effects of unhealthy workplaces and unhealthy lifestyle practices are well documented. They include increased incidence of:

- Injuries
- Back pain
- Mental health problems
- Substance abuse
- Heart problems
- Infections
- Certain cancers
- Conflicts²

Given the ample evidence indicating that a healthy workplace is critical to both organizational and employee well-being, and in order to remain competitive, it is time for all Ontario workplaces to take the necessary steps to provide a healthy environment for their employees.

¹ Bachmann, K. *More Than Just Hard Hats and Safety Boots: Creating Healthier Work Environments*. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada. 2000. Ulrich D. *Human Resource Champions: The Next Agenda for Adding Value and Delivering Results*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. 1997

² Shain, M., & Suurvali, H. *Investing in Comprehensive Workplace Health Promotion*, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, April 2001, page 11.

CWH does not need to be expensive in order to achieve results.

Comprehensive Workplace Health (CWH)

Our health is affected by the environments in which we live, learn, work, and play. Workplaces play a key role in either enhancing or diminishing an individual's health.

A comprehensive approach to workplace health has been demonstrated through research to be most effective in protecting and enhancing the health of an organization and its employees.

CWH builds on legislated occupational health and safety requirements. It addresses four elements through which an employer can influence the health of their organization and their employees to create a healthy workplace.

Workplaces play a key role in either enhancing or diminishing an individual's health.

Four Elements of Comprehensive Workplace Health

- **Occupational Health and Safety:** Reducing work-related injury, illness, and disability by addressing the physical environment and work processes. It includes factors such as air quality; physical, chemical and biological hazards; and violence prevention.
- **Health and Lifestyle Practices:** Creating an environment that is supportive of and encourages health-enhancing personal lifestyle practices, such as healthy eating, physical activity and not smoking.
- **Organizational Culture:** Fostering a supportive environment where employees are actively engaged and empowered. It focuses on the factors that affect the interaction between people, their work, and their organization.
- **Organizational Social Responsibility:** Participating in the community to improve the health of workers, their families and other members of the community. It includes being environmentally conscious; controlling pollutants; fundraising for charities; and volunteering during work hours.

There is an inherent relationship between all four elements of CWH, and to leadership and employee engagement. Leadership and employee engagement are two key drivers of organizational health and performance, and as such they have an impact on the CWH implementation process.

Businesses therefore need to consider all four CWH elements in the context of leadership and employee engagement in order to create a truly healthy workplace and optimize organizational health and performance.

Key Drivers of Comprehensive Workplace Health

- **Leadership** is about creating and facilitating an environment in which all employees can work together to achieve optimal employee health and organizational performance.
- **Employee Engagement** consists of two components:
 - *Satisfaction*: The level of contentment or passion a person associates with his or her job/position and the organization.
 - *Commitment*: Inspiration to do one's best work; to perform at levels beyond what is expected, while making a meaningful commitment to improving one's personal health and enhancing organizational performance.³

Leadership and employee engagement are essential to successfully implement and sustain actions that support all four elements of comprehensive workplace health.

³ Schmidt, F., & Marson, B. Employee engagement: A foundation for organizational performance. *Vanguard: Canada's Premier Defence and Security Magazine*. 2006. Retrieved October 25, 2009, from <http://www.vanguardcanada.com/EmployeeEngagementSchmidtMarson>

Comprehensive Workplace Health (CWH) Model

Employers and employees share the responsibility for creating a healthy workplace. With a combination of creativity and passion, organizations of any size can develop workplace health programs. Whether an organization chooses to think big from the start, or to begin with something smaller, it is wise to keep in mind the guiding principles for healthy workplaces (See *Appendix A*).

The Ontario Workplace Health Coalition has developed a *Comprehensive Workplace Health Model*. The model was developed from discussions with over 100 individuals and organizations at the Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition March 2009 Symposium (Note: the name of the Coalition was formally changed in 2012.) The model was reviewed and enhanced in 2013 based on the World Health Organization's *The Global Framework for Healthy Workplaces*.⁴

In the implementation process for this model the examples under Organizational Culture highlight the thirteen workplace factors that are known to impact psychological health and safety in the workplace.⁵

⁴ For additional information on the WHO healthy workplace model please see http://www.who.int/occupational_health/healthy_workplaces/en/. Joan Burton's presentation *What in the World is a Healthy Workplace* is a good place to start http://www.owhc.ca/pdf/JBurton_OHWC_Breakfast_What_in_the_World.pdf

⁵ CAN/CSA-Z1003-13/BNQ 9700-803/2013 *Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace* (<http://shop.csa.ca/en/canada/occupational-health-and-safety-management/canrsa-z1003-13bnq-9700-8032013/inv/z10032013>) addresses the thirteen workplace factors that are known to impact psychological health and safety.



CWH Implementation Process

At the onset of implementing this model, it is expected that a commitment from senior leadership has been attained and a healthy workplace committee and/or champions have been identified. The model recommends a [process or series of steps](#) that an organization could follow towards creating a healthy workplace.

The implementation process includes the following steps:

- Plan
- Do
- Check
- Act

1. Plan: This is an ongoing and recurring process.

- a. *Identify issues:* Identify and prioritize [workplace health issues](#) such as OH&S issues relating to the physical work environment, organizational culture issues relating to the psychosocial work environment, wellness and health promotion needs among employees, and opportunities for community involvement.
- b. *Gather information:* Existing wellness programs and policies, previous assessments, applicable legislation, resources, worker complaints, concerns and suggestions, data regarding absenteeism, disability claims, turnover, and other indicators.

The model recommends a process that an organization could follow towards creating a healthy workplace.

- c. *Assign*: Assign authority, responsibilities, and resources needed to develop and maintain the CWH program.

2. Do: This step includes the implementation steps for your program.

- a. *Identify resources*: Identify the resources and infrastructure required to reach your organization's objectives and targets including people, equipment, funds and space.
- b. *Define and assign*: Resources, responsibilities, time frames for completion and milestones to measure progress.

3. Check: This phase includes evaluating the outcome and reporting on the effectiveness and impact of the action taken.

- a. *Monitor progress*: Ask questions such as: is there management commitment and is it effective, are policy objectives being met, is worker participation effective, is information being produced, reviewed and used for continual improvement of the program?
- b. *Take action*: Identify what should be continued, stopped or revised.

4. Act: This phase requires periodic review of the CWH program by management.

- a. *Review*: To determine if the program meets the needs of the organization, is effective in reducing work-related injuries and illnesses, is improving the mental health and well-being of workers. Identify actions needed to address any deficiencies, including follow up actions from audits and previous management reviews of the CWH program.
- b. *Assess*: The future direction of the program, need for changes to policies, objectives and targets, resources, priorities and action items.

All Size Businesses as Healthy Workplaces

It is important to note that creating and sustaining a healthy workplace is an ongoing process that businesses should constantly monitor, update, and improve through experience and change.

A *Comprehensive Workplace Health Implementation Tool* is available as a template for organizations to use as a guide (See *Appendix B*).

97.4% of Ontario organizations have fewer than 50 employees. 29% of Ontario employees work for businesses with fewer than 50 employees; 24% work for organizations with 50 to 499 employees; and 47% work for large employers with 500+ employees.⁶

Traditionally it has been assumed that large organizations would be more likely to have the resources to develop a healthy workplace. Small businesses may think that they have limited resources and therefore a comprehensive workplace health plan is not feasible for them. However, this is far from the truth. Many small businesses have found ways to integrate healthy workplace initiatives into their organization in a way that works for them and fits their budget. A healthy workplace does not need to be expensive in order to achieve results.

Dr. Graham Lowe, a leading expert on work, notes that the most successful companies with fewer than 100 employees have:

- Policies that promote a balance between work and personal life;
- Flexible schedules;
- Excellent employee benefits;
- Competitive salaries;
- Excellent leadership with an emphasis on teamwork;
- Environmentally responsible company policies;
- Procedures for seeking employee input; and
- A focus on placing employee personal well-being ahead of personal gain of company leaders.⁷

⁶ Canadian Federation of Independent Business. *CFIB Research: Ontario Small Business Profile*.

<http://www.cfib-fcei.ca/cfib-documents/rr3093.pdf>

⁷ Workplace Wellness: Small vs. Big Business Options: Healthy U;

<http://www.healthyalberta.com/1068.htm>

The majority of these elements are components of a healthy workplace strategy. All that a business needs is support from leadership and a few committed people to embark on their journey towards a healthy workplace.

A Healthy Workplace Committee

A Healthy Workplace Committee or a designated individual can help champion the cause. If possible, the committee should consist of representatives from different levels and areas of the business, to account for all needs and interests. Healthy Workplace Committees need to work closely with Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC). Small businesses can move forward with just one champion or a smaller committee of two or more staff members.

Moving Forward

This *Healthy Workplace Handbook* has been developed to provide all Ontario organizations with information and resources to initiate their own healthy workplace programs in order to enhance both organizational and employee health. The *Handbook* takes into account the successful experiences and best practices from healthy workplaces throughout Ontario and elsewhere.

The Ontario Workplace Health Coalition aims to support the development of strategies that will increase the number of Ontario organizations integrating healthy workplace plans into their business operations. These strategies need to address: occupational health and safety; health and lifestyle practices; organizational culture; and organizational social responsibility.

The business case for investing in healthy workplaces proves that the time to act is now!

A *Resource Guide* provides links to useful information to help organizations implement the strategies presented in this *Handbook* (See *Appendix C*).

Through the information provided in the *Healthy Workplace Handbook*, Ontario workplaces can take the necessary steps to invest in the health of their organizations and their workers, and create healthier and more productive workplaces.

Appendix A: Guiding Principles for Healthy Workplaces:⁸

Guiding Principles for Healthy Workplaces

1. *Supportive culture and values:* Creating and maintaining a healthy workplace requires a supportive culture that clearly values employees and is trust-based.
2. *Leadership:* Commitment from senior management is critical, and must take the form of visible leadership on health issues. Employees judge commitment by the actions of the CEO and the executive team. Leadership must also be exercised throughout the entire organization.
3. *Use a broad definition of health:* Good mental and physical health means more than the absence of illness, injury and disease. It also means leading a balanced life, developing one's potential, making a meaningful contribution to the organization, and having input into workplace decisions.
4. *Participative team approach:* Implementing a healthy workplace strategy requires an integrated approach, guided by teams that include representatives from all segments of the organization such as management, health and safety, human resources, operations, employees, and unions. Direct employee involvement in all stages is especially critical to success.
5. *Customized plan:* Collaboratively develop a healthy workplace policy and action plan with clear goals. The policy and plan must be tailored to the business context, workforce characteristics, and documented gaps in the work environment. A healthy workplace plan is dynamic in nature, reflecting changing needs of the employees and of the business.
6. *Link to strategic goals:* Clearly link health issues and outcomes to the organization's strategic goals. Integrate health and well-being objectives into the organization's business planning process, so that all management decisions take employee health and well-being into account.

Employers and employees share the responsibility for creating a healthy workplace.

⁸ Lowe, G. S. *Healthy Workplace Strategies: Creating Change and Achieving Results*. January 2004

7. *Ongoing support*: Allocate resources that ensure continuity of healthy workplace actions. Provide training at all levels, to sustain the initiative and embed health into how the organization operates.
8. *Evaluate*: Effectively evaluate outcomes of healthy workplace initiatives. Monitor and measure healthy workplace indicators such as absenteeism, turnover, workplace injury rates, staff and customer satisfaction.
9. *Communicate*: Keep management informed about the impact on business outcomes. Open, continuous communication is a key success factor in any organizational change initiative.

Appendix B: CWH Implementation Tool

Elements of a Healthy Workplace <i>For more information on these topics, visit the "Links" section of the Ontario Workplace Health Coalition website http://www.owhc.ca/links.html</i>	Implementation Process Checklist								
	Plan			Do		Check		Act	
	Identify issues	Gather information	Assign	Identify resources	Define & assign	Monitor progress	Take action	Review	Assess
	Have all stakeholders (owner, management, union, staff & clients) identify issues of concern. Establish an overarching policy. Conduct hazard & risk assessments. Review legislative & other requirements,	Gather relevant information from best practices; internal records on experience performance; usage related to disability, absenteeism, benefits and Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) use; incident reports; available expertise.	Identify strengths & gaps. Decide what is working & what can or should be fixed. Define priority and high risk issues. Assign authority, responsibilities & resources. Set program objectives & measures.	Identify resources & infrastructure including people, equipment, funds & space. Base program development on outcomes of hazard, legal and needs assessments & the results of performance data.	Define the resources, responsibilities, time frames & milestones.	Keep track of your progress using measures you decided on in the planning stage. Monitor established measures. Conduct internal program audits to verify conformance to standards & effectiveness.	Identify what should be continued, stopped or revised. Define what needs to be corrected, revised or implemented as part of continual improvement opportunities. Celebrate & share successes. Share lessons learned.	Check how the process worked & if you met your objectives. Ask why your outcomes were met or why not.	Assess the future direction of the program, and the need for changes. Review & revise the policy. Update needs assessments. Set new objectives for next term.
Occupational Health & Safety Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury Prevention • Hazardous Substances • Air Quality (example provided) 									
	Review worksite layout & physical conditions. Conduct air quality surveys. Review worker complaints.	Review past surveys. Review Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) inventory. Review incident & environmental reports. Review purchasing records.	Prioritize air quality hazards & risks. Assign to person responsible for developing protective & preventive measures.	Look to hierarchy of control measures to eliminate or mitigate the air quality hazard. Remove contaminant from ventilation system, upgrade existing system, create work instructions, provide	Purchasing to investigate alternative products. Engineering to review ventilation systems. Operations to develop work instructions on safe handling, usage,	Re-survey once new product in use – have you introduced another problem? Monitor air quality measures. Conduct internal audits, inspections to confirm conformance to requirements. Investigate future incidents	Revise purchasing procedures to ensure products are scent-free. Correct and address issues arising from audits, inspections & investigations. Monitor air quality reports for acceptable levels & respond when those measures are not being met.	Confirm the air quality program is working to expected requirements, review results of air quality measures to evaluate effectiveness. Identify where corrective or preventive measures are needed. Identify opportunities for	Update policy & programs based on the management reviews. Set new objectives & action plans related to correction, prevention or continual improvement, which

				personal protective equipment (PPE) related to contaminant.	storage & disposal of materials.	& complaints regarding air quality.		improvement, including if new regulatory or other requirements are needed.	become part of next cycle of the management system.
• Ergonomics									
• Violence & Harassment									
• Workplace Accommodation									
Health & Lifestyle Practices									
Examples:									
• Healthy Eating									
• Tobacco Use									
• Physical Activity									
• Drug & Alcohol Use									
• Immunization									
• Stress Management									
Organizational Culture									
Examples:									
• Psychological & Social Support									
• Clear Leadership & Expectations									
• Civility & Respect									
• Psychological Demands									
• Growth & Development									
• Recognition & Reward									

• Involvement & Influence									
• Workload Management									
• Engagement									
• Balance									
• Psychological Protection									
• Protection of Physical Safety									
Organizational Social Responsibility									
Examples:									
• Reducing the carbon footprint of business activities									
• Control of pollutants in community air and water									
• Fundraising for local charities									
• Opportunities to volunteer during work hours									

Key Drivers Checklist

Leadership	Employee Engagement
Air Quality Example:	Air Quality Example:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish management commitment to the issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve employees in plan design & implementation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for managers to demonstrate their support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure employees can participate in developed program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate decision to buy scent-free products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & safety committee involvement in choosing cleaning products.

Appendix C: Resource Guide

The Resource Guide provides links to reliable and trustworthy websites with useful information to help organizations implement the strategies presented in this *Handbook*.

Resources

You can access these resources through the “Links” section of the Ontario Workplace Health Coalition. Please visit our website at <http://www.owhc.ca/links.html>.

You will find a comprehensive list of workplace health topics including active living, organizational culture, employee involvement, harassment and many more. We have also added links to the workplace health pages of public health units in Ontario. These units can provide assistance to workplaces within their community in establishing workplace health programs.

Getting Started

A first step is to review the following resources provided by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety:

Workplace health and wellness program – getting started
http://ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/wellness_program.html

Samples of workplace health program elements
http://ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/sample_elements.html

Sample workplace health and wellness survey
http://ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/sample_wellness.html

Another excellent resource is the former Workplace Health Promotion Project of the Health Communication Unit (University of Toronto). This archived website includes many useful tools and resources on developing a healthy workplace program.

THCU Resource Library
http://www.thcu.ca/infoandresources/resource_display.cfm?translateto=english

Other tools are available at <http://www.thcu.ca/infoandresources.cfm>

Become a Member of the Ontario Workplace Health Coalition (OWHC)

Membership in the Ontario Workplace Health Coalition is open to any workplace health stakeholder, including representatives from the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. Benefits of joining the OWHC include:

- Increasing your organization's profile as a leader in the development of healthy workplaces;
- Enjoying member discounts on special events;
- Receiving regular newsletter updates;
- Networking with other stakeholders; and
- Becoming part of a movement to advance comprehensive workplace health in Ontario.

Contact the OWHC:

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