



Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition

Supporting comprehensive workplace health in Ontario

Healthy Workplace Handbook

Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition

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The Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition (OHWC) would like to acknowledge the collaborative effort of many individuals and groups in developing this *Healthy Workplace Handbook*. We are grateful to the OHWC Advocacy Committee for taking the lead on the coordination and preparation of this *Handbook*; the Resource Integration Committee for development of the resource guide; and the Communication Committee for ensuring that the OHWC membership had the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft. We also appreciate the ongoing support and expertise from The Health Communication Unit (THCU) staff in assisting with this project. Most of all we thank the OHWC members who took the time to review and comment on the draft, providing us with valuable feedback to enhance the document.

Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition (OHWC)

The Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition (OHWC) 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 OHWC:

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

The OHWC 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 Implementation Model*.

The *Comprehensive Workplace Health Implementation 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 Handbook

Prior to the development of the *Comprehensive Workplace Health Implementation Model* and this *Healthy Workplace Handbook*, there was no common implementation model or guidelines for workplace health in the public domain in Ontario.

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

Goal and Objectives of 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, and a supportive organizational culture.

Objectives

- Improve integration of workplace health into organizational culture, vision, and overall business strategy;
- 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. ⁱ

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
- Conflicts ⁱⁱ

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.

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 three 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.

Three Elements of Comprehensive Workplace Health

- **Occupational Health and Safety:** Reducing work-related injury, illness, and disability by addressing the physical environment and work processes.
- **Health and Lifestyle Practices:** Creating an environment that is supportive of and encourages health-enhancing personal lifestyle practices.
- **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.

There is an inherent relationship between all three elements of CWH, and to leadership and employee engagement. OHWC considers leadership and engagement to be the two primary drivers of organizational health and performance, and as such they represent the foundation of the CWH implementation model.

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

Primary 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. ⁱⁱⁱ

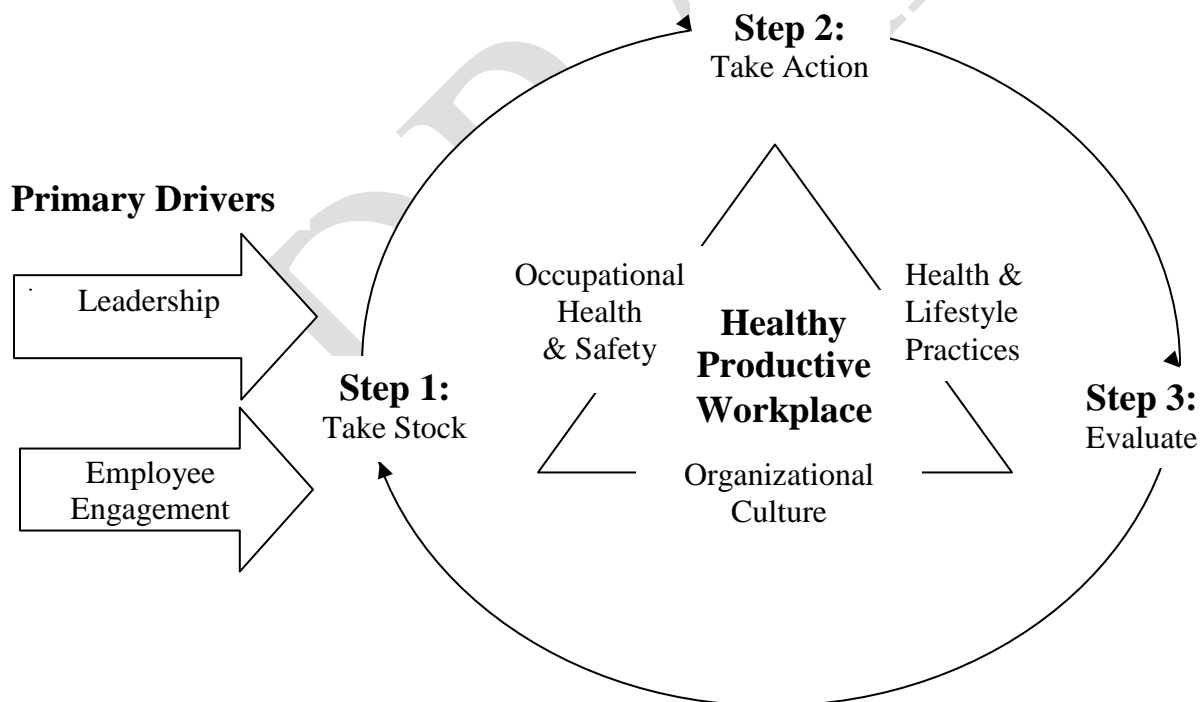
Leadership and employee engagement are essential to successfully implement and sustain actions that support all three elements of comprehensive workplace health.

CWH Implementation Model

Comprehensive Workplace Health (CWH) Implementation 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 1).

The Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition has developed a *Comprehensive Workplace Health Implementation Model*. The model was developed from discussions with over 100 individuals and organizations at the Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition March 2009 Symposium.



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.

This process includes the following steps:

- Take Stock
- Take Action
- Evaluate

1. Take Stock

- This step includes monitoring, measuring, and reporting data that reflects workplace health and organizational performance.
 - a. *Monitor:* Assess and [identify workplace health issues](#) e.g. workplace injuries, workplace stress, job satisfaction.
 - b. *Measure:* Gather available data or measure [using relevant tool](#).
 - c. *Report:* Identify gaps and review results with committee/representative and management champion.

2. Take Action

- This step refers to developing a plan and implementing a healthy workplace strategy that will best address the needs and gaps identified while **taking stock**.
 - a. *Plan:* Set goal and identify programs, processes or policies that are needed; develop [action plan](#).
 - b. *Act:* Implement action plan – [for small businesses](#) and [medium to large businesses](#).

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

3. Evaluate

- This step includes evaluating the outcome and reporting on the effectiveness and impact of the **action taken**.
 - a. *Evaluate*: Use [tools](#) to evaluate process, determine if plan has been fully implemented, and if goals have been met? Why or why not? How do you know?
 - b. *Revise*: Identify what should be continued, stopped, or revised. Start CWH implementation process over as necessary.

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 2).

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All Size Businesses as Healthy Workplaces

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.^{iv}

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.^v

The majority of these elements are components of a healthy workplace strategy. All that an organization 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 Health Workplace 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; and organizational culture.

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 3*).

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 workplaces.

References

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- ii Shain, Martin, and Helen Suurvali, “Investing in Comprehensive Workplace Health Promotion”, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, April 2001, page 11.
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- iv CFIB Research: Ontario Small Business Profile <http://www.cfib-fcei.ca/cfib-documents/rr3012.pdf>
- ^v Workplace Wellness: Small vs. Big Business Options: Healthy U: <http://www.healthyalberta.com/HealthyPlaces/206.htm>
- vi Graham S. Lowe. *Healthy Workplace Strategies: Creating Change and Achieving Results*. January 2004. Based on an analysis and synthesis of the following sources: Health Canada, Workplace Health Strategies Bureau, website (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/whsb-ssmt); Health Canada, Workplace Health Promotion Programs: Tools and Techniques for Evaluating Progress (2000); Health Canada, HealthWorks. A “How-to” for Health and Business Success (1999); Health Canada, Developing a Comprehensive Health Policy: Why and How. A Guide for the Workplace (1998); Health Canada, The Business Case for Active Living at Work; National Quality Institute website (www.nqi.ca) . NQI-PEP (National Quality Institute’s Progressive Excellence Program) Healthy Workplace Criteria Guide (July 2001); Shain M, Suurvali H. Investing in Comprehensive Workplace Health Promotion. National Quality Institute (2001); Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA) web site (www.welcoa.org)

Appendix 1: Guiding Principles for Healthy Workplaces: ^{vi}

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.

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.

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Appendix 2: CWH Implementation Tool

Elements of a Healthy Workplace <i>For more information on these topics, visit the “Links” section of the Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition website http://ohwc.ca/links.cfm</i>	Implementation Process Checklist							Primary Drivers Checklist	
	Take Stock			<i>Take Action</i>		Evaluate		Leadership	Employee Engagement
	Monitor	Measure	Report	Plan	Act	Evaluate	Revise		
	Identify issue	Gather data	Identify gaps	Set goal; identify action plan	Implement action plan	Check that process worked and goal has been met. Ask “why” or “why not”	Identify what should be continued, stopped or revised.	Establish management commitment to the issue. Provide opportunities for managers to demonstrate their support.	Involve employees in plan design and implementation. Ensure employees can participate in developed program.
Occupational Health & Safety, e.g.:									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury Prevention 									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazardous Substances 									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Quality (example provided) 	Worker complaints	Conduct a survey	Identify a cleaning product as the source of the concern	Reduce impact of scented product	Investigate alternative products	Re-survey once new product is in use – have you introduced another problem?	Revise purchasing procedures to ensure products are scent-free	Corporate decision to buy scent-free products	Health & safety committee involvement in choosing cleaning products

• Ergonomics									
• Violence and Harassment									
• Workplace Accommodation									
Health & Lifestyle Practices, e.g.:									
• Healthy Eating									
• Tobacco Use									
• Physical Activity									
• Drug & Alcohol Use									
• Immunization									
• Stress management									
Organizational Culture, e.g.:									
• Beliefs, Values, Norms									
• Management Practices									
• Job Control									
• Communication									
• Work-Life Balance									
• Safety Culture									
• Workplace Stress									

Appendix 3: 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 Healthy Workplace Coalition. Please visit our website at <http://ohwc.ca/links.cfm>

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

<http://www.thcu.ca/Workplace/Workplace.html>

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Become a Member of the Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition (OHWC)

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

- Increasing your organization's profile as a leader in the development of healthy workplaces;
- Receiving regular newsletter updates;
- Providing opportunities for partnership among members; and
- Becoming part of a movement to advance comprehensive workplace health in Ontario.

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