



Research at a glance

Wellness at Work: A Choice for a Better Future

KEY WORDS: *Workplace wellness programs, stress, occupational stress injuries,*

Why we did this study

Issues of psychological health, such as depression and stress-related injuries, are a leading cause of disabilities in the federal public service. Some staff members working for the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) experience high levels of occupational stress due to their roles working with offenders; other CSC staff experience stress due to workload pressures and organizational demands.

In response to issues of job-related stress, many organizations are developing workplace wellness programs.

What we did

This study reviewed the literature on workplace wellness programs as well as surveyed 63 federal government departments and 13 provincial and territorial departments of corrections to determine the types of wellness programs that they offered. Information from the RCMP and Canadian Forces was also solicited given the stressful events that police officers and soldiers routinely confront.

What we found

Most workplace interventions developed by other agencies fell within four broad categories:

- (a) Learning and development (e.g., educational strategies that promote employee wellness);
- (b) Supporting fitness related activities;
- (c) Health promotion and health screening activities (e.g., blood pressure and glucose screenings, monitoring heart rates, and immunization programs), and;
- (d) Employee recognition programs.

The Canadian Forces has developed “stress inoculation” programs to reduce the likelihood of psychological injuries, as well as peer support programs for soldiers suffering from stress-related injuries.

The RCMP is responding to occupational stress injuries by enhancing psychological services (prevention, detection, education, and screening), utilizing chaplains and peer-support programs, as well as increasing family involvement in education and information sessions.

The literature suggests that successful workplace wellness programs are comprehensive, long-term initiatives that are well-funded, involve key stakeholders, and have an organizational “champion.”

What it means

It is important that investigators continuously “scan the environment” to identify new and emerging trends, ground-breaking ideas, and different ways of confronting challenges. We found that while the CSC already has some components of workplace wellness programs, some of the initiatives that other agencies have developed could be of interest to the Service.

For more information

Bensimon, P. (2010). *Wellness at work: A choice for a better future*. Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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