



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Audit, Finance and Administration Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 13, 2015
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Workplace Mental Health Initiatives (HUR15008) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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Council Direction:

At the May 11, 2015 meeting of Audit, Finance and Administration meeting, staff was directed to provide a report on workplace mental health initiatives.

Information:

Mental Health in the Workplace:

Mental health is important to overall health. Good mental health can help our employees cope with the normal stresses of life, work effectively and make contributions to both the workplace and our community. There is growing recognition that improving the state of mental well-being for the entire community brings social and economic benefits to all. Since most people of working age spend a great part of their time at work, the workplace has an important role in the promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental illness.

Workplace promotion, prevention and anti-stigma initiatives, training for management, and employee assistance programs all have a role to play in maintaining mental health wellbeing. Employers need to encourage work-life balance and make sure employees are engaged in their work. Implementing policies and practices to deal with bullying and harassment-related issues will also help to reduce the risks for mental health problems.

Workplaces should also support the recovery of employees living with mental health problems and illnesses and enable their full participation in the workforce. Efforts to reduce stigma will encourage employees to feel comfortable in discussing their mental health problems and illnesses at work. Workplaces that implement comprehensive approaches will be in a better position to respond to employees who come forward.

The impacts of stress and mental illness on City staff may result in employee absenteeism, increased conflict, decreased productivity and disengaged workers. Studies show that 30% of short- and long-term disability claims are related to mental health problems and illnesses and are rated one of the top three drivers of both short- and long-term disability claims by more than 80 per cent of Canadian employers. While Return to Work Services staff in Human Resources are not able to quantify the number of short-term absences that are due to stress and mental health disorders, staff have made the following observations regarding the City of Hamilton employee population:

- \$430,000 of our drug benefit plans in 2013 went to covering depression-related drug treatment
- Mental and nervous disorders are the leading diagnosis of all long-term disability claims, surpassing musculoskeletal disorders and cancer
- 44% our Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) counselling services were provided for personal emotional issues including anxiety, stress, and depression in 2014 (see table below).

EFAP Usage

	Personal / Emotional	Couple / Relationship	Family	Work Related	Addiction Related
2014	44.1%	24.7%	13.9%	10.8%	6.5%
2013	38.5%	26.9%	15.2%	13.1%	6.3%
Industry Average*	43.8%	24.2%	14.1%	14.8%	3.1%
National Norm	45.3%	24.1%	13.0%	13.8%	3.7%

* Municipalities, Universities, Schools and Hospitals

Each year, we work with our EFAP provider to design specific programs and resources that address our trends and emerging issues.

Current Workplace Mental Health Initiatives:

Human Resources staff has introduced a number of employee-focused mental health initiatives to assist our staff personally and in their workplace roles. We are following the framework from the CSA Z1003 Psychological Health and Safety Standard for Workplaces and guidelines from the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Canadian Mental Health Association, Great West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace and other leading organizations. These initiatives include:

- **Mental Health@Work Certificate Training for Leaders**

This certificate program was arranged through Queen's University and Mounneau Shepell, our EFAP provider, and aligns with the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace. Over the course of three modules, participants explore the business case for mental health in the workplace while improving their understanding of relevant legal, ethical and business concerns. The program helps develop empathetic and solution-focused leadership skills that can be used at work.

Initially, the program was piloted with Human Resources employees in 2014 and has since been rolled out to people leaders across the organization. The training has been well received and appreciated by participants who are now more confident dealing with workplace issues as they arise. Senior Management Team has endorsed mental health training as part of the Leadership Development Pathway for people leaders. To date, 35 employees have completed the program and another class will start this fall.

- Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP) information sessions targeted people leaders and their role in workplace mental health. Eight sessions were held in 2014 with 72 people leaders attending.
- Employees and their families are provided free access to on-demand, on-line video-based resources through *LifeSpeak*. The library of titles includes a number of modules that assist with mental health issues, including:
 - *Understanding Mental Illness In The Workplace: Stigma, Reality & Hope*
 - *Addiction 101*
 - *Anxiety Disorders*
 - *Mental Health In The Workplace For Managers*
 - *Mood Disorders*
 - *Stress Management*
 - *Do It On Purpose: Achieving Work Life Harmony*
 - *Couples Relationships*
Common Marital Conflicts

- Chronic Pain Self-Management Workshops for Employees

This 6 session workshop series was developed by Stanford University and delivered jointly by our Occupational Health Nurse and Healthy Workplace Specialist to employees who live with chronic or ongoing pain. The workshop provides skills to improve quality of life on and off the job including how to deal with:

- difficulty sleeping and fatigue
- feeling closed off from others
- stopping pain from controlling one's life

Other topic discussions include: The Pain & Symptom Cycle, Pacing, Exercising, Relaxation, Action Plans, Problem Solving, Healthy Eating, Depression, Positive Thinking, Working with Health Care Professionals. Feedback from the 21 participants who have completed the program so far has been overwhelmingly positive. The impact of this program on improving the ability of employees to remain at work will be monitored going forward, along with follow-up assessment of participants' ability to apply the skills and make positive change.

- Our Occupational Health Nurse has been approached by the Hamilton Family Health Team who is interested in partnering with the City on an employer-based program on cognitive behavioural therapy to help employees build coping skills to use on and off the job. With the support of trained mental health counsellors, the City would offer workshops to help employees struggling with mental health issues.
- The annual joint health and safety committee recognition and learning event has included themes and topics related to workplace mental health and employee wellbeing. The event attracts approximately 150 of our employees who volunteer on committees in their workplace along with management and union leaders. They are provided with new tools and information to assist in their efforts at creating physically and mentally safe workplaces.
- The *Critical Incident Peer Support* team has been trained in Mental Health First Aid to assist in responding to situations involving a mental health problem or an employee experiencing a mental health crisis.
- A new microsite was released by our EFAP provider on "*Connecting Mental and Physical Health*" The site features an interactive poll and new articles, covering topics such as the mental and physical effects of weight loss and the importance of incorporating fitness and nutrition into a healthy lifestyle for your mind and body. Microsites were previously provided on
 - Improving your mental health
 - Stress and You
 - Managing Stigma
 - Understanding Mental Illness

- Bullying
- Mental Illness In The Workplace
- Coordinated disability management efforts have been enhanced by the Health, Safety and Wellness section increasing their collective knowledge of workplace stress, addictions, mental disabilities and accommodation issues.

Next Steps:

Over the next quarter, staff will be consolidating and analyzing 2014 and 2015 employee data that we can access to inform and monitor our Workplace Mental Health strategy and work plan over the next three years. The strategy will include:

- Establishing an advisory committee on Workplace Mental Health composed of stakeholders from across the organization including departmental and union leadership and Human Resources
- Promoting our Employee and Family Assistance Program and the mental health supports they provide
- Providing education for our people leaders on creating a psychologically safe and healthy workplace
- Providing targeted workshops for our employees based on needs identified through Return to Work Services and our EFAP provider
- Providing educational resources for all employees that promote good mental health and remove the stigma of mental illness
- Monitoring the outcomes of our programs provided to our employees

In addition, to get a measure of the prevalence of employees who are dealing with mental health issues and to monitor their perception of the City's support in creating a psychologically healthy and safe workplace, our plan is to ask employees a series of evidence-based questions as part of the City's organizational culture survey.