



INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Mayor and Members of the General Issues Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: March 20, 2013	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Workplace Mental Health Summit (HUR13005) - (City Wide)	
SUBMITTED BY: Chris Murray, City Manager	PREPARED BY: Helen Hale Tomasiak 905-546-2424 X4155 David Lindeman 905-546-2424 X 5657
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

Not Applicable

Information:

Members of Council are invited to join senior leaders from across the Corporation at a one-day Workplace Mental Health Summit on April 19, 2013.

The City's Healthy Workplace Strategy sets out a series of actions to be implemented between 2012 and 2015, to achieve a vision of a workplace where employees feel safe, valued and empowered to achieve physical, social and mental health. Creating workplaces that promote mental health and prevent mental illness is an important objective of the strategy.

A one day Workplace Mental Health Summit is being planned for April 19, 2013 to assist the City's leadership and key stakeholders in their role in leading and supporting workplace changes. The Summit will involve senior management leaders, union representatives, the Healthy Workplace Advisory Committee and other key staff.

The Summit will include presentations from outside subject matter experts along with facilitated planning exercises to develop an action plan to guide our healthy workplace programming. The Summit is modeled after the successful Health and Safety Summit that was held for all directors in the organization in 2007.

The objectives of the Summit are to:

- develop a common understanding of the role of the workplace in promoting mental health and preventing mental illness
- measure the organization's readiness to change management practices and organizational culture in support of our values, mental health promotion and mental illness prevention
- develop an action plan that focuses on building employee self-reliance and resiliency, creating respectful workplaces, enhancing mental health knowledge and developing mental illness prevention strategies.

The Summit agenda will include:

- a presentation on the CSA Z1003 Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace standard and other workplace tools that can help us develop our program
- a presentation on mental health issues in the workplace, what causes these kinds of problems, the costs of not addressing them and identifying some solutions
- a presentation from a mental health advocate/subject matter expert/best practice employer on how to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, support stay-at-work strategies, design workplace programs and sustain change
- a workshop to determine what we could do short-term and long term, to identify the barriers to moving forward and discussion on next steps, priorities, and who will do what

Dr. Linda Duxbury, the session keynote speaker and workshop facilitator, is a noted expert in the field of organizational health. Her previous work includes similar exercises with the federal public sector including the Treasury Board, Statistics Canada, Health Canada, Department of National Defence, Natural Resources Canada, Environment Canada and Transport Canada. She has also worked with most provincial governments in Canada and municipalities including Calgary, Kitchener, Waterloo, Ottawa and Peel Region.

Background

Essential to the creation of a healthy workplace are policies and programs that focus on workplace mental health. 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 promotion of mental health and the prevention of mental illness.

Impacts of stress and mental health on City staff are being experienced in the workplace through employee absenteeism, increased conflict, decreased productivity and disengaged workers. Further evidence to support mental health promotion being an important component of our healthy workplace strategy includes the following:

- our drug benefit plans disbursed more than \$450,000 in depression related drug treatment in 2012
- 39% of counselling services in 2012 were for personal emotional issues including personal and workplace stress
- 32% of all EFAP users use the services for personal relationship issues
- approximately 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. At the City of Hamilton, mental and nervous disorders have been the leading diagnosis of all long-term disability claims over the last three years surpassing musculoskeletal disorders and cancer.

The federal government released a national strategy document in 2012, *Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada 2012*, recognizing that mental health and well-being is essential to quality of life. It provides a pan-Canadian blueprint for improving mental health, including promotion and prevention. A voluntary Psychological Health and Safety Standard was developed by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and released in January 2013 for Canadian public and private sector workplaces. The standard provides guidance for changing how mental health and mental illness are approached in the workplace and enable both employers and employees to measure their progress. The voluntary standard and its associated tools will be available for free to workplaces for the next 5 years.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has also developed a resource document *Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers*, which outlines evidence-based, practical and flexible actions that an employer can take to enhance and protect employee psychological health and safety.

City of Hamilton Workplace Mental Health Initiatives to Date

Human Resources staff has introduced a number of employee-focused mental health initiatives to assist our staff as follows:

- provision of mental health information through eNet, Connections bulletins, eLibrary web site, Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP) web site
- establishment of corporate-wide Healthy Workplace Advisory Committee
- mental health training for HR staff, city management and union leadership
- EFAP information sessions on relationships, stress, time management, work/life balance
- LifeSpeak on-demand, on-line videos
- promotion of manager-focused workplace mental health micro-website
- flexible work arrangements including telecommuting
- workplace mental health focus for annual joint health and safety recognition and learning event
- respectful workplace training
- bullying and harassment prevention policies
- compassion fatigue training (train-the-trainer) for employees whose daily work involves helping others in dealing with difficult life circumstances
- Critical Incident Peer Support team to serve our employees during times of intense trauma or critical incidents
- ongoing research into workplace mental health through conferences, seminars, articles and reports
- Membership in Excellence Canada for access to their healthy workplace expertise, training and resources.

Following the Mental Health Summit, Human Resources will be partnering with stakeholders across the corporation to build on the workplace mental health initiatives implemented to date and implement the action plan arising from the Summit.