

Healthy Workplace

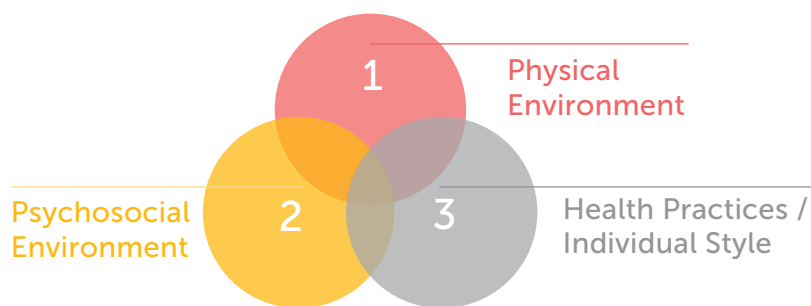


WHIRLING CHIEF



Introduction

It is interesting to see how our definition of a 'healthy workplace' has evolved over the years. Early on, we used to think of workplace health as physical safety. We wanted to ensure there were minimal accidents and that people were protected from any unseen injuries. Over time, we started thinking about physical environment as more than safety. We started paying attention to physical design elements such as lightening, sound, color, and art. Once again, in time, upon endorsement from regulatory bodies, we started considering ergonomics, like comfortable work clothes, adjustable chairs, desks, etc. Our collective definition of a 'healthy workplace' has continued to evolve. Today, we define 'healthy workplace' by three main factors:



Why Should You Care as an Employer?

As an employer you may ask, "Why should I care about this? Is it really my responsibility or company responsibility to care for employees' health? And if so, how could we make it a reality?"

We would like to inform you that aside from possible legal ramifications, the research supports that taking care of workplace health brings the following outcomes for organizations: Worker health, job satisfaction, employee morale, company productivity and bottom line cost drop.

And the good news is that investing in workplace health doesn't have to cost too much!

Let us provide you with a few tips for how you can make headway in this area.

Physical Environment

Physical work environment refers to "traditional" health and safety issues – these are elements that can be seen with our eyes, often touched by hand and can result in injury. A few good examples of these elements would be:

- Chemical and/or biological agents
- Noise
- Machinery use safety
- Electrical and mechanical safety
- Any other element that can lead to cuts, falls, eye injuries, etc.



Psychosocial Environment

'Psychosocial work environment' refers to the organizational environment and culture employees are expected to operate in. These are sometimes referred to as "mental hazards" – the kind of elements that are relatively difficult to detect by our five senses and often ignored by many companies. Some examples of these elements include:

- Work overload, time or resource pressure
- Lack of influence or complete loss of control on work activities
- Lack of support, orientation or training to do the job effectively
- Discrimination, harassment, lack of respect for personal choices
- Poor communication
- Lack of support for work/family balance

Health Practices

'Health practices' refers to lifestyle choices employees and employers make at the individual level. These days of globalization have pushed many of us to deal with competing priorities such as work, family, personal interest, etc. As we have less time to do activities we enjoy, we have less energy in engaging preventative behaviors like physical activity. Some examples of discouraged health practices include:

- Tobacco use
- Dietary habits
- Lack of physical activity
- Sleep deprivation
- Negative thinking and use of language

Your Role As an Employer / HR Business Partner

Physical Environment

It is important to note these are the kinds of hazards that cannot be completely eliminated and/or controlled; however, practice has shown that training and warning signs have an immense impact on possibility ranges. A few tips about how to provide a better physical environment:

- Engage in hazard identification, risk assessment
- Determine needs
- Develop and document procedures, guidelines, and practices for occupational safety
- Provide technical training and personnel development activities
- Manage environment, monitor safety elements

Psychosocial Environment

Data shows people working with high demands and very low control over work elements experience significantly more issues with anxiety, depression, cardiovascular diseases, back pain, and alcohol abuse. To prevent such wrongdoings, here are a few tips you may consider to provide a better psychosocial environment:



- Provide a venue for employees to voice their concerns and make suggestions
- Improve trust and confidence among team members
- Train management to demonstrate fairness
- Train management and employees to improve communication
- Training and evaluating supervisors in such basic management skills as time management, appropriate delegation, feedback presentation, etc.
- Promote and role model a respectful learning environment
- Measure and monitor employee stressors and satisfaction regularly

Health Practices /Individual Style

A non-comprehensive list of initiatives that could support health practices include:

- Raising awareness and education through an organizational newsletter, blog sites, brochures, and hand booklets
- Promoting behavior change through seminars and individual coaching
Offering skill building workshops
- Increasing access to preventative care such as access to fitness centers, offering showers, walk pathways, etc.

For more information on how to build and maintain a healthy workplace, please contact us by sending an email to sebnem@whirlingchief.com and/or through our website.



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