

# Healthy Workplaces

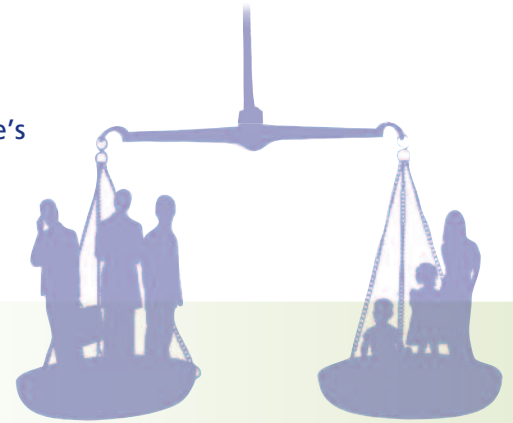
ON TOPIC



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## *Balancing our life, our work*

Life and Work. Must they conflict? After all, work is really just a part of one's life, isn't it? But does work have to take over? Not always... which is why some experts say employers need to dramatically rethink their corporate culture. Work hours and overtime have been squeezing those other important things out of the average worker's day – things like sleeping, eating, raising a family, and simply living.



## *Causes*

One in six Canadian workers report that they work at high speed “all of the time,” says a recent study. One in four Canadians works 50 hours per week or more. As work takes up a bigger and bigger chunk of our lives, it's becoming more difficult to pay attention to other important matters – namely our families, our downtime, and our general well-being.

There are several reasons for the buzz about “work/life balance”. Since the mid-60s, Canada has seen fundamental shifts in its economy, in society, and in families. In particular, the labour market has seen more women in the workplace, more two-income families, more single-parent families, an aging population, changing immigration patterns, and a greater number of non-standard work arrangements.

## *Effects*

Not surprisingly, when work and family conflict, stress is the number one side effect. A study sponsored by the Government of Canada reveals that the number of employed Canadians reporting high job stress (tensions and pressures resulting from job requirements and duties) doubled during the 1990s from 13% to 27%.

## *Who is at Risk?*

Workers are juggling more responsibilities and working longer hours than ever before. It's not uncommon for someone to put in frequent paid or unpaid overtime at work, while trying to also fulfill the roles of parenting and/or caring for an aging parent.

- Currently 70 percent of women with children under the age of six are in the labour force, compared to only 25 percent in 1965
- Many more families have both parents spending long hours at a job before coming home to their second job of running a young family with equally pressing needs
- Statistics Canada reports that between three in 10 Canadians are part of the sandwich generation, individuals who are caught between the conflicting demands of caring for children and seniors simultaneously.





## **What Makes Good Business Sense?**

As workers have been pulled in different directions, many employers have made efforts to ease the pressure by offering alternative work arrangements. By being flexible and giving employees options such as part-time work, job sharing, flexible hours or the choice to work from home, many have succeeded in reducing employee stress and the feeling of being overloaded.

## **What Employers Can Do?**

More can be done, however. According to a report by the Public Health Agency of Canada, many employers need to:

- Find ways of reducing employee workloads, particularly that of managers and professionals, in all sectors.
- Let employees know that they have the option of refusing overtime, without fear of penalty.
- Make clear that they don't expect workers to choose between their families and their career advancement.



If you're considering implementing a program that officially addresses work/life balance for your employees, tailor the program to suit your organization's needs and corporate culture. Involve employees in the process and consult them frequently.

Setting up a work/life program can bring significant changes in the workplace, but these changes are becoming necessary in the new, ever-changing workplace. Besides, having a corporate culture that fosters a healthy work-life balance brings many rewards, including more trusting relationships between employees and the employer, a more enjoyable work environment, and happier workers who feel encouraged, supported and rewarded for their hard work.



# WHERE TO START? WE CAN HELP!

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) has a number of user-friendly products and services to help you get started.

## Health and Safety Publications



**Workplace Health and Wellness Guide** – This 190-page guide will give you the tools to identify factors that influence the health, safety and wellness of employees, conduct a general health survey and develop and implement a workplace health and wellness program. The information is designed for both the program leader and the workforce in general.

## Webinars

**Journey to a Healthier Workplace** – To discover healthy workplace strategies you can use, learn how Trillium Health Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, incorporated health and well being into their workplace. What began as a healthy workplace initiative has become everyday life at Trillium—a free webinar produced by CCOHS. CCOHS offers a series of free webinars during Healthy Workplace Month – [www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca/](http://www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca/)

## Web Resources

**Healthy Workplaces Web Portal** – [www.ccohs.ca/healthyworkplaces/](http://www.ccohs.ca/healthyworkplaces/)

CCOHS has created a one-stop source of healthy workplace information that helps employers, employees and health promotion practitioners find what they need to develop a healthier workplace.

Learn healthy living tips and how working in a healthy workplace can have a positive impact on health, including improved balance of work and family responsibilities, greater job satisfaction and reduced work-related illness, injury and disability. Practitioners can find tools and resources to help develop healthy workplace strategies and initiatives.

**Healthy Workplace Month** – [www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca/](http://www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca/)

October has been set aside to increase awareness regarding the importance of workplace health, helping enhance personal and organizational performance. Visit and find plenty of resources and ideas to assist you in developing a strategic approach to workplace health. Check back to the website often so you can plan a month's worth of healthy workplace events!

## e-Courses



**Office Health & Safety** – This course provides a practical introduction to office health and safety for managers, supervisors and employees, including health and safety committee members. It describes how to develop a health and safety program and introduces potential hazards in an office environment—including workplace stress.

## FREE OSH Answers

Visit [www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/)

Search our easy-to-read answers in fact-sheet format on the web. Topics include:

- Aging workers
- Bullying in the workplace
- Active living at work
- Employee assistance programs
- Work/life balance
- Healthy eating at work
- Exercises for a healthy back
- Flexible work arrangements

## FREE Need Answers to your Questions?

Contact CCOHS' Inquiries Service at **1-800-668-4284** for confidential help regarding your health and safety questions. This free bilingual service is available each business day, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm or via email at [clientservices@ccohs.ca](mailto:clientservices@ccohs.ca)  
CCOHS offers many sources of Healthy Workplace support services including information in our newsletters, presentation and online resources –

**Visit [www.ccohs.ca](http://www.ccohs.ca)**