

Summary of the National Guidelines for the Promotion of **Healthy** Working Environments

A Framework for the Health and Disability Support Sector

The Health Workforce Advisory Committee (HWAC) sees healthy working environments as a key priority for New Zealand's health and disability support sector.



Healthy working environments will enhance New Zealand's ability to recruit and retain appropriate staff in a competitive global environment, and have a positive impact on the health outcomes of New Zealanders. HWAC's principles can be used for developing healthy working environments.

HWAC's vision of a healthy working environment is one in which people work in a positive environment in which they are valued and that supports them to work in an effective manner.

Healthy working environments:

- are people-centred
- value effective teamwork
- make information-based management decisions
- involve employees in decision-making
- promote open communication
- support individual learning and development
- emphasise innovation and creativity
- support work–life balance.

Healthy working environments have clear benefits in terms of enhancing both the retention of high-quality staff and improving the overall performance of the workforce.

This pamphlet is designed to give you an overview of Healthy Working Environments principles. The full Healthy Working Environments report is online at www.hwac.govt.nz and you can order hard copies from moh@wickliffe.co.nz



WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT: Positive Performance Spiral

Good organisational practice

- Participatory decision-making.
- Culture promotes teamwork, support, communication, innovation, inclusion, clinical effectiveness and risk management.
- Systematic collection of information to understand, develop and monitor workplaces.
- Excellent staff orientation, training and ongoing development.
- Workloads, remuneration and skill mixes are optimally structured.
- Clinicians make timely decisions based on expert judgement.

Individual behaviours

- Satisfaction or good morale.
- Optimal stress levels.
- Low levels of absenteeism, lateness and stress-related illnesses.
- High levels of motivation.
- Loyalty and enthusiasm about the organisation and the results being achieved.
- Constructive working relationships between staff, including goodwill.

Performance results

- Higher quality of care.
- Staff retention.
- Reduction in costs.
- Reputation of service.

Healthy working environments can be positive for staff and the organisation as a whole. Healthy working environment initiatives can also have significant benefits for quality of care. For example, there is strong evidence that a workforce's level of satisfaction with their working environment impacts on the quality of their clinical practice.

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT: Negative Performance Spiral

Performance problems

- Negative reputation as employer and provider of care.
- Lower quality of patient care, such as mortality and post-operative infection.
- Increased costs, such as recruitment and casual labour.
- Labour shortages.
- High turnover, affecting continuity of care, programmed-development, institutional knowledge and mentoring.

Individual behaviours

- Reduced focus on work and less productivity.
- Burnout, lateness and absenteeism.
- Higher staff turnover.
- More accidents.
- Vertical and horizontal conflict (such as bullying, distrust between clinicians and managers).
- Reduced loyalty and 'ownership' of organisational development.

Organisational response

- Reduce training and staff development.
- Management 'control' model.
- Salary freeze.
- Use of casual labour.
- Freeze on hiring or promotion.

Unhealthy working environments can often be detrimental to staff morale and motivation. This can lead to reduced quality of care and difficulties in attracting and retaining high-quality staff.

Organisational Culture (norms, values, beliefs and behaviours)

A healthy work environment:

- will have the health and wellbeing of the person as its primary objective
- reflects a culture that values employees and promotes trust between staff
- demonstrates people working collaboratively as teams and forming constructive relationships to achieve shared objectives
- enables effective and open multi-level communication channels
- encourages and supports change and innovation
- fosters creativity
- promotes continuous learning
- has a risk management approach that supports staff and is not simply risk aversion
- recognises and adapts to changing work–life balance
- reflects a culturally aware environment that is supportive of, and responsive to, the increasing diversity of the workforce.

Leadership and Decision-Making

- Governance structures and systems support staff involvement in decision-making, implementation and the review of initiative success in their area of expertise.
- Participatory management is commonplace with staff involved in decision-making in their area of expertise and influence.
- Partnerships are established between the management and clinical cultures.
- Clinical leadership and shared clinical governance are promoted.
- Professional autonomy and accountability is promoted and valued.
- Leadership is continually developed and supported at all levels of the organisation.
- Leadership focuses on people, their potential, their impact, and what makes them function optimally.
- Effective feedback systems are developed.

Change Management

- Change is managed as a normal and ongoing characteristic of the workplace, and good processes and principles are evident.
- Organisations engage in change management processes that help build and maintain organisational trust.
- Change has a rationale, is managed through action plans, and is monitored to enable future learning.
- Frontline staff are involved in the definition of problems and the design of solutions.
- Change is preceded by robust consultation processes with those who will be affected.
- Opinion is sought and considered throughout the process from all who are involved in, or will be affected by, the change.
- Effective evaluation mechanisms are put in place and used.

Information and Knowledge-Sharing

- Excellent information is collected to assist organisations to understand their workplace and staffing needs.
- Demographic information is collected about staff and used to customise organisational design.
- Evidence about working environment success is collected and shared with the staff and, where appropriate, the sector as a whole.
- Comprehensive information is regularly collected about staff satisfaction with aspects of their environment, and is used to inform future decisions and actions to promote a healthier working environment.
- Organisations co-operate and share information with each other to help gain a national picture of future trends.
- Knowledge and solutions are shared.

Career Development

- Staff are developed throughout their employment by high-quality systems.
- Individuals are oriented to the work environment by their team.
- Career development opportunities are readily available.
- Research is recognised as a legitimate work activity where appropriate.
- Staff receive feedback on performance and are actively involved in their performance development plan.
- Training and continuing education/learning is conducted on-the-job and through professional agencies.

Employee Recognition

- Staff are expected to perform well and are recognised appropriately.
- Remuneration is fair.
- Workloads and skill-mixes are optimally designed.
- Casual labour usage is minimal.
- There is flexibility in job design and work arrangements.
- Clinicians take responsibility for making timely decisions based on expert judgement.
- Excessive levels of stress are recognised as an occupational hazard and actively managed and monitored, and effective processes are provided to support affected staff.
- Employee assistance is provided where appropriate.

Examples of Sector Initiatives

District Health Boards (DHBs) and other organisations in the health and disability support sector have been proactive in developing programmes to support the health and wellbeing of staff and to support their career development. Three examples of healthy working environment principles in action in DHBs are set out below.

Bay of Plenty DHB

Bay of Plenty DHB designed a career development initiative which includes an in-house career development programme to support the organisation, and to support employees' needs with a focus on development and retention.



Career Dimensionz is designed to assist employees with:

- confidence in making career choices and decisions
- establishment of career goals
- opportunities for personal and professional development
- resources to lead a satisfying career path.

The organisation benefits by:

- demonstrating the value placed on its people
- identification of workforce development and retention issues
- providing an encouraging and supportive careers service
- having a motivated workforce.

More information can be obtained by emailing career.dimensionz@bopdhb.govt.nz

Hutt Valley DHB

'Putting the health back into health and safety.' Hutt Valley DHB wanted to promote health and wellness in the workplace and has two main programmes at present.

The Wellness Initiatives for staff are:

- 10,000 steps programme
- weight watchers at work.

Over 200 employees at Hutt Valley DHB have completed the 10,000 steps challenge.

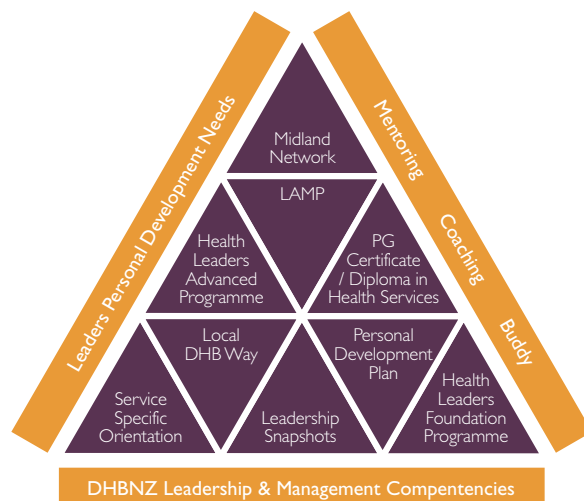
More information can be obtained by contacting the Healthy Staff team on (04) 566 6999.

Midland Region DHBs

The Midland Leadership Framework was created to advance the skills of all levels of leadership. All initiatives will be based on DHBNZ Leadership Competencies, new learning opportunities have been created:

- Health Leaders Foundation and Advanced Programmes
- Midland Network
- Postgraduate Diploma in Health Service.

For more information please look at DHBNZ's Leadership and Management Programmes www.dhbnz.org.nz and www.midlandleadership.co.nz (this website will be live from July 2006).



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