

On Occupational Health and Safety

Shifting Responsibilities

Employees take charge of work schedules

When Elizabeth has a family celebration, she can take the day off work, no questions asked. All she has to do is find someone else to cover her shift.

At Lions Manor in Winnipeg, employees in the Supportive Housing Program are in charge of their own scheduling. This is unusual for a workplace such as a long term care facility, where employees are always busy and stretched, trying to meet the residents' needs.

Nine employees work in the Supportive Housing Program at Lions Manor, a facility which offers a continuum of housing for older adults. Lions Manor offers a range of options from independent housing to long term care facility for seniors.

Employees are Responsible

Laura Devlin, Director of Social Care, says that when self-scheduling was introduced nine years ago, employees were unsure of what to expect. She says that it involved a paradigm shift. In a traditional system, employees are often treated like children, and will look to management to resolve problems. But in self-scheduling management is not involved, for the most part. The workers manage the schedule themselves. With this right has come extra responsibilities, Devlin explains. It's up to workers to find their own replacement and to negotiate with one another to make changes to the schedule.

If a worker agrees to take someone else's shift and then doesn't come in, they become accountable to their coworkers. Elizabeth Pontanos, one of the Tenant Companions on the evening shift, says this rarely happens. She also

says the employees have a shared understanding that if someone agreed to take your shift and then can't at the last minute, the original staff member will have to come in to work after all. Pontanos reports that having a trained pool of part time and casual workers also helps ensure that replacements are not too hard to find.

Pontanos says that by having the freedom to look after her own shifts, she feels relaxed and happy at work. She states, "when I have the freedom to look after my own shift, it helps me to concentrate on providing the very best care to the residents."



Elizabeth Pontanos loves being in charge of her own shifts

Lions Manor's approach to self-scheduling comes from the Eden Alternative philosophy, adopted by a small but growing number of personal care homes. The goal is to be a warm, nurturing environment where residents will thrive. A key part of this approach is moving decisions closer to the residents and that often means the front line staff. By taking away the bureaucratic hierarchy, it gives more ownership to employees and residents to create a good place to live and to work. The basic idea is that if you treat employees well, the residents will benefit.

Benefits of Self-Scheduling

Besides high levels of employee commitment and satisfaction, Devlin lists a number of other benefits to their workplace. They have lower sick time and

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Aboriginal Workers Project Has Made a Difference

Over the last three years the Occupational Health Centre's Aboriginal Workers Education and Outreach project has equated the seven Sacred Aboriginal teachings with the three workers' rights as part of storytelling within Sharing Circles. We held Sharing Circles with many Aboriginal organizations, teachers and students. We also recently began to merge our Circles with workplace health and safety committee work.

We learned early in our discussions with the Aboriginal community that Aboriginal workers are even more reluctant than other workers to become involved with their workplace health and safety issues. This is

even still sometimes continues to be passed down generationally to this day.

As part of their healing journey, many participants identify, name and some even move beyond their generational inhibitions to become actively engaged in their workplace health and safety concerns for the first time. Some participants, who took part in our more intensive Sharing Circle Guide Training, have even become representatives on their workplace health and safety committees.

The voices of those who have been part of our Circles best describe the transformative work of our Circles.

"We had a lot of fun. The three hour session was powerful, moving and impactful for me. I look forward to the self changes that I plan to make and some changes that may occur in the workplace."

"The Circle had a profound impact on my thinking. I've done a tremendous amount of reading and thinking about the human condition, but this has truly resonated with me. I feel like I 'got' it at a deep level. I found these workshops to be the most valuable in which I have taken part, anytime, anywhere."

This three year project was funded by the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) of Manitoba. We hope to receive new funding from WCB so we can help workplace health and safety committees throughout Manitoba integrate the Sharing Circle approach as part of their committee work. Contact Diana Ludwick at 926-7903 if you want more information.

Seven Sacred Teachings	Three Workers' Rights
Respect Humility Love Truth Honesty Courage Wisdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to Know • Right to Participate in Health & Safety Committees • Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

attributed, in large part by the Aboriginal community, to be a consequence of loss of their culture in many ways during colonization, especially during residential school or foster or adoptive life experiences. They learned as youngsters that if they complained, they were often punished more. This reluctance to voice concerns often continues into their adult lives and

Upcoming Events

Workplace Safety and Health Division presents the following courses at locations throughout Manitoba: **Chemical & Biological Hazard Control; Control of Risks for Musculoskeletal Injury; Investigating Workplace Incidents; SAFE Committee Basics; SAFE Work Procedures; Supervisor & SAFE Work** Free registration for all of the above courses. For more information call 945-3610 or go to www.gov.mb.ca/labour/safety (Committee Training)

Occupational Health Centre presents **Resources for Managing Mental Health in the Workplace** by Maureen Grace
 November 6, 2007 - 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
 275 Broadway (Union Centre) call 926-7907

Safe Communities Foundation presents **2007 Canadian Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Conference**
 November 11-13, 2007 - Toronto
 For more information call (613)798-8029 or go to www.injurypreventionconference.ca

Safety Services Manitoba presents **Occupational Health & Safety Conference**
 January 22 & 33, 2008
 Victoria Inn and Conference Centre - Winnipeg
 For more information call 949-1085 or go to www.safetyservicesmanitoba.ca/ohs/

overtime costs than the other programs at Lions Manor. Employees have also learned more about budgets. When shift changes result in overtime costs, employees need to get management's approval. By educating and sharing information with workers about the budget and its effect on scheduling, they have learned how to stay in budget.

Devlin says that management's role in self-scheduling at Lions Manor has been to coach employees on negotiating and conflict resolution skills. She believes that these skills result in a warmer interpersonal environment.

Pontanos reports that good communication and teamwork is key between coworkers. This system won't work without it.

Both Devlin and Pontanos agree: employees love self-scheduling and wouldn't want to lose it. Devlin points to the need to treat employees the way you want them to treat residents. And Pontanos adds, "It benefits everyone".

Do you have an article or story about health and safety at your workplace that you want to share? Send your contribution to Karen Hamilton at khamilton@mflohc.mb.ca or fax to 956-0848.

NEW!

Workplace Violence Training

As of February 2007 a new Workplace Health and Safety regulation that deals with Violence is in place. Workplaces now need to identify and assess the risk for violence in their workplace and develop a Workplace Violence policy in consultation with the health and safety committee.

OHC will be offering free one day training sessions on Violence for Health and Safety Committee members starting in January 2008. Check our website for specific dates and registration information at www.mflohc.mb.ca or call Diane Gagnon at 926-7904.

did you know. . .?

Canadian workers are not experiencing an overall improvement in job quality. Despite economic prosperity in Canada a new report found that only about one-third of all workers are very satisfied with their jobs. The report urges employers and government to focus on job quality as a means to recruit and retain workers.

Download the report at www.cprn.org

"21st Century Job Quality: Achieving What Canadians Want"
Canadian Policy Research Network, 2007

I want to help!

I will support the Occupational Health Centre to help Manitobans protect their health and safety at work.

Name _____

Please make your cheque payable to the
MFL Occupational Health Centre
102-275 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4M6

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____

Postal Code _____



Check out this website!



<http://www.scorecard.org/chemical-profiles/>

Scorecard provides detailed information on more than 11,200 chemicals. You can search for information by typing in the chemical's name (or the chemical's standard identification number (Chemical Abstracts Service or CAS registry number)).

Scorecard highlights the specific health hazards that each particular chemical poses and ranks chemicals according to which are most dangerous to human health and to the environment.



Send your newsletter contributions for "Focus on Occupational Health and Safety" to Karen Hamilton at khamilton@mflohc.mb.ca or fax: 956-0848. We reserve the right to edit.

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If at any time you wish to be added or removed from our mailing list, please call (204) 949-0811 or fax to (204) 956-0848.

The MFL Occupational Health Centre

(OHC) is a community health centre focussed on promoting the health of Manitoba workers. We are a non-profit, charitable organization funded by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and by donations from individuals and unions. We are committed to working with all Manitobans who are interested in creating safer and healthier workplaces.

The OHC provides the following services to Manitobans:

- **medical services to help you find out if your job is making you sick**
- **education and assistance to workplace health and safety committees to identify and resolve health and safety problems.**
- **special initiatives with immigrant and Aboriginal communities**
- **information and library services, Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm**

Healthy Workplaces Healthy Workers Healthy Communities

