

## Workplace Wellness: Healthier Employees, and a Healthier Bottom Line

Unhealthy employees cost your business money. In fact, a research study found that over a 3 year period, the total cost of illness and disability to a single large Canadian company was over \$43 million dollars (Dewa, Et. Al., 2010). It simply makes good business sense to invest in the health of employees.

### Why a healthy workplace matters?

There are many benefits to creating a healthy workplace. A 2007 Canadian report shared the following benefits of creating a healthy workplace:

- Increase productivity
  - Decrease absenteeism
  - Improve risk conditions
  - Decrease drug costs
  - Decrease turnover rates
  - Improve employee morale
- (Makrides, et. al. 2007)

### How to create a healthy workplace?

Workplace Wellness Programs are a positive way to improve the health of working individuals and decrease health costs to the employer. A comprehensive workplace wellness program involves four main strategies.

- **Awareness building** - Information about the benefits of making healthy choices.
- **Educational skill building** - Help to educate and develop the necessary skills to support a healthy choice.
- **Environmental support** - Create supportive physical or cultural workplace environments that strengthen and enhance healthy practices.
- **Policy support development** - Policies to further enhance and sustain healthy practices.

Creating a healthy workplace can also gain your company respect and admiration. Local workplaces are invited to apply for prestigious *Working Toward Wellness* Healthy Workplace Awards sponsored by Go For Health and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU). This program recognizes workplaces that are leading the way in addressing wellness topics such as smoking, healthy weights, stress management, and more through integrated health program and policy strategies.

Go For Health Windsor-Essex and WECHU also offer an internationally recognized comprehensive workplace wellness program to interested Windsor-Essex County businesses. The program focuses on three key health topics each year. The cost of the program varies based on the scope of the wellness services and support provided. Indeed, some workplaces offer the program for as little as covering the cost of photocopying resources.

WECHU, Go For Health, and our community partners are working together with business leaders in the community to help improve the health of everyone around us. Contact WECHU at 519-258-2146 ext. 3100, or online at [www.wechealthunit.org/workplace-health](http://www.wechealthunit.org/workplace-health) for more information on the *Working Toward Wellness* workplace wellness program. Together we can create a healthier Windsor-Essex.

### Key References:

- Conference Board of Canada (2006). *Smoking and the bottom line: Updating the costs of smoking in the workplace*. Retrieved December 1, 2010, from <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/documents.aspx?did=1754>
- Dewa, C.; Chau, N.; Dermer, S. (2010). Examining the comparative incidence and costs of physical and mental health-related disabilities in an employed population. *Journal of Environmental Medecine* Vol. 52 Iss. 7. July. P. 760
- Makrides, L.; Heath, S.; Farquharson, J.; Veinot, P.L. (2007). Perceptions of workplace health: building community partnerships. *Clinical Governance: An International Journal*, Volume 12, Number 3, page 7.