CITY WIDE IMPLICATIONS

To: Mayor and Members
   Board of Health

From: Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
       Medical Officer of Health
       Public Health Services

Telephone: (905) 546-2424 x3501
Facsimile: (905) 546-4075
E-mail: erichard@hamilton.ca

Date: June, 2006

Re: Workplace Health Promotion (External) PH06023 (City Wide)

Council Direction: Not applicable

Information:

The work environment has a profound effect on health and well-being and has been recognized as a determinant of health\(^1\). The majority of Hamiltonians spend over one third of their waking hours at work. As a result, workplaces include large numbers of people, with established communication channels, providing an ideal environment to promote and support healthy lifestyles\(^2\).

Public Health Services is mandated to perform workplace initiatives under the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines (1997). These initiatives are frequently done in partnership with Healthy Living Hamilton, a community coalition funded in part by the Ministry of Health Promotion and in-kind partnerships. Public Health Services addresses health promotion for workplaces within the community, while workplace wellness for City employees is addressed through the Human Resources Department.

The following summarizes Public Health Services workplace health promotion initiatives in 2006.

Staff and Partners:

Two Health Promotion Specialists, within the Chronic Disease Prevention – Adult Program in the Healthy Living Division, are assigned to workplace health promotion...
initiatives. They are assisted by other Public Health Services staff including Public Health Nurses, a Public Health Nutritionist, a Physical Activity Specialist, and Health Promotion Specialists.

Public Health Services also has partnerships with local workplaces through the Healthy Living Hamilton Workplace Workgroup. These partners help guide programming to ensure that workplaces are offered useful and relevant services.

**Initiatives:**

**Innovation Series**

The Healthy Workplace Innovation Series consists of three to four half-day sessions per year. Each session features a combination of keynote speakers, small group discussions, and displays. Topics for 2006 have included Motivating Employees and What Works, a panel discussion of workplace representatives sharing health and wellness strategies that have been successful in their organizations. The fall sessions will cover Stress Management Techniques and Obesity. To date 48 workplaces have participated in the series. Recent evaluations reflect 97% participant satisfaction with the experience and confidence that learnings can be applied to the workplace.

**Bulletin**

The Healthy Workplace Bulletin is a key marketing tool sent once a month by email to 245 contacts from 116 workplaces, reaching over 35,000 employees. The bulletin targets business owners, operators, and others who influence employee health by highlighting upcoming events, information, and ready-to-use resources. Immediate requests for information follow each bulletin and articles are widely copied and distributed in the workplaces.

**Media**

In 2005/6 the following media communications occurred.

- Twelve articles published in *The Bottom Line*, the Flamborough Chamber of Commerce newsletter
- Three articles published in *Panorama*, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce magazine
- Five articles in *The Hamilton Spectator*
- Six media releases and Public Service Announcements distributed
- Seven media interviews conducted with radio, television and print

**Healthy Workplace Recognition Program**

Established by the Workplace Workgroup of Healthy Living Hamilton, this program recognizes workplaces in Hamilton that make a commitment to workplace health. There have been seven workplace recipients since 2003 who have met the minimum criteria for the recognition program. They have incorporated healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco-free strategies in the workplace.
Canada’s Healthy Workplace Week (CHWW)

CHWW promotes the importance of healthy workplaces in the third week of October. In Hamilton, a Task Force collaborated on developing challenges for workplaces. The chart below demonstrates the challenges and participation rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th># of workplaces</th>
<th># of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Physical Activity Challenge</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Physical Activity Challenge</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5 to 10 Healthy Eating Challenge</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Take Time for Your Health Challenge (coming in October)</td>
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Each year participating workplaces, ranging in size from 50 to 7141 employees, were recognized on the City of Hamilton website. The challenge packages are now available to workplace wellness committees to implement at any time; five workplaces have already requested the packages for 2006. Staff anticipate similar success with this year’s Take Time for Your Health Challenge.

Healthy Workplace Resource Series

In February 2006, the first topic developed in the series was Healthy Eating/Nutrition. This pamphlet provides workplaces with a list of Public Health Services supports for awareness raising, skill building, supportive environments, and policies related to healthy eating. Future topics include Tobacco-Free Living, Physical Activity, Stress Management and Prenatal/Reproductive Health. All topics in the resource series will be posted on the website and available to workplaces year round.

Healthy Food Guidelines for Food Served at Workplace Functions

The guidelines give examples of healthy and safe foods that can be offered at meetings and meals served at work. Workplaces are encouraged to promote and implement the guidelines with everyone who orders or serves food. Over 3,000 employees and caterers have received these guidelines since April 2006.

Eat Smart! Workplace Cafeteria Program

This provincial program is designed to enable workplace cafeterias to provide and promote healthy eating and food safety. Eighteen nutrition standards and six food safety standards must be in place for a workplace to receive the Eat Smart! Award of Excellence. A Public Health Nutritionist meets with the workplace wellness team and food service provider to review the standards and helps enable the cafeteria to receive
the award. In Hamilton, three workplace cafeterias have received the award and three more are changing their menus to qualify. Help is available to workplace cafeterias to educate staff about healthier food choices available.

**Hamilton Walks Initiatives**

This initiative is designed to increase the number of employees who walk where they live, work and play.

*Pedometer Kits* were developed from a one month pilot test conducted at three workplaces with 77 participants in the fall of 2004. In the spring of 2005 the finalized pedometer kits were purchased by seven workplaces (minimum of 25 kits) for employees and an in-service was provided. Workplaces are also encouraging employees to purchase pedometer kits at the municipal centres and walk more before, during, and after work. Loaned kits are available for workplace wellness committees considering adopting this program at their workplace.

*Hamilton Walks spring and fall promotions* encouraged employees to boost the amount they walk and discover the joy of walking throughout the year. In October 2005, nine workplaces implemented the 31-day Walktober program. A calendar of walking opportunities from weekly walking groups, nature walks, charity walks, trail clean-up days, to streetfests were identified in the October 2005 and spring 2006 calendars.

*Walking related resources* are available to workplaces to support and encourage employees to walk, establish walking routes, and develop walking groups.

**Consultations and Services**

Public Health Services staff support workplaces in the community on many levels. Consultations and services are no-charge and are directed to those who influence employee health and wellness in the workplace. Consultations involve providing recommendations, resources, and training to wellness committees.

Services are also provided for workplaces requesting displays, presentations, and resources depending on staff availability. The Workplace Health Promotion Specialists have had 61 requests in 2006. Public Health Services content specialists (nutrition, physical activity, tobacco-free living, etc.) have accommodated over 100 requests from their respective areas of expertise.

**Websites**

Two website sections are maintained by the Workplace Health Promotion Specialists:

1) **www.hamilton.ca/workplace** highlights services available through Public Health Services

2) **www.doitwell.ca** promotes the Healthy Workplace Innovation Series and the Healthy Workplace Recognition Program.
In Conclusion

Public Health Services staff provide effective and relevant initiatives to workplaces. Increasing demand for public health support can be attributed to reliable and evidenced-based health information, and customized services that support workplaces at all levels. Additionally, workplaces recognize the benefits of workplace health and appreciate being able to access our professional services free of charge.

Promoting healthy workplaces is important to the viability of the City of Hamilton as the costs of unhealthy workplaces can include:

- Higher health care system costs
- Higher law enforcement costs
- Lower social, political participation
- Less community vitality
- Decrease in Quality of Life
- Higher social services costs

Workplace health promotion contributes to improving employee health and giving businesses the edge that they need to become more competitive, both of which make the City of Hamilton more economically vibrant and a better city in which to work.

Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health
Public Health Services

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