

4.5 Healthy Workplace Policy

Policy Statement

The Government of Nova Scotia is committed to providing a healthy, safe and supportive workplace which will enhance employee health and job satisfaction, and enable employees to contribute most effectively in their roles of delivering high-quality public service.

This policy gives direction to Government's Healthy Workplace Initiative and provides the umbrella or overarching context under which individual policies, programs and activities comprising a comprehensive healthy workplace approach will fall.

Guiding Principles

Efforts to meet Government's commitment to a healthy, safe and supportive workplace will be supported by the following guiding principles:

- A positive, healthy work environment contributes to an organization's success. Healthy employees are essential to achieving a productive workforce.
- An individual's health is influenced by many interconnected factors. Therefore, efforts to promote employee health must take a comprehensive healthy workplace approach that addresses as many of these factors as possible.
- A corporate healthy workplace culture responds to the diverse and unique needs of employees within individual departments.
- Participation by employees at all levels is key to successfully creating a sustainable, healthy workplace.

Definitions

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTHY WORKPLACE APPROACH¹

An effective healthy workplace excellence approach to defining, implementing and sustaining a healthy, safe and supportive workplace that has three key elements:

¹The Nova Scotia Government has adopted the National Quality Institute's comprehensive healthy workplace approach. The National Quality Institute is an independent, not-for-profit organization committed to enhancing Canada's national well-being and global leadership through the adoption of management principles and practices that reinforce and sustain excellence and healthy workplace environments.

- **Individual health and lifestyle practices**, such as mental health, physical activity, eating habits, sleep habits, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse.
- **Workplace culture and supportive environment**. This includes, but is not limited to, work/life balance, the organization and design of work, a sense of control over one's work, positive and respectful relationships with co-workers, supervisors and clients, adequate training, a sense of fairness and fun at work, and access to support during difficult times.
- **Physical environment and occupational health and safety**. This refers to the quality of the physical work environment which impacts the health and well-being of employees. It includes elements such as noise control, air quality and ergonomics, and involves working in partnership with occupational health and safety programs.

DEPARTMENT

Any department, office or public service entity established by the Government of Nova Scotia, as identified under Category I in Appendix I-A of the Management Manuals Policy.

DEPUTY HEAD

The deputy minister or designate of a department or the senior administrative officer of a government agency not reporting through a deputy minister.

EMPLOYEE

Employee refers to

- an employee as defined in the *Civil Service Act*
- an employee as defined in the *Corrections Act*
- an employee as defined in the *Highway Workers Collective Bargaining Act*, or
- any other person directly employed by the Province of Nova Scotia.

HEALTHY WORKPLACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An interdepartmental committee, chaired by the Public Service Commission and reporting to the Public Service Commissioner, which provides advice to government on a comprehensive healthy workplace approach and supports departments as they develop their own healthy workplace initiatives.

Policy Objectives

- To encourage individual employee health practices that enhance physical and mental health and well-being.
- To promote and sustain a healthy and supportive organizational culture across government.
- To provide a safe and healthy physical work environment for all employees.

Application

This policy applies to all civil servants whose terms and conditions are set out in accordance with the *Civil Service Act* and regulations and other direct employees of the provincial government, including all bargaining unit employees.

Policy Directives

- Departments will support the interdepartmental Healthy Workplace Advisory Committee by identifying an appropriate staff member to actively participate on the Committee and assist the Committee in its role to promote, advise and report on performance in the development of a corporate comprehensive healthy workplace.
- Departments will demonstrate their support for workplace health by establishing coordinated active healthy workplace programs, supported by a committee structure, that are responsive to the expressed needs of their employees and consistent with the Government of Nova Scotia's Healthy Workplace Policy.
- Departments will be required to report their progress on establishing healthy workplace initiatives and the outcomes and impacts of those initiatives. Progress reports will be submitted to the PSC on a regular basis in a manner to be determined and communicated by the PSC.

Policy Guidelines

- The principles of this policy and impacts on workplace health should be considered by all departments in their management decision-making, day to day operations, and human resource practices.
- To identify meaningful and effective healthy workplace initiatives for their workplaces, and to determine the effectiveness of initiatives once implemented, departments should conduct an employee needs assessment on a periodic basis that addresses all three elements of a comprehensive healthy workplace. This will help to ensure that initiatives implemented are responsive to the needs of employees. Survey instruments and focus group sessions are examples of approaches to conducting a needs assessment.

- An individual department's healthy workplace program should be comprised of a variety of elements tailored to the needs of its employees. These elements could include, for example, Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) Committees, healthy workplace committees, recognition programs, information sessions on topics such as healthy eating, physical fitness or stress management, a strategy to ensure effective internal communications, and training plans for employees to help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to confidently carry out their work.
- In implementing healthy workplace programs, departments and their departmental coordinating committees are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from the Public Service Commission, as well as from the Healthy Workplace Advisory Committee, which can share information about the comprehensive healthy workplace approach that has been adopted, as well as healthy workplace activity that is underway corporately and within other departments.
- Costs associated with departmental healthy workplace programs will be managed from within departmental budgets and/or through voluntary participation by employees in initiatives for which they may have a particular interest, such as a healthy eating program.

Accountability

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The Public Service Commission is responsible for providing guidance to departments on their healthy workplace programs. The PSC is also responsible for coordinating regular progress reporting on healthy workplace activity across departments. In addition, the PSC will seek input from departments and make recommendations on corporate healthy workplace programs.

HEALTHY WORKPLACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Healthy Workplace Advisory Committee is responsible for promoting, guiding and informing government's healthy workplace initiative. The Committee provides support to departments as they implement healthy workplace programs, monitors progress and makes recommendations to the Public Service Commissioner on how to sustain a corporate healthy workplace culture.

DEPUTY HEADS

Deputy Heads are responsible for ensuring their departments are compliant with this policy. Deputy Heads are also responsible for integrating the guiding principles of this policy within their department's operations and ensuring the implementation of the policy's directives within their departments.

MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

Managers and supervisors are responsible for modelling the guiding principles of this policy and operationalizing healthy work practices within their own work units.

EMPLOYEES

Employees are responsible for taking reasonable care and precaution to protect their health and safety and that of others in their workplace, while contributing to a supportive and respectful work environment. Employees are encouraged to participate in available and supported healthy workplace programs that meet their needs and interests.

Monitoring

The Public Service Commission is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness and consistent application of this policy. The Public Service Commission may periodically conduct audits of departmental practices and request access to data maintained by departments with respect to this policy.

References

Civil Service Act

Corrections Act

Highway Workers Collective Bargaining Act

Management Manuals Policy

National Quality Institute Healthy Workplace Progressive Excellence Program Criteria

Enquiries

Strategic Support Services, Public Service Commission (902) 424-7660

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