

# ATTACHMENT 5 – CASE STUDY: REGIONAL CENTRE WORKGROUP

## 5. CASE STUDY: REGIONAL CENTRE WORKGROUP

### STEP 1 – IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL WORK-RELATED STRESS HAZARDS

Communication was a cause for concern to the Health and Safety Representative (HSR) and a significant proportion of the 40 staff working at a regional centre. Staff felt that there was not sufficient information being passed on from management. Staff felt they were 'kept in the dark' and not adequately consulted about a range of workplace issues which affected the centre as a whole. This was ultimately seen to impact on staff on a personal level, causing considerable angst and stress in the workplace. The communication problem was exacerbated by the fact that staff work shifts, with not all staff being at the centre at the one time, impacting on the dissemination and consistency of communications in the centre.

**The workgroup recorded the potential stress factors or hazards in the workplace in Step 1 of the OHS work-related stress prevention worksheet.**

### STEP 2 – DETERMINING WORK-RELATED STRESS RISKS

Staff were invited to participate in OHS work-related stress prevention workshops at times of the day which allowed them all an opportunity to attend. The HSR and staff:

- described the circumstances when work-related stress occurred – 'the communication problem was common', 'lack of consultation and participation in decisions at the centre';
- described the frequency and duration of this issue occurring – 'communication has been poor on an ongoing basis, for a long time'; and
- determined the work-related stress risks – 'lack of agreed procedures for the dissemination of information to staff, and consultation about workplace issues'.

**The workgroup recorded the work-related stress risks in Step 2 of the OHS work-related stress prevention worksheet.**

### STEP 3 – CONTROLLING WORK-RELATED STRESS HAZARDS AND RISKS, LOCAL AND ORGANISATIONAL RISK CONTROL MEASURES

Staff determined a number of actions to reduce work-related stress from the 'communications problems'. These include (but were not limited to):

- changes to meeting times and dates to accommodate the different shifts, thereby increasing the opportunity for staff to attend;
- more regular 'all of staff' meetings to disseminate information, gain feedback from staff and involve them in decisions that affected their work;
- more visibility from senior management in attending and addressing staff at various forums and meetings at the centre;
- information posted on staff notice boards and staff 'pigeon holes' in hard copy format;
- the formation of a dedicated local consultative committee, to meet on a weekly or fortnightly basis, to deal with workplace issues; and
- the circulation of minutes of consultative committee meetings through a shared computer drive (which is accessible to all staff).

The solutions were incorporated into an action plan for implementation. A local consultative committee was convened to implement the action plan and follow through with the proposed solutions. Staff voted representatives onto a committee from each of their work areas to progress the action plan. The union was also represented at this committee.

**The workgroup recorded the measures/actions to control work-related stress hazards and risks in Step 3 of the OHS work-related stress prevention worksheet.**

### STEP 4 – IMPLEMENTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT, TRIAL, REVIEW AND EVALUATE

The OHS team conducted a follow-up evaluation at the centre and was satisfied that these measures were going a long way to addressing the communications issues.

Another follow-up by the OHS team will be conducted in six months' time to further ascertain the success of these measures.

# ATTACHMENT 5 – CASE STUDY: REGIONAL CENTRE WORKGROUP – SAMPLE WORKSHEET



## STRESSWISE OHS WORK-RELATED STRESS PREVENTION WORKSHEET

Date: 12/12/2006

Workgroup: Centre workgroup

Management Representative: Jim Malloy, Centre manager  
Health and Safety Representative: Paul Smith, Group 1

### 1. SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT

STEP 1 Identify potential work-related stress factors or hazards.	STEP 2 Determine work-related stress risks.	STEP 3 Control work-related stress hazards and risks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tick the potential stress factors or hazards in the workplace from workgroup discussion and/or information from workplace records.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a tick in STEP 1, proceed to STEP 2.</b></p> <p><b>Organisational culture and function</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> poor communication</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> poor leadership</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> low levels of support for problem-solving and personal development</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of definition of or agreement on organisational objectives and structure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> poor management of organisational change</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (describe): <b>Lack of agreed procedures or knowledge of procedures for dealing with workplace problems or complaints.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Interpersonal relationships at work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> social or physical isolation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> poor relationship with co-workers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> poor relationships with superiors/workers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> interpersonal conflict</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of social support</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> bullying, harassment and violence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> isolated or solitary work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of agreed procedures or knowledge of procedures for dealing with workplace problems or complaints</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):</li> </ul>	<p>Record what the workgroup says about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the circumstances when the hazard or risk occurs;</li> <li>the frequency and duration of exposure; and</li> <li>things the workgroup says are likely to cause harm (the precursors to harm) or the harmful outcomes (illness or injuries) experienced by the workgroup* (see Attachment 3).</li> </ol> <p><b>Proceed to STEP 3.</b></p> <p>Staff described the circumstances where there was not sufficient information being passed on from management, that they felt they were 'kept in the dark', about a range of workplace issues leading to isolation and disempowerment. They described communication as being 'poor on an ongoing basis, for a long time'. Staff described the harm or outcomes as anxiety angst, dissatisfaction, discouragement and work-related stress. They described the source of the risk as a 'lack of agreed procedures for the dissemination of information to staff, and consultation about workplace issues'.</p>	<p>List:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>actions the workgroup determines are needed to control work-related stress hazards and risks;</li> <li>who is responsible;</li> <li>the date by which actions are to be trialled, evaluated and implemented; and</li> <li>the date by which actions are to be reviewed.</li> </ul> <p><b>A manager/supervisor must then proceed to implement local actions so far as is reasonably practicable and where required, and recommend actions for decisions or authorisation at a higher level in the organisation.</b></p> <p><b>More visibility from senior management in attending and addressing staff at various forums and meetings at the centre. Information posted on staff notice boards and staff 'pigeon holes' in hard copy format.</b></p> <p><b>Minutes of these consultative committee meetings are circulated through a shared computer drive (which is accessible to all staff).</b></p> <p><b>The development of agreed procedures for the dissemination of information to staff and consultation about workplace issues.</b></p>
	n/a	n/a

# ATTACHMENT 5 – CASE STUDY: REGIONAL CENTRE WORKGROUP – SAMPLE WORKSHEET



## STRESSWISE OHS WORK-RELATED STRESS PREVENTION WORKSHEET

### 1. SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT (CONTINUED)

STEP 1 Identify potential work-related stress factors or hazards.	STEP 2 Determine work-related stress risks.	STEP 3 Control work-related stress hazards and risks.
<p><b>Role in the organisation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> unclear work role</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> conflicting roles within the same job</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> responsibility for people</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> continuously dealing with other people and their problems</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>	n/a	n/a
<p><b>Career development, status and pay</b></p> <p>Unclear processes that lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> career uncertainty</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> under/over-promotion</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of promotion prospects</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> job insecurity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> pay inequity or pay not commensurate with work requirements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> low social value of work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> unclear or unfair processes for performance appraisal</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> being over-skilled or under-skilled for the job</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>	n/a	n/a
<p><b>Home/work demands</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> conflicting demands of work and home</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> low support for domestic problems at work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> low support for work problems at home</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>	n/a	n/a
<p><b>Physical work environment and equipment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> poor workplace layout</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of space</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> layout or location that interferes with communication</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> layout or location that interferes with social support</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> inadequate equipment availability, suitability or maintenance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> poor lighting</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> excessive noise</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>	n/a	n/a

# ATTACHMENT 5 – CASE STUDY: REGIONAL CENTRE WORKGROUP – SAMPLE WORKSHEET



## STRESSWISE OHS WORK-RELATED STRESS PREVENTION WORKSHEET

### 2. SYSTEMS OF WORK

STEP 1 Identify potential work-related stress factors or hazards.	STEP 2 Determine work-related stress risks.	STEP 3 Control work-related stress hazards and risks.
<p>Identify potential work-related stress factors or hazards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tick the potential stress factors or hazards in the workplace from workgroup discussion and/or information from workplace records.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a tick in STEP 1, proceed to STEP 2.</b></p>	<p>Record what the workgroup says about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the circumstances when the hazard or risk occurs;</li> <li>the frequency and duration of exposure; and</li> <li>things the workgroup says are likely to cause harm (the precursors to harm) or the harmful outcomes (illness or injuries) experienced by the workgroup* (see Attachment 3).</li> </ol> <p><b>Proceed to STEP 3.</b></p>	<p>List:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>actions the workgroup determines are needed to control work-related stress hazards and risks;</li> <li>who is responsible;</li> <li>the date by which actions are to be trialled, evaluated and implemented; and</li> <li>the date by which actions are to be reviewed.</li> </ul> <p><b>A manager/supervisor must then proceed to implement local actions so far as is reasonably practicable and where required, and recommend actions for decisions or authorisation at a higher level in the organisation.</b></p>
<p><b>Content/demands of the work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of variety</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> monotonous, under-stimulating, fragmented or meaningless work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> under use of skills</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> high uncertainty</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> low social value of work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> continuous exposure to people through work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> unpleasant tasks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> tasks that require emotions to be kept hidden</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p><b>Workload/work pace</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> work overload or under load</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> machine pacing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> having too much or too little to do</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> working under time pressures</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> continually subject to deadlines</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

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## STRESSWISE OHS WORK-RELATED STRESS PREVENTION WORKSHEET

### 2. SYSTEMS OF WORK (CONTINUED)

STEP 1 Identify potential work-related stress factors or hazards.	STEP 2 Determine work-related stress risks.	STEP 3 Control work-related stress hazards and risks.
<p><b>Work schedule/working hours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> shift working</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> night shifts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> poorly designed shift systems</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> strict and inflexible work schedules</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> unpredictable working hours</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> long or unsocial hours</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (describe): <b>Staff described the communication problem as exacerbated by the fact that staff work shifts, with not all staff being at the centre at the one time, impacting on the dissemination and consistency of communications in the centre.</b></li> </ul>	<p>Staff reported that when working on night shift they were particularly disadvantaged, disempowered, frustrated and isolated.</p>	<p>Staff meetings were moved to various times and dates to accommodate the different shifts, thereby increasing the opportunity for staff to attend.</p>
<p><b>Participation and control</b></p> <p>Issues to do with control over and involvement in decisions that could be reasonably be expected in a job or a role about such things as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work methods</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> workload</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work schedules</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the pace of work</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the working environment</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> shift work</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (describe): <b>Lack of consultation and participation in decisions about a range of workplace issues at the centre.</b></li> </ul>	<p>Staff described the lack of consultation and involvement in decision-making as disempowering, dissatisfying and frustrating.</p>	<p>More regular 'all of staff' meetings were scheduled, to disseminate information, gain feedback from staff and involve staff in decisions that affected their work.</p>

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## STRESSWISE OHS WORK-RELATED STRESS PREVENTION WORKSHEET

### 3. MANAGEMENT OF WORK

STEP 1 Identify potential work-related stress factors or hazards.	STEP 2 Determine work-related stress risks.	STEP 3 Control work-related stress hazards and risks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tick the potential stress factors or hazards in the workplace from workgroup discussion and/or information from workplace records.</li> </ul> <p><b>If you have a tick in STEP 1, proceed to STEP 2.</b></p>	<p>Record what the workgroup says about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the circumstances when the hazard or risk occurs;</li> <li>the frequency and duration of exposure; and</li> <li>things the workgroup says are likely to cause harm (the precursors to harm) or the harmful outcomes (illness or injuries) experienced by the workgroup* (see Attachment 3).</li> </ol> <p><b>Proceed to STEP 3.</b></p>	<p>List:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>actions the workgroup determines are needed to control work-related stress hazards and risks;</li> <li>who is responsible;</li> <li>the date by which actions are to be trialled, evaluated and implemented; and</li> <li>the date by which actions are to be reviewed.</li> </ul> <p><b>A manager/supervisor must then proceed to implement local actions so far as is reasonably practicable and where required, and recommend actions for decisions or authorisation at a higher level in the organisation.</b></p>
<p><b>Supervision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> inadequate or absent supervision</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> inconsiderate or unsupportive supervision</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p><b>Information, instruction, training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> inadequate information, instruction or training to enable staff to do their work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> inadequate information, instruction or training to enable staff to identify and report work-related stress hazards</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> inadequate training in the organisation's policies and procedures designed to protect and support employee health and safety</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

Worksheet adapted from the World Health Organization (WHO) 2004. Work organisation and stress. Protecting Worker's Health Series No. 3.

\* Note: Privacy and confidentiality of personal information must be protected. Personal information is information or opinion, whether true or not about an identifiable individual. It should not be possible to identify an individual from workplace records, survey data or consultations; therefore, grouped or aggregate information is recommended to protect the identity of individuals.

**Feedback to workgroups**

Where it is not appropriate for actions to be implemented or they need to be modified to reduce risk to other parties, this needs to be communicated to workgroups/HSRs. Consultation should occur to ensure that accurate information is provided and outcomes are clearly understood.