

BULLETIN

Safety concerns in your workplace? See your Safety Steward!

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by RACHEL NOTLEY

HSAs hard-working safety stewards have a tough job: working to ensure that their fellow members enjoy a safe, healthy workplace. Please see your safety steward if you have occupational health and safety concerns at your worksite.

Safety stewards urged to request funding

In the fall of this year, the Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare (OHSAH) will put out a call for research funding requests. As with last year, over \$2 million in requests will be approved.

In the first round of applications, almost all funding requests came from employers. However, the funding program was conceived with the expectation that union members from the worksite would initiate projects at least half the time.

While this did not happen in the first year of funding, it is hoped that the second round of applications will reflect a greater level of worker participation. With this in mind, safety stewards are encouraged to consider the areas in their worksites where health and safety could be improved with the implementation of research projects designed to eliminate or minimize health and safety hazards.

Safety stewards are encouraged to consult with other stewards at the worksite, with the HSA membership at their worksite, and with their union counterparts on the health and safety committee. Tri-union proposals might be appropriate in certain circumstances. If you have an idea for a funding request, please contact your safety steward

The criteria for funding through OHSAH have been established by OHSAH's board of directors. They include scientific merit, feasibility and support, relevance, fit and fairness.

In the initial stage of the application (the letter of intent stage), scientific merit is not an issue. With respect to the latter criteria, OHSAH will consider the following:

- **Feasibility** - Considering the proposed timelines, available resources, project team and scope of activities, is the project feasible? Is the budget breakdown reasonable for the proposed activities?
- **Support** - Is there support for this project by all the relevant stakeholders? It is essential that there be both senior management buy-in as well as worker participation and acceptability clearly demonstrated. A project should score more highly if there is considerable contribution in kind from the proponent. In addition, for some types of projects, a submission initiated or strongly supported by unions could score more highly because of the traditional lack of needed involvement in this field.

- **Relevance** - Is the proposed project a high priority for occupational health in the health care sector?
- **Fit** - Does the project build upon previous work in this area and avoid duplication of existing work? If there is an existing or proposed endeavour that is similar in nature, is there willingness on the part of the proponents to work together with the existing or planned initiative?
- **Fairness** - Will funding this project seem unfair to others who are funding similar initiatives without external support? If so, can this be justified

More information on the process of putting together a funding application, as well as advice with respect to the feasibility of a particular proposal or idea, can be obtained by contacting Rachel Notley, HSAs Occupational Health and Safety Officer, at the HSA office.

Are you happy with your Employee Assistance Program?

In response to direction from HSAs annual convention, HSAs Occupational Health and Safety Committee has been investigating the different Employee Assistance Programs in place throughout the province.

Part of that process involves getting information from safety stewards about the extent and quality of the programs "on the ground." Specifically, we would like to know who provides the program, how and where it is accessed, the eligibility criteria for access and a brief description of the service provided. If you would like to contribute your comments about your local Employee Assistance Program, please contact your safety steward

Does your workplace have a scent policy?

As a result of a resolution passed at April's annual convention, the HSA Occupational Health and Safety Committee has been asked to develop a report on the state of workplace scent control policies and practices in HSA workplaces.

All safety stewards are asked to find out if their employers have policies on controlling scents in the workplace. If you would like to make a suggestion about workplace scent control policies or practices at your worksite, please contact your safety steward

The interest in this area is primarily related to the control of fragrance use by either staff, patients, clients or visitors given the allergic reactions experienced by some people in response to exposure. At the 1998 HSA convention, the HSA OH&S committee distributed a brief report outlining some of the hazards associated with fragrance exposure along with a description of some of the hazardous components. For a copy of the report, contact Rachel Notley at the HSA office.

Rachel Notley is HSAs Occupational Health and Safety Officer.

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