

The Business Case for a Comprehensive Organizational Health & Workplace Wellness Program

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WORKPLACE STRESS CONSEQUENCES

When we consider the economic and social burden of workplace stress, the costs are staggering. A decade of research has demonstrated a pervasive set of negative effects – on organizational capacity, organizational culture, recruitment and retention, absenteeism and presenteeism. All these arise from the impact of sustained stress on individuals, which has profound effects on physical and mental health, behaviours and interpersonal abilities.

Levels of workplace stress have been increasing over the past decade and are expected to continue to escalate - along with the negative effects. It is critical that organizations approach the issue as a central operational concern.

There is already a strong business case for addressing workplace stress and research consistently demonstrates a return of \$2.00 to \$5.00 for every dollar invested in comprehensive population based wellness programs.

We are specialists in high stress, high trauma workplaces and know that the effects of stress are only magnified in these environments. Our effective range of programs, resources, research and consultation services, are all designed to reduce stress consequences by:

- increasing individual and organizational resiliency
- reducing stress levels and mitigating stress effects
- supporting sustainable and positive culture change

Fisher & Associates Solutions Inc. Organizational Health & Employee Wellness Specialists

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Organizational Costs

- Absenteeism and presenteeism costs
 - Sick leave and disability costs
 - Overtime
 - Replacement workers
 - Return to work protocols
 - Cost for managing disability cases
 - Work overload for colleagues
 - Loss of critical skill capacity
 - Indirect harm to work team
 - Loss of intellectual capital
 - Increase in errors
 - Decrease in quality of work
- Decreased morale
- Lower employee satisfaction
- Increased conflict
- Increased health burden in work force
- Increased health care costs
- Increased grievances and legal disputes
- Staff turnover and retention challenges
- Increased recruitment and training costs
- Higher proportion of new in position workers
- increased cross generational conflict
- Internal communication challenges resulting from higher turnover
- “Siloping” as divisions and units isolate
- Increased resources devoted to “unintended consequences”
- Lost productivity
- Challenges to client/community relations

Canadian Facts*

- One in three workers are stressed out due to excessive work demands and hours
- On average, Canadians work 50 hours per week
- One half of deaths in Canada and the US are caused by stress-related illness and disease
- The leading cause of death is cardiovascular disease 75% of coronary heart disease is related to stress
- 25% - 35% of new disability claims in Canada are for mental health and nervous disorders
- Stress-related mental health claims are becoming the leading cost of short- and long-term disability claims in Canada
- On average, Canadian workers miss 9 days per year due to illness and disability
- The highest rates of days lost are in the Canadian health care and social services sector (av. 13.4 days/year) and the public administration (av. 11.0 days/year)
- Stress-related absences cost Canadian employers an estimated \$3.5 billion annually
- Health-care expenditures are 50% higher for workers reporting high levels of stress
- Unhealthy employees are costing organizations in Canada billions of dollars every year. The cost of employee absence alone is approximately \$8.6 billion

**(Refs: Canadian Policy Research Networks, The Canadian Council On Integrated Healthcare (CCIH), Statistics Canada, Centre for Addiction & Mental Health, Health Canada, Canadian Mental Health Association, Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health)*

Stress Effects on Individuals

Extensive research has demonstrated the widespread effects of prolonged stress on individuals. Consequences include:

- Physical health problems:
 - Cardiovascular disease
 - Stroke
 - High blood pressure (hypertension)
 - Elevated cholesterol
 - Insomnia
 - Increased fatigue
 - Depressed immune system
 - Increased cancer rates
 - Overweight and obesity
 - Type II diabetes
 - Inflammatory bowel disorders
 - Arthritis
 - Premature death
- Mental health problems:
 - Clinical depression and mood disorders
 - Anxiety spectrum disorders
 - Lower self-esteem
- Behavioural problems:
 - Physical inactivity
 - Increased smoking and alcohol use
 - Poor nutrition
 - Increased risk for accidents
- Interpersonal problems:
 - Poor communication
 - Social withdrawal
 - Increased aggression
 - Cynical attitude
 - Mistrust of others,
 - Defensiveness
 - Family breakdown and violence

Important Questions

- **What does Workplace Stress cost your organization?**
- **How significant are each of the listed stress effects for your organization?**
- **Are the stress symptoms more or less prominent in different areas of your organization?**
- **Can you sustain your current levels of stress symptoms and be a well functioning organization?**
- **Have the stress symptoms increased or diminished over the past 5 years?**
- **Do you need to address this in an effective and comprehensive way?**
- **Can we be helpful to you?**

Key References

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We are Organizational Health and Workplace Wellness specialists who work with high stress occupational sectors such as health care, social services, and the justice sector. Please contact us to discuss how we may assist your organization.

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