Junior Officer Advisory Group
Readiness & Deployment Committee
Behavioral Health Team

Practicing Wellness

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Placing Wellness at the Center of our Workplace Practices: We All Have an Important Role to Play

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Take a moment to reflect. How much time—as well as physical, intellectual, and emotional energy—do you dedicate to your work? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) devised the Total Worker Health (TWH) Model to highlight the significant impact working conditions have on us. As a result, work conditions are considered a social determinant of health.

Our health and well-being at work depend on more than our employer ensuring a safe physical environment and preventing work-related injuries. As underlined in the Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being, chronic stress at work can lead to lack of sleep, altered metabolism, and muscle tension. These are linked to the development of acute and chronic diseases. When we experience chronic stress at work, it can be challenging to show up as the best version of ourselves. This can impact our loved ones and our communities' well-being. The TWH approach highlights the link between how leadership, managers' practices, employment arrangements, and work schedules impact quality of life, productivity, attendance and retention among the workforce.

One of the key TWH strategies is to encourage and support workers' involvement in identifyign issues and concerns within the workplace. Like me, you have probably filled out a survey for your agency asking you to rate your work experience on a scale. At times, the responses may seem to happen at higher levels and feel disconnected to our immediate office and teams.

As PHS officers, either in supervisory or supervisee positions, we can advocate for a needs assessment to be conducted within our immediate office. An initial needs assessment can serve as a point of reference for future monitoring and evaluation initiatives, and it can identify issues and concerns. In addition, the needs assessment can generate many ideas for worksite initiatives. These ideas include, but are not limited to, improving workspace design, promoting healthy meeting policies, cultivating trust among employees, fostering connections at all levels, and devising targeted work stress interventions.

As leaders in public health, we must demonstrate a commitment to our team's well-being. We can better understand workplace issues and advocate for initiatives promoting healthy workspaces.

References:
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