

A Worksite Readiness Checklist for Participatory Worksite Ergonomics and Health Promotion Programs

Session Date & Time: Monday, September 10, Poster Session I (#14)
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Background: High-demand jobs, with inadequate application of ergonomic principles to the design of the workplace and with little decision latitude for employees, appear to have significant impact on cardiovascular as well as musculoskeletal health. The organizational structure of work has been identified as a major contributor to employee health behaviors, such as physical activity, eating habits and smoking. Social support by both supervisor and co-workers also has an impact by buffering these exposures to decrease stress level and possibly related cardiovascular disease.

In this project, as a component of the Center for Promoting Health in the New England Workplace (CPH-NEW), we propose to develop a worksite readiness checklist (WRCL) for assessment of conditions relevant to integration of participatory workplace health and safety and worksite health promotion programs (WHS+WHP). The purpose of the WRCL is to evaluate the management, employees, and organization for their level of readiness for successful program implementation and provide feedback to the worksite with an action plan based on the results of the checklist.

Objectives:

- 1- To develop a WRCL for integrated assessment of ergonomic exposures, health-relevant conditions, and health promotion activity at work;
- 2- To utilize the results of the WRCL in developing an action plan specific to the worksite;
- 3- To assist employees in identifying and prioritizing participatory WHS+WHP activities for implementation at work.

Approaches: Most organizations assume that implementation of WHP is costly, and time intensive and they doubt the sufficiency of human resources and funds. As a result institutional motivation and self-efficacy are often low. However, with technical support and continuous assistance, feasible programs could be developed while including a participatory approach that engages both management and the workforce. Accordingly, reinforcement and feedback are necessary for employees and management.

The WRCL will have three assessment components, 1) management readiness and support, 2) employee readiness including employees health risk assessment), and 3) organizational, physical and psychosocial conditions that affect employee health. Based on a scoring system an easily understood and feasible action plan can be developed for an organization that includes menus of feasible WHS+WHP program options, in part based on employee recommendations for programmatic interventions. It must provide systematic, comprehensive and concrete information and knowledge on available resources, identify and disseminate good practices, and provide personnel with expertise to facilitate the planning and activities. The action plan will be multi dimensional to encourage company's voluntary initiatives into various areas of WHS+WHP. It will provide basic knowledge, list of available resources to increase motivation and self-efficacy, and will provide examples of good practices.

Summary: To be successful, health promotion programs must be matched to an organization's resources during the early stages of implementation. In improving employees' health, the integration of workplace safety and health ergonomic principles and health promoting activities are hypothesized to provide more successful outcomes. It is also important that this integrative process pay adequate attention to assisting employees by increasing their self efficacy so they actively participate in changing the worksite and their lifestyle choices.

Learning Objectives

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| 1. | Recognize the interrelation of worksite health promotion, worksite health and safety with application of ergonomic principle at work |
| 2. | Communicate the conceptual framework for a readiness checklist for implementation of worksite health promotion program |
| 3. | Identify an easily understood and feasible action plan specific to an organization |