

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT 2015

INFORMATION FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR | AUGUST 2016

TOPIC 9

Health and Wellbeing Programmes

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT CAME INTO EFFECT ON 4 APRIL 2016. IT MAKES THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF WORKERS AND WORKPLACES A PRIORITY.

This series of guides provides general information for the Education sector about the different elements of an effective health and safety system.

In these guides, “Boards/ECES” refers to school Boards of Trustees, early childhood education (ECE) services and kōhanga reo as entities that meet the definition of Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) under the Act.

These guides draw on information published by WorkSafe New Zealand and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. To keep fully informed about your health and safety obligations, visit WorkSafe’s website:
<http://www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/hswa>

What are health and wellbeing programmes?

Health and wellbeing programmes aim to improve the health of workers and their families while reducing health-related costs to the school or ECE service.

Many workplaces implement comprehensive health and wellbeing programmes that encourage workers to focus on key health behaviours such as increasing physical activity, improving eating habits, reducing stress, and ceasing tobacco use.

The rationale behind health and wellbeing programmes is that encouraging healthy habits now can prevent or lower the risk of serious health conditions later. Similarly, adopting these same habits can help workers manage an existing health condition.

Why have health and wellbeing programmes?

Health at work is not just about people being physically well. Research confirms that physical, social and psychological wellbeing are closely interlinked, and that sickness absence is often a symptom of work stress and low engagement. If workers are physically and emotionally healthy, they are more likely to contribute fully at work and in the wider community.

Health and wellbeing programmes have significant benefits for both the Board/ECE and the workers, which are summarised in the following table:

For the Board/ECE	For the worker
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improved health and wellness of workers » A happier, more resilient workforce » More engaged staff » Increased worker performance » Reduced absenteeism » Better staff retention » Reduced workplace accidents » Reduced sick leave » Increased loyalty » Stronger employer/employee relationships » Lower injury, illness and sick pay costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improved job satisfaction » Better quality of life » Improved physical fitness, nutritional practices and mental wellbeing » Better knowledge of health promoting behaviours » Better health outcomes » Increased energy and morale » Better quality of life » Less likely to have

What are the components of a health and wellbeing programme?

Health and wellbeing programmes vary considerably between organisations but the **key components of health and wellbeing programmes** are those that target:

- » physical activity
- » healthy nutrition
- » smoking cessation
- » mental wellbeing

Other components that may be incorporated into health and wellbeing programmes include:

- » free access to personal counselling and other support services
- » cheaper health insurance
- » free influenza vaccination
- » discounted membership to fitness facilities
- » participation in a range of regular wellbeing challenges, focusing on physical activity, nutrition, emotional wellbeing
- » access to advice, e.g. financial and retirement planning, wellbeing workshops for managers
- » onsite physical activity classes including Zumba, Pilates, yoga and walking groups

An individual's commitment to personal wellbeing will vary greatly, so it is a good idea to offer a broad range of wellbeing opportunities for workers to increase participation.

What is work-life balance?

Work-life balance is about **effectively managing paid work and other activities** that are important to workers – including spending time with family, taking part in sport and recreation, volunteering, or undertaking further study.

Poor work-life balance can lead to stress and absenteeism, and poor performance. Helping workers achieve work-life balance is integral to their general health and wellbeing, and to increasing their work satisfaction and motivation. They are likely to be more committed, more flexible and more responsive to the organisation's needs.

Many people achieve better work-life balance through **flexible working arrangements**. There are two key elements to flexible working arrangements: hours and/or place of work. These working arrangements are not the traditional 40-hour week, worked Monday to Friday at the workplace. This might mean working more or fewer than 40 hours a week, working variable hours, working non-standard hours, e.g. late or early starts, or working only parts of the year. It may involve working from home. These arrangements might be on an intermittent or regular basis. Workers may work different patterns which reflect the work they do and their personal situation, rather than all workers working the same.