



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
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EMPLOYEE WELLNESS STRATEGY

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PURPOSE:

1. To share with the Board of Trustees the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) Employee Wellness Strategy.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. The Employee Wellness Strategy is aligned with the District's commitment to employee well-being. Ensuring that our employees remain safe and well while working in our schools/offices is aligned with the District's commitment to employee wellbeing as well as the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

CONTEXT:

3. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's 2023-27 Strategic Plan is built upon the District's core values of equity, inclusion and accessibility, community building, leadership development, and responsible use of resources. The wellness of employees can have a direct impact on student well-being and achievement within the District. The Employee Safety and Wellness division within the People, Culture and Leadership (PCL) department plays a pivotal role in helping enable our District to achieve organizational goals related to the wellness of employees. To action some of the key deliverables related to wellness, including enhanced safety to support the cultural, emotional, and physical well-being of all students and staff, as well as employee and engagement, PCL has drafted an Employee Wellness Strategy (Appendix A) and Employee Well-Being Resource Guide (Appendix B).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4. While the District has undertaken many employee safety and wellness initiatives annually, the development of an employee wellness strategy and resource guide is a foundational step in meeting the organization's strategic plan priorities.
5. A combination of proactive and responsive internal and external resources and services will be used to help ensure our employees and leaders receive support in developing, nurturing and maintaining environments that are conducive to

fostering employee wellness. Increasingly sophisticated techniques will be used to gather data, metrics and insights about our current state. Those insights will help inform organizational leaders and enable informed risk management decisions. Intentional efforts will be made to improve existing core wellness services, and to deliberately expand wellness supports based on evolving operational needs. Key expected outcomes include enhanced organizational capacity to foster employee wellness, and improved ability for the OCDSB to demonstrate success in these areas in tangible ways. The strategy is composed of five key elements:

- a. **Strategic Plan Through Employee Wellness Perspective:** The District's Strategic plan outlines a framework of core values and key areas of focus that serve to guide our efforts. In addition to directly supporting well-being, our Employee Wellness Strategy also supports the optimization of learning environments and demonstration of commitment to social responsibility.
- b. **Framework for Employee Well-being:** A variety of contemporary multi-faceted frameworks and models can be used to help employers consider employee well-being. Although different approaches may consider different factors, commonly considered elements include factors that affect employees in their workplaces and away from work. They also include a combination of proactive resources to help promote individual resilience, and responsive resources that provide assistance when individuals are injured, ill, or otherwise unwell.
- c. **Current Employee Well-being Resources:** Our primary in-house wellness support resource is the Employee Safety and Wellness team. The team is composed of a variety of professional staff with expertise in the disciplines of occupational health and safety and disability management, as well as support staff. In-house provision of employee wellness resources and services is supplemented with service offerings provided by expert third parties.
 - i. **Internal Resources Include:** Employee Wellness Promotion, Management of Medical Absence and Accommodation Cases, Attendance Support Resources and Tragic Event Response Team and Critical Incident Stress Management Support
 - ii. **External Resources Include:** Employee Assistance Program, School Board Cooperative Incorporated and Public Services Health and Safety Association.
- d. **Data, Reporting and Auditing:** Through current management of core employee wellness functions, the District generates a variety of different sources of data. These data are used for a variety of different purposes, including ensuring compliance with health and safety legislation, helping to manage medical absence and accommodation cases, and to analyzing benefit usage rates. Different types of data are housed in multiple different platforms, and there is limited integration potential between those platforms. Part of the Employee Wellness Strategy will involve integration of different

data sources to help provide comprehensive analysis and help enhance the ability for the district to make data-driven risk management decisions.

i. **Data sources for Inclusion in future analysis include:**

1. Numbers of Interventions from the Ontario Ministry of Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, reasons for those interventions, and outcomes (e.g. orders);
2. Numbers and categories of reported workplace injuries, illnesses, incidents Employee Violence Incident Reports, and safety concerns;
3. Numbers and categories of medical absence (Short Term Disability, Long Term Disability & Workplace Safety & Insurance Board) and medical accommodation cases.
4. Usage rates for 3rd-party Wellness Resources (e.g. employee assistance program); and
5. Employee Survey Results (e.g. employee engagement, perception surveys)

- ii. **Auditing:** There are various contemporary standards and frameworks against which employee wellness programs can be audited. Auditing against recognized standards helps enable a clear understanding of the current state or baseline level of maturity. It also provides a reliable method for tracking incremental progress toward a desired future state.

- e. **Growth Plan for Employee Well-being:** A primary focus over the next few years will be to assess, evaluate, and continuously improve our current core functions of occupational health and safety and disability management. This will be facilitated through continued intentional development of internal staff, strategic engagement of third-party resources, and deliberate measures to enhance organizational capacity through support of our leadership community. As current-state information and data are gathered and analyzed, insights will be derived that will help clarify current and future operational needs. Auditing of our current processes over time will allow measurement of forward progress and program maturation.

i. **Key programs and initiatives for 2023-2024 includes:**

1. Slips, Trips & Falls Campaign
2. Enhanced Workplace Violence Resources
3. Enhanced Management of Asbestos Containing Materials
4. Joint Health & Safety Committee Support
5. Updated Attendance Support Program
6. Mental Health Training Pilot
7. Enhance Employee Assistance Program Use Rates

ii. **Potential programs and initiatives being considered for the future:**

1. Updated Attendance Support Program
2. Enhance Employee Assistance Program Use Rates
3. Mental Health Training
4. Workplace Violence Training
5. Ergonomics Program
6. Hearing Conservation Program
7. Peer Support Program

8. Early Intervention Program
 9. Contractor Safety Risk Management Program
6. Following the conclusion of the consultation with the employee community, Employee Safety and Wellness will finalize the strategy and develop an annual action plan. The action plan will detail goals, initiatives and/or programs and data measures that will be used to assess progress and achievement of the strategy.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7. Resources to support the Employee Well-being Strategy will have some annual costs associated with initiatives and projects. These costs will be covered by either through departmental budgets and/or specific budget requests that would be included within the annual non-academic budget process.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

8. The consultation was launched in February 2024 in connection to our Employee Wellbeing Resource Guide requesting feedback on the guide and asking about priorities for employee well-being to support the foundation of our strategy. Specifically, feedback on employee well-being resources and priorities was sought from federation/union partners, principal and vice principals, senior team members, as well as employee resource groups.

The Employee Well-Being Strategy was shared with federation/union partners, representatives of principals and vice-principals, and employee resource groups, as well as the Joint Health and Safety Committee in April 2024. Feedback is welcome into May 2024 with the goal of finalizing the strategy by June 2024.

The rollout of the Employee Well-being Strategy and Employee Well-being Resource Guide will be shared with all staff once finalized for use.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

9. The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:
- How does the Employee Wellness Strategy align with the strategic priorities of the board?
 - How does the plan address the needs of our staff?

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and Leadership

Pino Buffone
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the Board

APPENDICES

Appendix A Employee Wellness Strategy
Appendix B Employee Well-Being Resource Guide