

Creating a Quality Work Environment

OVERVIEW OF THE HSAA 2006 WORK ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

The Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA) conducted a Work Environment Survey to provide new evidence that can be used constructively to improve the work environments of HSAA members, and through this, contribute to health service excellence in Alberta. The 74-page report, ***Creating a Quality Work Environment: Results from the HSAA 2006 Work Environment Survey*** (available at www.hsaa.ca), is a basis for action within workplaces.

The survey provides the most reliable and comprehensive analysis ever conducted in Alberta of health care employees that included HSAA members. It examined work environment factors affecting the quality of work life, individual quality of work-life outcomes, and organizational outcomes.

The survey response rate was 43%, for a total of 5,131 completed questionnaires. Independent experts, The Graham Lowe Group Inc., conducted the survey, analyzed the results, and reported on the findings.

The survey documents key strengths on which to build better workplaces. Among the many positive features of HSAA members' work environments are respectful work relations with co-workers and supervisors, effective teamwork, and a strong commitment to the kind of work they perform.

Professional development is a major need identified in the study. Survey respondents are committed to developing their skills and abilities, so it is essential that employers enable employees to act on this commitment.

Not surprisingly, staffing levels and workload are reported as major areas of concern. But the study goes even further, identifying many opportunities for management and employees to find more effective ways to schedule work, allocate existing staff resources, and generally make better use of available human resources.

Based on survey results, employees want to participate in finding solutions to workload and service delivery challenges. And they are realistic that while hiring more staff is a priority, this is not always easy to do.

The study also presents strong evidence of the relationship between the quality of the work environment and the quality of health services. Quality and safety outcomes vary systematically across health employers but not job classifications. The same holds true for quality of work-life outcomes.

A major conclusion of the study is that the values, policies, and practices of specific employers matter most when it comes to improving the quality of employees' work life and the quality of patient or client services.