



HEALTH INNOVATIONS

NAME OF PRACTICE: Summer Measures for Work-Life Balance and Optimal HR Planning

JURISDICTION: Quebec

HEALTH THEME: Workplace-Healthy

HEALTH SECTOR: Health Systems

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: 2010

To foster a positive culture in the workplace, support a sound balance between work and life, and to achieve management agreement targets, it is important to implement action strategies to meet the needs of employees and managers. Several measures have been implemented to promote the attainment of these objectives without resorting to a mandatory overtime policy. Measures have been implemented to promote flexible work schedules for the summer period (June to September):

- 7/7 schedule available to nurses and nursing assistants (56 employees registered);
- Light schedule available to full-time employees: orderlies and support staff (19 employees registered);
- Enhanced schedules for nurses based on their availability (100%);
- Summer training program for orderlies

Methods

- Structured work plan to support planning, starting in January
- Partnership program with teaching facilities
- June-September work schedule created in May
- Close monitoring of the situation with clinical and administrative managers; includes meetings with them
- Over-staffing structure (creation of positions with customized mobility to increase our structure to 120-130 per cent) to cover various absences

Indicators

- Employee satisfaction (survey in September)
- Number of hours on wage insurance, 2010-2011 compared with 2009-2010
- Short-term and long-term absenteeism rate (attendance report)
- Managers' satisfaction (review in September)
- Number of hours by independent workers, 2010-2011 compared with 2009-2010
- Number of hours of overtime, 2010-2011 compared with 2009-2010

Repercussions of the measures: As described below, the proposed measures have had favourable repercussions for many people. Our measures are interrelated and this combination further enhances their positive effect. The 7/7 schedule is a program for reorganizing the summer work schedule. Using 15 days of vacation (and three holidays for full-time staff), the work schedule is reorganized to provide seven days of consecutive work, followed by seven days off work, over a period of 10 or 12 weeks, depending on whether the employee has part-time or full-time status. Participation is voluntary. The 7/7 is designed so that full-time and part-time nurses and nursing assistants can work every other week. The person must have at least 15 days of vacation leave credits, with or without pay, to participate.

Benefits:

- Employees: On a volunteer basis, employees have the possibility of obtaining five or six weeks off work (non-consecutive) during the summer and the possibility of obtaining vacation leave in July and August.

Organization: Stable staffing in the summer because the same people work continuously for seven days

every other week (during the 10 or 12 weeks of the program). Where possible, the manager can twin two participants in the program to ensure expertise and stability seven days a week. Participating employees do not plan a continuous vacation in the summer but use their three weeks of vacation in 15 fractional days. No weekend vacation replacements are needed – a major advantage in the summer.

Unions: Unions initially suggested the 7/7 schedule. Light schedule: This program reorganizes the summer work schedule. Six days of vacation leave, two days of personal sick leave and two statutory holidays in the summer are used to reorganize the work schedule and provide one day off a week. This is a 10-week program from 6 June to 14 August 2010, when the person maintains full-time status. It is open to full-time orderlies and support staff (food services, laundry, housekeeping, and other staff).

Benefits: Employees (voluntary participation): With the replacement needs created by authorized leave, new staff are offered a more interesting work schedule (more hours worked). In turn, the program gives staff a respite during the summer and provides a form of recognition for full-time staff.

Organization: Fewer short-term absences occur(see indicators). Furthermore, leave under this program is authorized during the week only, before or after a weekday off, for a maximum of two days of leave every two weeks. No weekend leave is allowed. The program also creates loyalty after the first year of studies, as nursing students have a summer job as an orderly or other staff member. This helps establish hiring needs for the summer period and facilitates recruiting for subsequent years. Finally, implementation of this program continued the partnership with Granby CEGEP: We could offer first-year nursing students a work-study program to meet one of the requirements of the program – providing 300 hours of guaranteed work during the summer.

Union: It ensures respite for members and is a form of recognition for incumbents of full-time positions. It also ensures the hiring of students in the summer.

Enhanced nursing schedules: In summer, it provides a work schedule that matches the maximum availability indicated.

Benefits: Employees: This measure ensures security of hours worked based on availability for the summer. We contribute to staff satisfaction with the work schedule, ensuring that staff can work as they wish.

Organization: Under this measure, the surpluses generated foster staff mobility toward critical sectors. By planning the work schedule based on maximum availability indicated by nursing staff, we secure their commitment starting in May. This sometimes even provides a small amount of flexibility in some areas of the organization. This measure has a direct impact on the reduced use of independent workers.

Union: This achieves member satisfaction.

Training program for orderlies: Throughout the summer, orderlies have access to continuing training one day per week. The training program is created early in the spring.

Benefits: Employees: Our regular staff can upgrade their skills. With the replacement needs created by the training, new staff are given a more interesting work schedule (increased hours worked).

Organization: There are increased staff skill levels after receiving ongoing training; this has no impact on work teams, because the people in training are replaced by students.

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