

Portugal

Workplace Health Promotion at the City Council of Oeiras

CÂMARA MUNICIPAL DE OEIRAS
FACULDADE DE MOTRICIDADE HUMANA

The Municipality of Oeiras is near Lisbon. The City Council employs 1600 workers. Around 1000 are male and 600 female, 11% are older than 55 and 7% younger than 24.

How the WHP is organised

The Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) is organised by the initiative and political decision of the Mayor. For functional reasons, it was decided to place the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and WHP under the responsibility of the Human Resources Unit (incorporated in the Municipal Directorate of Administration and Finances). This unit is also responsible for training and social activities. The workers' health surveillance, part of OHS, is connected to this unit. The confirmation of interest is shown by the following statement: the health of workers "... in the global context of the Local Administration ... should be accepted as a dynamic management philosophy, as result of the continuous turnover of workers and by the multiple relations between the different services".

The strategic thinking of the Human Resources Unit is oriented towards the recognition of an individual responsibility/autonomy binomial vision and the fact that everyone should feel healthy and safe in the development of his individual and collective activities.

The working conditions study is developed simultaneously with the promotion of information, education and training on prevention and on health.

The health experts recognise how important the holistic health approach is and they are interested in more gen-

eralised participation in health circles to identify priorities and define programmes and strategies as well as in the reinforcement of the evaluation and the involvement of everyone.

Taking responsibility for OHS

The safety activities and the health surveillance are developed in agreement with the legal requirements. OHS is provided by a combined system of internal and external services.

As employer, the City Council ensures medical curative care for all workers and retired personnel as well as their families (in total about 10.000 people).

Increasing awareness

The "Ponto de Encontro" (Meeting Point) is a bulletin distributed every month to all workers, together with the salary slip, with a view to disseminate occupational health and safety initiatives and concepts for education in order to achieve a healthier life.

The first forum of national municipal medical doctors, an innovative initiative, took place in 1999 from 21st to 23rd October and showed the City Council's interest in the interchange of knowledge, policies and experiences of different health and safety teams and players at local administration level. One hundred participants at this event helped to initiate the process conducive to the promotion of new activities related with today's challenges on health.

Contact:
Oeiras City Council Occupational Health Service
Dr. Ramos Osorio MD
Phone: +351-21-4406347
E-mail: josorio@cm-oeiras.pt



Bringing in WHP

Different key experts, responsible for developing policies, programmes and activities oriented towards workers' health, have attended training courses directed towards prevention and health promotion. Matters, such as health and nutrition, nutrition and obesity, self-medication, active life, stress management, stress prevention, reception and how to make contact with the public and management of health units, are among the subjects of studies and training activities attended by the Town Hall staff whose main areas of responsibility are involved with workers' health.

These training activities have facilitated training trainers and improving their capacity and responsibility as well as developing the interest and involvement of chiefs and leaders. They also promote the creation of groups of interest on health, which could result in health circles.

Action areas

In City Council professional annual training programmes workers' well-being is a relevant subject. In addition, specific prevention and health promotion information and training activities are developed in an adequate way to achieve better performance in different activities.

Among the specific health promotion activities the following must be distinguished:

■ "Move Yourself More" programme

Together with the School of Human Motricity (from the Technical University) the Town Hall developed the "Move Yourself More" project.

The Town Hall personnel have received specific training and this in-house programme became an outdoor project. Nowadays, people of Oeiras are invited to participate and area residents are involved in a municipal programme that has the following objectives:

"Move yourself daily with your family and friends", "Challenge your colleagues at work" and "Challenge your Club". To implement this project and to induce "physical activity is for everybody, anywhere" the Town Hall counts on the collaboration of the School of Human Motricity. Jointly, Town Hall employees and citizens are involved in promoting "Better exercise ... more health". Actually, this became the town's charismatic programme. Several pamphlets contributed towards publicising the programme and its activities (for example, see the "20 questions, 20 answers" pamphlet).

■ "Healthy Nutrition" programme

In 1998, training was offered oriented towards the cooks, kitchen maids and other Town Hall refectory and cafeteria personnel. "Rational and healthy nourishment" and "Nourishment Hygiene and Safety" were the main subjects. This project has been expanded. Nowadays, the Town Hall organises annual activities, in which house personnel and other citizens of Oeiras participate. The courses related to the different aspects of nutrition are relevant to these activities. They are financed

by the Town Hall and take place at a hotel. Many relevant brochures were issued following these activities.

■ Preparing for retirement

Activities oriented towards pre-retirement staff are organised especially to prepare the workers for the changes in life and to help them live a different and healthy life.

Building up a positive future

- since the basic areas of occupational health and safety are assured
- since the need and importance of WHP are recognised
- since the basic conditions are created and some WHP projects are already in place
- since the Mayor expressed the decision

WHP's future holds important challenges at the Oeiras City Council.

The enlargement and strengthening of WHP require conceptual and structural revision and revitalisation as well as innovation and creativity.

Revision and revitalisation oriented towards the following goals:

- The political decision should give consideration to the potential impact of new strategies to promote health and the capacity of work.
- Managers not only have to understand but also valorise their WHP responsibility as an important technical area of the global management capacities.

- The workers' generalised and informed participation should be considered as a priority and a permanent objective.
- Based on concrete results and values recognised by the evaluation system the impact of the investments on WHP should be disseminated.
- Administration should ensure human and financial resources as well as training and expertise in order to promote healthy and safe behaviour, whilst giving consideration to the identified needs and the results showed by a permanent evaluation system.
- The implemented projects should be optimised or reinforced wherever necessary.
- Skin health promotion and sun protection.
- Travelling health promotion, oriented towards workers who travel (namely to African cities twinned with Oeiras) and to train staff members to contribute to the health promotion of tourists and visitors.

Final appraisal

The existence of the interest, know-how, resources and appropriate conditions for the development of WHP require a continuous process of evaluation and optimisation.

Efforts have to be made to show the added value and the need for the individual and collective participation to develop safe and healthy styles of life and work conditions.

Innovation and creativity to allow and promote:

- Involvement of all staff members on WHP.
- Development of WHP evaluation methods.
- Motivation and reinforcement of health circle participation as the best way to get new input.
- Research on WHP, especially to identify new forms to promote health and safety in areas related to problems identified as local or specific working population needs.
- Implementation of new prepared and discussed projects. Two areas of health promotion have been considered giving thought to the fact that Oeiras is a municipality near the Atlantic coast: