

Local employers want guidance on Mental Health & Addiction in the Workplace

NLEC to hold workshop Thursday, November 6th to address employer concerns

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October 29, 2008, St. John's, NL Employers in this province want guidance on how to handle issues of mental health and addiction in the workplace. To address this issue, the NL Employers' Council (NLEC) is hosting a workshop for employers next Thursday, November 6th on Mental Health & Addiction in the Workplace.

Mental health and addiction problems that go unaddressed in the workplace can lead to prolonged absenteeism, insurance claims, long-term disability, decreased productivity, a strained workplace environment and a need to hire replacement workers. A study by Dr. Carolyn Dewa of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto determined that the Canadian economy loses \$51 billion each year in lost productivity due to excessive stress and other mental health problems among employees and mental health claims account for an estimated 30 to 40 percent of disability claims. In a May 2006 study done by The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), the overall social cost of substance abuse in Canada in 2002 was \$39.8 billion, measured in terms of loss of productivity in the workplace or at home and the burden on services such as health care and law enforcement. When extracted from the same study, the cost in Newfoundland & Labrador alone was estimated to be \$737 million in 2002.

The NLEC often receives calls from employers wondering how to implement strategies to deal with mental health and addiction in the workplace. "This is an important issue for employers." Says Richard Alexander, NLEC Executive Director. "We live in a knowledge based economy, where the skills and knowledge of staff are an employers biggest assets. Employers have a responsibility to be proactive on the issue of mental health & addiction in the workplace in order to protect these assets."

This full day workshop will bring together professionals from the mental health & addiction, employee assistance and legal fields to address the issues of mental health and addiction from an employer perspective. Topics to be discussed include: the challenge to maintain a health work environment; how to prevent work-related mental health problems and reduce related disability claims; what rights and responsibilities an employer has when dealing with these issues; and strategies for dealing with addiction problems at work.

The Employers' Council session "**Mental Health & Addiction in the Workplace**" will be held Thursday, November 6th, from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. For more information and to register, employers should visit www.nlec.nf.ca.

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The NLEC provides advocacy, communication and training for employers in matters that affect the employment relationship.

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