

# Workplace Health Promotion Includes Self-Help

Canadian corporations such as Warren Shepell Consultants and the Ontario Power Generation encourage employees to donate to non-profit organizations such as the United Way and local community centres. They also understand the benefits of a healthy worker and one way to ensure this is through the integration of self-help/mutual aid referrals to the workplace.

“Studies show that organizations that invest in promoting the health of their staff enjoy increased productivity and reduced costs,” says Jane Hutt, Health and Social Services Minister of the UK. However, due to recent cutbacks, health promotion within the workplace is lagging.

Integrating self-help referrals within workplace health centres can be a favorable and cost efficient way to increase the quality of employees’ health conditions. Mary Fenessey, Health Assistant for the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, says that despite their strict budget, they still manage to order the Self-Help Resource Centre Directory for self-help referrals. The Canadian Union of Postal workers have a network of social stewards (union employees) that are trained as councillors for referrals. Both companies keep a referral list which includes self-help/mutual aid options to better assist employees. These companies are integrating selfhelp/mutual aid referrals because of the unique quality that self-help groups possess. Self-help/mutual aid groups, in contrast to ones that are professionally led, offer more practical support and information exchange. “With self-help groups you’re dealing with people who have ‘been there, done that’, so people learn from personal experiences,” says Joanne Ryan, an occupational health nurse from the Ontario Power Generation.

For more information on integrating self-help referrals into workplace health promotion programs, contact the Ontario Self-Help Network at (416) 487-355 or [oshnet@selfhelp.on.ca](mailto:oshnet@selfhelp.on.ca).