

10 November 2011

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HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD AND ASSOCIATION OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES INK MOU TO PROMOTE WORKPLACE HEALTH

Employers get support to do the right thing and do things right

By 2015, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) and the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (ASME) would like 80 per cent of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to have a Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) programme.

2 This is up from the 40 per cent of SMEs who already have such a programme, according to the Workplace Health Prevalence Survey 2010.

3 To seal their partnership in working towards this goal, HPB and ASME signed a MOU at the National Conference on Workplace Health Promotion 2011 today, witnessed by Guest-of-Honour Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health.

4 In its 10th year, this year's conference centres on 'Optimising Employees' Health – New Perspectives for the Singapore Workforce'.

5 "ASME is HPB's valued partner in encouraging employees to stay healthy, employable and productive," said Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB. "As SMEs employ more than 60 per cent of Singapore's workforce, they provide many opportunities for HPB to expand our workplace health programmes and help working adults enjoy and practise healthy living in their work environments."

6 Mr Eugene The, General Manager of Enterprise Development Centre@ASME said, "Many SMEs are increasingly aware of the importance of workplace welfare activities to help their staff achieve better health. Most employers, however, are hampered by constraints, such as costs. With financial support from HPB, I am certain that even more SMEs will come on board and start their own WHP programme."

Do the right thing

7 Noting that companies often cite inadequate budgets as a reason for not having a WHP programme in place, HPB is increasing its WHP Grant by 25 per cent, from \$12,000 to \$15,000, in order to encourage more SMEs to do the right thing and implement their WHP programmes.

8 A WHP programme improves the health of employees as well as the health of business. But beyond helping companies start a WHP programme that will promote healthy lifestyle activities and keep employees fit and productive, HPB now aims to broaden the scope of WHP programmes to include the needs of at-risk employees as well.

9 “To this end, the WHP Grant has been restructured to direct resources to targeted care for at-risk employees, who may be struggling with obesity, unsuccessful attempts to quit smoking, depression or chronic diseases,” explained Mr Ang.

10 “In line with this broadened objective of WHP programmes, HPB is rolling out a comprehensive workplace mental well-being programme. Called ‘Working Minds’, it will highlight the importance of a supportive workplace environment for corporate well-being,” added Mr Ang.

Do things right

11 While doing the right thing starts by putting in place a WHP programme that strikes a balance between healthy lifestyle activities and targeted care for at-risk employees, doing things right ensures that WHP programmes are accessible, convenient and beneficial.

12 “Health promotion activities and programmes have to be easy to implement, be accessible and engaging in order to be effective and secure sustainable participation,” said Mr Ang. “With this MOU, ASME may now leverage HPB’s know-how to find innovative solutions in planning and executing WHP programmes.

13 “Playing the role of a consultant whose task is to provide clever solutions, HPB will conduct visits to SMEs, draw up their company profiles and develop checklists before working with each organisation to roll out a relevant WHP programme.”

14 Indeed, HPB will set aside \$200,000 in 2012 as a WHP Capability Development Grant for WHP consultants and practitioners to develop new and creative solutions which will be convenient and easy to implement, as well as enhance the effectiveness of WHP programmes.

15 “In addition, HPB will also help ASME implement these new solutions by facilitating the sharing of services and suppliers among SMEs in order to create an aggregate demand and enjoy economies of scale.

16 “An example is Talk2Us, a counselling helpline set up to support distressed employers and employees. Such a service will not be economically viable for any single SME to undertake, but it is made possible via a tripartite collaboration among HPB, ASME and the Singapore Business Federation,” added Mr Ang.

Learning from those who got it right

17 Many countries and regions have long histories of good WHP policies and programmes, with valuable learning points for Singapore companies to adopt and adapt accordingly.

18 The keynote speaker at the 10th National Conference on Workplace Health Promotion 2011, Prof Dame Carol Black, National Director for Health and Work in the UK, shared the UK’s latest strategies to improve the health and well-being of employees and how they may be applied in Singapore.

19 Participants of the conference will also visit six Singapore HEALTH, or ‘Helping Employees Achieve Life Time Health’, Platinum Award recipients to learn how these organisations have put in place sustainable and effective WHP programmes for their staff over the years.

20 These Singapore HEALTH Platinum Award organisations are Sembawang Shipyard, PUB the national water agency, Hotel Grand Pacific, GlobalFoundries Singapore Pte Ltd, NCS Pte Ltd and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Alexandra Health Pte Ltd.

Annex 1 Details of the revised WHP Grant and WHP Capability Development Grant

Annex 2 “Working Minds” - A Comprehensive Workplace Mental Well-Being Programme

Issued by Health Promotion Board

Details of the revised WHP Grant and WHP Capability Development Grant

(A) Workplace Health Promotion Grant

Background

The workplace is a key setting to reach out to Singaporeans as 65% of the Singapore adult population is in the workforce. The Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) Grant is one of the key strategies to incentivise employers to start and sustain health promotion programmes for their employees. The WHP Grant provides financial support of up to \$12,000 to organisations for health promotion initiatives in the areas of health risk assessment, healthy eating, exercise, mental wellbeing, smoking control, chronic diseases and other health related topics for their employees.

Indications from the National Health Survey 2010 has shown that there is an increase in the prevalence of health risks and their related medical conditions amongst Singaporeans, i.e. obesity rate, diabetes and smoking rate.

Revision to the WHP Grant

HPB will increase the current WHP Grant quantum to provide additional funding support for companies to implement targeted intervention programmes (e.g. weight management, chronic disease management, smoking cessation), for their at-risk employees. The additional funding can also be used to fund comprehensive mental health programmes for employees, as the mental wellbeing of Singaporeans is also a national health priority.

Each company can apply up to \$15,000 for their WHP programmes from April 2012.

(B) Workplace Health Promotion Capability Development Grant

Background

The demand for professional WHP consultants has been increasing as more organisations embark on comprehensive and sustainable WHP programmes. HPB will tap on the creativity of service providers by encouraging them to develop innovative WHP solutions that will enhance the effectiveness of WHP programmes and improve employees' health.

A \$200,000 capability development grant for WHP service providers will be introduced from July 2012.

WHP will invite service providers to submit ideas and proposals for the grant funding. HPB will co-develop and jointly test-bed the proposed WHP solutions with successful applicants. Learning points from the pilot project that has practical applications will be shared with other service providers at suitable platforms.

“Working Minds” - A Comprehensive Workplace Mental Well-Being Programme

Working Minds is a comprehensive programme for companies to support employee and corporate mental wellbeing. It achieves this by offering a one stop solution for workplaces that extends beyond employee mental health education.

It is a programme with key elements to educate and empower individuals and employees. It also enables organisations to provide employees the support services and initiatives, necessary to influence change agents in order to nurture a supportive work environment.

The programme has a broad focus and includes:

- Enhanced workplace mental health education resources to promote employee mental health wellbeing
- Promotion and support of individual employee support services
- Training and nurturing of internal workplace champions for employee assistance and mental wellbeing
- Management and leadership development initiatives to develop supportive workplace environments