OHS Canada, 10/7/2005

IAPA: Raising awareness of mental health in the workplace

By Source: Canada NewsWire

TORONTO, Oct. 6 /CNW/ -- While most of us will be sitting with family and friends and giving thanks for each other and the good food before us this Thanksgiving Monday, we should also give thanks for our health and well-being.

IAPA (Industrial Accident Prevention Association) is proud to support World Mental Health Day on October 10th. This year's theme is "Mental and Physical Health Across the Life Span," emphasizing the importance of recognizing the inter-dependence of good mental and physical health at every stage of life. In other words, there is no health without mental health.

IAPA advocates for the physical and mental health of all people. Healthy people make healthy workplaces. This is the underlying factor of IAPA's Healthy Workplace strategy, which is not only being implemented within the organization, but is also an outreach program that is available to firms who wish to adopt this approach within their own health and safety programs.

Within the last five years, IAPA has been developing strategies for healthy workplaces, nurturing relationships with those in the mental health fields, and actively delivering information, workshops, and presentations with a goal to creating workplace environments that are conducive to good mental health.

Earlier this year, the organization's Board Chair, Doug Schur of Dofasco, made a personal commitment to mental health. He states, "Today, most companies are forced to produce more with less. This can mean that employees, as well as employers, are more apt to become casualties of mental illness. More and more people are falling victim to the stressors of what is now becoming the norm of today's workplace. Mental illness doesn't discriminate, but people with mental illness face discrimination. We need to be able to recognize the signs, to train today's leaders to recognize the signs, and to be able to take appropriate actions to eliminate as many of the stressors from the workplaces as we can."

According to the World Health Organization, mental health disorders are among the leading causes of ill health and disability. They estimate that one in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. In addition, a recent report from Health Canada suggests that mental health disorders in the workplace cost nearly 14 per cent of the net annual profits of Canadian companies, with an annual price tag of up to $16 billion.

IAPA believes that while mental health is on the radar screen of many organizations, knowing about it is not enough. There are opportunities for workplaces to create healthy workplace cultures and to promote positive mental health.

"The statistics are there. Workplaces need to take action when it comes to their employees and mental health," says Maureen Shaw, President and CEO, IAPA. "As employers, we have taken great strides to provide our employees with benefits programs, fitness programs, smoking cessation programs, and more. But when it comes to mental health, we tend to do nothing because we are not in our comfort zone. A physical injury is something we can see and treat. An injury to the mind is something we can't see, don't understand, don't know how to fix, and don't feel skilled to deal with. Workplace stress is

becoming a major workplace hazard that can contribute to poor mental and physical health. We can no longer view mental health as separate from the workplace. It is a significant factor in workplace productivity and prosperity, and the overall health and well-being of our society."

Working in collaboration with other organizations, IAPA will provide information, knowledge, and tools to assist those in business with preventing and mitigating the injuries to the mental health of workers. "Prevention is always better than cure so businesses can start by creating a healthy workplace culture that promotes good mental and physical health," says Joan Burton, Manager, Health Strategy, IAPA. "One way to start is by arranging training for supervisors and managers so that they will be able to recognize the signs of mental illness in employees, and then, have a program in place (i.e. EAP program) with resources to refer employees to should they need help."

World Mental Health Day was established by the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) and was first observed on October 10, 1992. It is a worldwide mental health education, awareness and advocacy project of the WFMH, which was founded in 1948. The WFMH, with members and contacts in 112 countries on six continents, "envisions a world in which mental health is a priority for all people." For more information, go to www.wfmh.org.

Copyright (c) 2005 The Canadian Press

Table of Contents

Click to Print

Copyright © 2005 Business Information Group.
A member of the esourceNetwork

Business Information Group Privacy Policy