HEALTHY JOBS CALL TO ACTION

Here in the 21st century, everyone should have the right to a healthy job. A “healthy job” is one in which the workplace hazards that cause injury or illness are being eliminated or reduced and in which full, productive and health lifestyles are also supported. Americans spend nearly half of their waking hours at work.i Work affects employees and their communities in profound ways, impacting stress levels, healthcare options, emotional wellbeing, and family life. Healthy jobs are those that:

1) Protect Against Workplace Hazards
   Each year, tens of thousands of Americans die from workplace exposure to dangerous chemicals and safety hazards. Hundreds of thousands more are seriously injured and face a difficult road to recovery. Every workplace needs a comprehensive program to reduce hazards and prevent injuries, illnesses and deaths on the job. [See factsheet and checklist on Preventing Workplace Hazards for more information.]

2) Provide Living Wages and Benefits
   Inadequate wages do more than cause financial stress; they lead to poor health. Evidence shows that low pay, lack of medical benefits, lack of a secure retirement, and lack of paid sick leave all have serious health impacts. [See factsheet and checklist on Benefits and Living Wages for more information.]

3) Respect Human Dignity on the Job
   A working environment that does not properly recognize the dignity of all workers can be physically and mentally damaging. A positive workplace culture is free of harassment, discrimination and disrespect. In order to thrive, workers need to have good communication with management and staff, room for advancement, and job satisfaction. [See factsheet and checklist on Respect on the Job for more information.]

4) Limit Excessive Stress and Workload
   Overwork and unrealistic expectations can lead to serious health effects. Workers can be more productive and efficient, if they preserve their bodies and minds. [See factsheet and checklist on Stress and Workload for more information.]

5) Offer Job Security
   Instability, or fear of unemployment, can be a major source of stress, as well as an impediment to adequate and regular health care. Healthy jobs provide reliable employment and fair policies that instill confidence and trust among workers. [See factsheet and checklist on Job Security for more information.]

6) Support Healthy Lifestyles
   Access to workplace health promotion activities, such as exercise or smoking cessation programs, promote a healthy work/life balance. Employers and workers benefit in terms of health and productivity if they encourage and take advantage of these opportunities. [See factsheet and checklist on Healthy Lifestyles for more information.]

7) Support Family Life
   Workers provide for and care for their families. This not only requires adequate income, but also means flexibility. Family health is contingent upon flexible workplaces and schedules, child care accommodation, and reasonable leave for medical necessities. [See factsheet and checklist on Family Friendly Policies for more information.]

8) Support Communities
   Healthy jobs result in a healthier community. This means a commitment to responsible environmental impact (e.g., toxics exposure and waste) and a commitment to fair, community-minded development. [See factsheet and checklist on Supporting Communities for more information.]

RWJ Foundation, Commission to Build a Healthier America

iProtecting Workers on the Job agenda, a collaborative product of the APHA OHS Section and the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health.

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