

## Health and Safety Climate Assessment Project

### *Health and Safety Climate as an Indicator of Organizational Culture*

#### Project Background and Context

The Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) is being funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), through HealthForceOntario (HFO), to assess the health and safety climate and culture of four organizations across Ontario's healthcare system.

This is a groundbreaking and important initiative. Research shows that a positive organizational health and safety culture is associated with lower workplace injury and illness rates, as well as other positive organizational outcomes.

The project builds on a previous initiative undertaken by PSHSA in partnership with HFO – *the Healthy and Safe Healthcare Workplace Indicators Project*. The Indicators Project involved extensive research and stakeholder engagement and resulted in the following recommended set of seven healthy and safe workplace indicators for Ontario's healthcare organizations:

- Turnover
- Absenteeism
- Workers Compensation Composite
- Manager/Supervisor Training
- Training and Professional Development
- Risk Assessment
- Employee Engagement Climate

The last two indicators – Risk Assessment and Employee Engagement Climate – were highly supported in the research, as well as by stakeholders, as indicators of healthy and safe workplaces. However, although these indicators were highly supported, stakeholders were not able to reach consensus about the details and approach for each. As a result, the two were included in the recommended set of indicators with the caveat that additional development is required.

The mandate of the *Health and Safety Climate Assessment Project* is to further develop the Employee Engagement Climate indicator. This is being done through the implementation of health and safety climate assessments.

#### Understanding Health and Safety Climate and Culture

Assessing an organization's health and safety climate identifies the current values, attitudes and patterns of behaviour of employees with respect to health and safety. The assessment explains why there may be a gap between the desired outcomes of the organization and the current reality.

Assessing an organization's health and safety climate:

- Offers insight into the organization's health and safety culture by identifying the current perceptions held by the organizations' workforce – **how people behave and how they think and feel about health and safety issues.**
- Enables the factors that contribute to the health and safety climate to be categorized and profiled, thus providing specific explanation and action planning opportunities.

- Provides organizations with the ability to measure improvements or changes over time (as the assessment can be repeated).

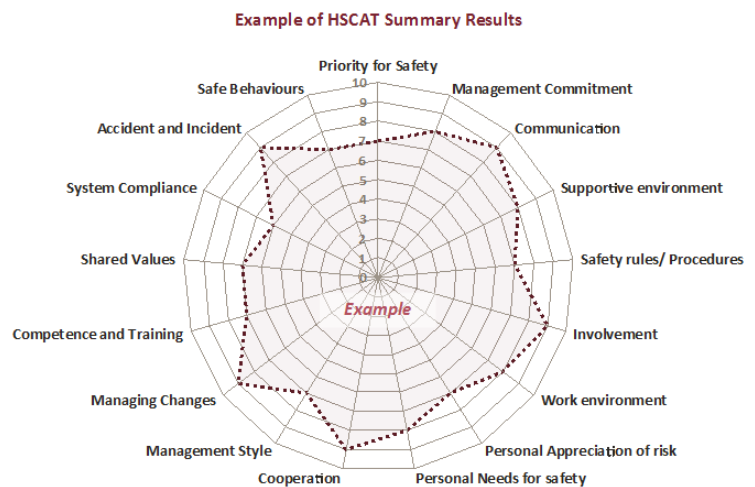
## Project Approach

PSHSA is using an established health and safety climate assessment tool for this initiative. The climate tool was originally developed in the UK and has been successfully used to assess the health and safety climate and culture of organizations in high-risk environments (i.e., offshore oil rig operations).

*The climate tool was chosen for use because it is a validated and comprehensive tool that is based on a sound methodology.*

Implementation of the tool occurs in three sections, with data being collected via survey(s), focus groups and/or interviews as well as direct and indirect observation. Demographic data is also collected to understand results by various factors such as level in organization, years of service, age and profession.

The results of the assessment provide an overall score for **17 organizational health and safety dimensions** which can be graphed to provide a 'snapshot' of the organization's current health and safety climate.



## Project Implementation and Timing

PSHSA consultants are working with four organizations to carry out the climate assessments. These organizations represent stakeholders across the healthcare system – an acute care health facility, a community care organization, a long-term care home and a public health unit.

It is expected that all project work will be completed by spring 2014. A summary of the project outcomes will be posted on [www.healthyworkenvironments.com](http://www.healthyworkenvironments.com).

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Please visit [http://www.healthyworkenvironments.ca/Resources\\_Indicator\\_Project.htm](http://www.healthyworkenvironments.ca/Resources_Indicator_Project.htm) for additional information about the Healthy and Safe Healthcare Workplace Indicators Project.