



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Dr. Alexander Summers, Medical Officer of Health
Emily Williams, Chief Executive Officer

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MIDDLESEX-LONDON HEALTH UNIT BE WELL PROGRAM UPDATE

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No. 37-22 re: “Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) Be Well Program Update” for information.

Key Points

- The Be Well Program, supported by the Be Well Committee which launched in 2016, provides tools and opportunities for employees to benefit from initiatives that promote the well-being of all employees at MLHU.
- The Be Well Program promotes strategies for meeting the Psychological Standard and is a key activity in the Employee Engagement and Learning component of the MLHU 2021-22 provisional plan.
- The Be Well Program is supported by an external party, Employee Wellness Solutions Network (EWSN) and offers monthly programming to MLHU employees in a variety of mediums, including in person, virtual and asynchronous participation.

Background

To accomplish MLHU’s mission of promoting and protecting the health of the community, it is essential to promote and protect the health of employees. With Board of Health approved funding in 2016, MLHU launched the Be Well Program for all employees. A Be Well internal committee, with representatives from different roles and from all divisions, was formed in April 2016 and continues to promote and sustain the development of a culture of health and wellbeing among MLHU employees.

Be Well Initiatives

The Be Well Committee works together with Employee Wellness Solutions Network (EWSN), the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC), and other workplace parties and uses the four Pillars of Wellness¹ as guideposts for delivering programs and events in a comprehensive approach to employee wellbeing. The events, resources, training, and programs provided to staff in 2021-2022 are outlined in [Appendix A](#).

The pandemic did not deter the Be Well Committee from providing important wellness information and activities to MLHU employees. The Committee was able to pivot to a virtual environment, one which will continue as the Health Unit moves to a hybrid workforce where employees work both in the office and remotely.

¹ World Health Organization’s (WHO) 4 Pillars of Wellness are: Physical Work Environment, Workplace Culture and Wellness, Personal Health Resources, and Enterprise Community Involvement.

Employee Engagement

Each month staff are asked to complete a monthly participation survey which provides an opportunity for them to report in which wellness activities they participated during the previous month. It also provides an opportunity to gauge employee interest and feedback for future wellness programming and initiatives. This feedback is used in the development of weekly ‘wellness Wednesday’ content which is sent out via a Microsoft Outlook meeting invitation and is intended for employees to schedule time to participate in the week’s wellness activity. Examples of “wellness Wednesday” content include stretch breaks, meditation, nutrition tips, and mindfulness.

Testimonials from staff over the past year have been shared with the Be Well Committee and demonstrate the impact that Be Well has had on employees. Several testimonials received include:

“I do not know how I would have coped some days, if not for the access to the wonderful resources and cheerleading provided through Be Well!”

“Thank you to Be Well for this gratitude journey and for my positive relationships with my colleagues. I am lucky to work at MLHU and have a BeWell team that has positive impact in my life – thank you for your hard, creative, informative, resourceful, and fun work.”

Next Steps

According to the data on drugs, extended health care, short-term disability, long-term disability, and employee assistance plans for organizations of similar size and industry in 2016, the top four most common modifiable conditions by therapeutic category are: musculoskeletal, mental health, cardiovascular, and Type 2 diabetes. Supports to assist with these modifiable conditions are provided through tailored programming, such as offering ergonomic reviews and resources, wellness workshops (e.g. nutrition or mental health sessions), training and the promotion of physical activities through various instructor-led exercise series.

According to the aggregate Personal Wellness Assessment (PWA) Corporate Trend Report from EWSN for the period of January 4, 2021 – May 31, 2021, which included 69 respondents, the categories “My Health Overview” and “My Readiness to Make Changes” were indicated as “needs attention”, highlighting areas for action or intervention to support the employees’ health and wellbeing. Of the respondents, 68% indicated good job satisfaction results and 87% indicated they felt MLHU supports and encourages a healthy workplace.

Respondents of the PWA indicated that yoga/mediation, stress management and mental health were their top interests for health improvement opportunities. This feedback drives the programming for Be Well and is considered when planning initiatives and events for the next calendar year.

Utilization of the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) through Homewood Health was 33.71% from April 2021 to March 2022, which exceeds the contracted average 20% utilization rate. Employees used a variety of supports including counselling, proactive programming from the LifeSmart offering and e-courses through Homewood Health’s web portal, homeweb.ca. The high utilization rate speaks to the regular promotion of these services to employees and is positive in that employees and their families are getting the support they need during challenging times in their lives. MLHU also offered several group counselling debrief sessions for employees and leaders this year to support them in acknowledging the impacts of the pandemic over the past few years.

The Be Well Committee continues to consider employee feedback to develop engaging and interesting content for employees to support them to be well in life, at work and at play.

This report was prepared by the Healthy Organization Division.



Alexander Summers, MD, MPH, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health



Emily Williams, BScN, RN, MBA, CHE
Chief Executive Officer

Reference:

World Health Organization & Burton, Joan. (2010). WHO healthy workplace framework and model: background and supporting literature and practices. World Health Organization.

<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/113144>