



TO: Chair and Members of the Governance Committee

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

DATE: 2023 April 20

2022 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Governance Committee recommend that the Board of Health receive Report No. 05-23 GC, re: “2022 Occupational Health and Safety Report” for information.

Key Points

- The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) annual report summarizes the health and safety accomplishments, challenges, incidents and activities of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) from the previous calendar year.
- In 2022, the number of employee-reported incidents was 86; an 11% increase when compared to 2021.
- Key accomplishments include improved safety and security measures in Strathroy, re-introducing de-escalation training for staff in response in an increase in reports of verbal aggression, establishing a robust and effective employee immunization policy, and continued regular occupational health and safety education for MLHU employees.
- The MLHU achieved the highest vaccine uptake rates for COVID-19 and Influenza since the implementation of the Employee Immunization Program.

Background

Occupational health and safety is an integral aspect of any successful organization. Ensuring that all workplace parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) is at the foundation of any health and safety program. This is further codified in the organizational requirements within the legislative Public Health Accountability Framework, in which the “board of health shall comply with all legal and statutory requirements”.

As part of the Occupational Health and Safety Program, the Occupational Health and Safety team submits an annual report ([Appendix A](#)) summarizing health and safety initiatives, employee-reported injuries and incidents, and the activities of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) from the previous calendar year. The annual report is shared with staff at all levels of the organization.

Occupational Health & Safety Incidents

The annual report highlights the functioning of the Internal Responsibility System, where each member of the organization has a role to play in supporting occupational health and safety and ensuring the MLHU is committed to fostering a safe work environment.

Over the course of 2022, there were 86 employee-reported incidents, which is an 11% increase from 2021.

The most reported incidents were workplace violence (47%); struck with/ caught by/ contact with (10%); slips, trips, and falls (9%); and exposures (9%). The second largest increase in reporting was related to exposures (100% increase), with staff reported incidents related to minor electric shock, chemical fumes, hand sanitizer splashes, and exposure to second-hand smoke.

There was a 117% increase in near miss reporting in 2022 in comparison to 2021. The MLHU investigated six potential cases of COVID-19 workplace transmission in late 2022, the organization's first occupational illness report filed since the declaration of the pandemic in 2020. Incident reporting is regularly encouraged to ensure MLHU is aware of what employees are experiencing on the job and has likely continued to have an impact on the number of reports received over the course of 2022.

Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness

Employees continue to utilize employee wellness supports available to them. In 2021-2022, the utilization rates for the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) were significantly higher than our contracted utilization rate. Additional virtual wellness program supports through a wellness provider, Cyno, will be implemented in 2023 to complement employee and family assistance programming and further support employee's individual wellness needs.

Revisions to the Employee Immunization Policy and dedicated attention to the Employee Immunization Program resulted in an increase in vaccine uptake and compliance rates. The compliance rate for submission of immunization history, as required by the Employee Immunization Policy, among new hires in 2022 was 100%. In addition, vaccine uptake (employees who reported receiving a recent dose of vaccine) rates for influenza increased by 5% when compared to 2021 and is the highest uptake of the influenza vaccine (80%) for MLHU employees since the Employee Immunization program was launched.

With the introduction of a hybrid work model at MLHU, the OHS team supported the Return to Office efforts through the creation of process documents, a business processes SharePoint page with employee resources, and employee communications. A focus on ergonomics was also an important part of return to office, which included a lighting assessment and ergonomic reviews.

The trend of increased vitriol, harassment and aspects of workplace violence continued from 2021 into 2022, resulting in an increase in workplace violence-related employee incident reports including reports of verbal aggression, harassment, and threats of physical violence. Occupational Health and Safety provided support to staff, including but not limited to formal safety planning, security enhancements in Strathroy, consultation, and the development of a robust training program which includes both strategies for verbal intervention and physical disengagement. De-escalation training developed by the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) will be a primary focus in 2023.

Next Steps

The Occupational Health and Safety program at the MLHU and the work of the JOHSC continue to make improvements for the health and safety of all employees through awareness campaigns, ongoing training opportunities, and ensuring legislative compliance. Continued focus on policy review, employee education, infection control, workplace violence and employee wellness are anticipated over the course of 2023. The 2021 investment of an additional permanent full-time position in the Occupational Health and Safety Program has continued to allow for further integration and continuous quality improvement of occupational health, safety, and wellness at MLHU and continues to play an important role in the staff immunization program.

This report was prepared by the Human Resources Team, Healthy Organization Division.

Handwritten signature of Emily Williams in cursive script.

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

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