

Understanding the Ontario Health and Safety System: Health and Safety Associations – Paper 2

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Occupational health and safety in Ontario is protected by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* and enforced by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD)¹. The main purpose of the OHSA is to protect workers from health and safety hazards by establishing rights and duties for all workplace parties. The MLTSD¹ works with six Health and Safety Associations (HSAs)², the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)³, and other partner institutions, including the Centre of Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (CRE-MSD)⁴ to form the Ontario Health and Safety

System. This paper will outline the roles of each of the six Health and Safety Associations including a brief description of their services and the sectors they support. The other Health & Safety System Partners are described in separate papers in this series (see [Paper 1 – Government Bodies](#) and [Paper 3 – Research Centres](#)).

Key Messages

- There are six Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) within the Ontario Health and Safety System.
- HSAs provide workers in all sectors with access to occupational health and safety professionals, training, and resources.

Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA)⁵

Sectors: Construction, Electrical and Utilities, Transportation, and Natural Gas

At a Glance: Created as an amalgamation of the Construction Safety Association of Ontario, the Electrical and Utilities Safety Association of Ontario, and the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario, IHSA⁵ focuses on the health and safety of workers who perform high-risk tasks. IHSA's⁵ goal is to improve the lives of workers in the construction, transportation, and electrical and utilities sectors by providing resources and training to prevent workplace incidents, injuries, illnesses, and fatalities. IHSA⁵ helps employers and workers to identify and evaluate health and safety hazards and develop strategies to control and eliminate them. Recognized as designated trainers and consultants, IHSA⁵ provides consulting, training, and information that meets current regulatory requirements and compliance standards.

Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA)⁶

Sectors: Health/Community Care, Education/Culture, Municipal/Provincial Government, and Emergency Services

At a Glance: PSHSA⁶ was created as an amalgamation of the Education Safety Association of Ontario, the Municipal Health and Safety Association, and the Ontario Safety Association for Community and Healthcare. PSHSA⁶ has an “anywhere learning” vision providing access to health and safety training and consulting solutions regardless of location in Ontario. PSHSA⁶ offers services in a variety of formats including online and in-person with a focus on creating safe environments and healthy workers. When starting service with PSHSA⁶, a preliminary assessment is conducted to determine where the workplace's program needs to be amended and the solutions that need to be implemented. In addition to Schedule 1 WSIB³ firms, PSHSA⁶ works with many Schedule 2 WSIB³ firms, where the employers are responsible for costs associated with health and safety claims. As a result of this, PSHSA⁶ focuses on services to meet and assist these companies' unique needs including auditing, training, and specialized courses.

Workplace Safety North (WSN)⁷

Sectors: Forestry, Mining and Aggregates, and Pulp and Paper

At a Glance: WSN⁷ comprises the former Mines and Aggregates Safety and Health Association, the Ontario Forestry Safe Workplace Association, the Ontario Mine Rescue, and the Pulp and Paper Health and Safety Association. Despite its name, WSN⁷ services are available to all workers in Ontario who work in these industries. WSN⁷ focuses on vulnerable worker populations including First Nations, new, young, and aging workers, as well as workers in underserved workplaces in Northern Ontario. WSN's⁷ goal is to address what makes workers susceptible to injury in order that health and safety

services can provide targeted improvements. WSN⁷ offers mandatory and optional training for workers and employers, as well as certification programs and other safety programs, including auditing and consulting.

Workplace Safety and Prevention Services (WSPS)⁸

Sectors: Manufacturing, Agricultural, and Service

At a Glance: The largest of the Health and Safety Associations in Ontario, WSPS⁸ comprises the former Farm Safety Association, the Industrial Accident Prevention Association, and the Ontario Service Safety Alliance. WSPS⁸ supports workplaces with federal and provincial health and safety regulatory requirements. Offering consulting, training, guidance, and resources, WSPS⁸ protects Ontario businesses and workers. WSPS⁸ has a team of safety professionals with diverse areas of specialization including ergonomics, mental harm prevention, managed systems, occupational hygiene, warehousing and racking, and machine safety.

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)⁹

Sectors: All sectors

At a Glance: OHCOW⁹ has seven occupational health clinics in six geographic areas across Ontario. These clinics are staffed by an inter-disciplinary team of nurses, hygienists, ergonomists, researchers, client service coordinators, and contracted physicians specializing in occupational health. The goal of these clinics is to identify and prevent work-related injuries and illnesses. The services are free, and a self-referral can be made by anyone with an occupational disease, injury or illness. An assessment is conducted to determine if there is a work-related condition. OHCOW⁹ clinics operate with a public health oriented clinical approach. When a work-related condition is identified, further steps may be taken to investigate the working conditions to determine if there is a risk for other injuries, illness or disease. OHCOW⁹ clinics do not provide acute treatment or ongoing medical care, nor do they address non-work-related problems and disability claims. OHCOW⁹ teams also provide workplace prevention consultation services to worker groups and Joint Health and Safety Committees. At times, when a cluster of occupational health conditions emerges, OHCOW⁹ will respond to the cluster with community clinics and other collective System interventions, in partnership with unions and other organizations in the Health and Safety System.

Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC)¹⁰

Sectors: All Sectors

At a Glance: The WHSC¹⁰ is a training centre for businesses of any size and for all sectors in Ontario. The WHSC¹⁰ was created to ensure both workers and employers have knowledge of their legal obligations outlined by the OHSA. WHSC¹⁰ provides hazard-based training where workers and employers can learn to identify and control work-related hazards and prevent injury. Affordable training services are provided online, offsite, and onsite anywhere in Ontario¹¹. Employers can request a quote for an onsite training session specific to their workplace needs and schedule. The WHSC¹⁰ provides a training compliance audit for employers to ensure the working environment passes all safety requirements as outlined by the OHSA. A detailed confidential audit report identifying training required by law is provided, placing no obligation on the business.

Conclusion

The Ontario Health and Safety System has seen many changes over the years including the amalgamation of associations into sector specific HSAs. These HSAs are in place to assist workplaces in creating safe and healthy work environments by providing such services as education, training, resources, and audits. This paper presents initial information to assist both employers and workers to understand the

Implications for the Prevention of MSD

- Health and Safety Associations increase education and awareness of occupational health and safety in the workplace.
- Resources and services are directed at workplace injury prevention, available to businesses of all sizes and types in Ontario.
- Workplace-specific training is provided ensuring that each location receives the solutions that they need to protect their workers from MSD.

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Resource papers are available online at:

www.cre-msd.uwaterloo.ca



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contributions of each HSA. While the examples included in this paper present a snapshot of the services offered by the HSAs, they do not cover the full extent of their services. By engaging with these HSAs and their expert consultants, employers and workers can begin to recognize and understand where injuries are occurring and what training and resources can assist with addressing the prevention and ultimately the elimination of these injuries.

References

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