

## **COPING DURING A STRIKE**

### ***A Guide for Managers***

#### **THE ISSUES:**

During a strike situation, those staff who are required to provide client care through direct or indirect service, face many issues and challenges. How each person sees and responds to the issues will depend on things such as personal experience and individual coping style.

Being aware of the issues that you may face and recognizing ways in which they can affect you enables you to be prepared.

#### **Anxiety and Fear of the Unknown**

Typically, during a strike non-unionized, managerial and excluded staff are re-deployed to cover the essential services required to provide client care. To that end we may find ourselves working in areas that are unfamiliar or require us to learn new skills in short order.

While some people may embrace the opportunity to face new challenges, most feel some degree of anxiety related to fear of the unknown. “Butterflies in the stomach”, increased heart rate, perspiration and fatigue are all symptoms that can signal anxious feelings.

#### **Anger, Frustration and Resentment**

The disruption in our daily work lives, within in our families and toward our clients can cause us to develop feelings of anger, frustration and resentment. If these feelings go unrecognized and are ignored, once the strike is over, they can severely damage working relationships.

#### **Caught in the Middle**

Unionized staff, designated as essential services providers may find themselves with mixed feelings and a sense of “being caught in the middle” between their colleagues on the picket line and the clients requiring their special care. This situation can evoke intense feelings similar to those mentioned above.

#### **Fatigue**

The longer the strike situation lasts, the greater the likelihood of increasing physical and mental fatigue. Becoming physically worn out can impact on us mentally. Situations of conflict, strained relationships and feelings of increased vulnerability and powerlessness can surface at this time.

### **Demands Between Work and Home**

Because a strike situation places different demands on our time, knowledge and skills, there is bound to be a spillover effect in our personal lives. Routines will be disrupted and changes will require new arrangements; particularly with regard to childcare.

### **Focus on Mental Health**

Positive mental health is directly linked to your physical health. Taking care of your body by eating well, exercising and getting enough rest are the key strategies for weathering the stressful effects of a strike situation.

### **Spirit of Caring**

Despite all the negative feelings and challenges to our physical well-being, the fact remains that our clients require safe care. It is this very point that draws us together, energizes us and keeps us focused on why we are here and what we are doing. It has been reported from other health care organizations, that a strong spirit of community, sense of purpose and camaraderie frequently develop among staff, which can create a positive environment despite the difficulties created during a strike.

## **RESOURCES AND SUPPORT**

There are numerous resources available in the form of people, pamphlets, and books that can assist you in balancing the demands that you will face.

The following handouts were prepared by your Employee Assistance Program:

- **Guidelines for Key Personnel During a Strike**
- **Tips for Positive Thinking**
- **Seven Steps to Healthy Anger Release**
- **Coping Skills: Taking Care During a Strike**

<p>The EFAP is available to help and can be reached by calling 1-800-461-5558</p>
---