

ASW Steering Committee Meeting Minutes – Jan. 29, 2019

Phone Meeting

Attending: Shari Featherstone, Tammy Sowinski, Crystal Volansky, Miranda Burdock, Susan Trower, Barbara Ross, Diana Hillocks

1. Approval of Nov. 27, 2018 meeting minutes – minutes were pre-circulated to the group with no amendments brought forward.
2. Old Business
 - a. Data Analysis Update: Shari reported there is not a lot to report regarding the data analysis tool for SD10 and other SDS districts. As indicated last meeting, Craig is working on a resolution to errors and inconsistencies that arise in support staff data due to absence data formats that don't match the position FTE data. While it's impossible to achieve 100% accuracy with the data, it's important to minimize errors and fully understand the source.

Shari further noted that provincially, Morneau has largely completed a data analysis tool for the four contracted districts. Kathy Wright from BCPSEA indicated she is expecting to know by mid-February what the cost to each district will be, and from there will provide Morneau with a prioritized list of districts who wish to contract with Morneau for a data analysis tool. Shari will provide this pricing information to districts for consideration when it's available.

Action Item: Shari will continue to work with Craig and the districts with the goal of adapting the analysis tool to other SD's data. She will also provide cost information when it's available, for the Morneau data tool option.

- b. Planning Guide: Shari reminded the group of the Employee and Workplace Health Planning Tool that was previously provided to all. She encouraged districts to review it and identify feasible goals that can be worked on right now; Shari is available to discuss and assist with planning, preparation of materials and presentation as needed.

Action Item: Districts are encouraged to review the guide, identify priorities and contact Shari to discuss next steps.

3. New Business:
 - a. Attendance Support Without Aggregate Data Analysis: Shari emphasized that the principles of supporting employees to attend work regularly can still be implemented despite not having absence analytics that identify the top percentile employees. She explained that having supportive conversations with any employee who presents with attendance or other behavioural concerns is good management practise.

She noted that she is working with several districts who don't currently have data analysis in place, regarding employees whose absences are of concern. These situations present opportunities to conduct informal supportive conversations with the employee, and to prepare and issue an Attendance Support package (including an adapted letter, calendar, EFAP information, Wellness Directory etc) from existing templates.

Susan commented that even though SD53 is performing absence data analysis regularly, there has been occasion to connect with an employee whose absences demonstrated that although she was not within the top 95th percentile, there were times during the year when it appeared she struggled to attend work regularly. Shari agreed this is a proactive approach that may prevent a worsening of the attendance issue, and provide and encourage some needed support for the employee.

- b. Disability Management: Shari prompted the group that this is a good time of year to review all full and partial medical/sick leaves, as well as existing accommodations so that appropriate next steps can be planned for those files with incomplete information and medical.

This practise is timely as districts head into 2019-20 staffing processes. Understanding current and prognostic medical status re: recovery and RTW timeline etc, is helpful information for district planning/staffing. It also ensures employees and medical leaves/accommodations aren't falling through the cracks, particularly those that are not being followed up and reported back by 3rd party insurers (such as Great West Life, Desjardins and WSBC).

As previously discussed, partial medical leaves are a form of workplace accommodation. After a period of several years and with sufficient process and medical documentation (to indicate the medical condition is considered permanent), districts may have reached the point where an ongoing partial medical leave is no longer the correct form of accommodation.

Action Item: Districts are encouraged review all partial/full medical leaves and accommodations, and contact Shari as needed to discuss documentation and next steps. There is also a leave tracking template available on request.

- c. Wellness Program: Shari encouraged all districts to consider steps that can be taken to increase awareness about wellness. She commented that there are many informal, free and low-cost ways to promote wellness that districts can implement easily. She reminded the group that EFAP providers issue monthly newsletters that can then be forwarded by the district to each employee. Susan confirmed this is what she has been doing for SD53, with positive and appreciative feedback from employees. Shari noted that employees are more likely to read an email from their employer than from an EFAP provider. Tammy commented that it is a good thing

for employees to associate wellness with their employer so that they know who to contact when in need. Tammy also noted that promoting wellness and establishing a wellness presence during a time of contract negotiations is timely and could help alleviate stress for some employees.

It was also noted that establishing a wellness presence on the district website is an important element and provides a consistent area to post all information relating to wellness. Districts were encouraged to ensure this is in place.

Susan further commented that SD53 ordered a number of “Bounce Back” pamphlets and have distributed them to each school as resources. [Bounce Back](#) is a well-respected, free program for individuals experiencing mild to moderate depression or anxiety.

Shari advised she will forward a one page document outlining a more formal and objective approach to a Wellness program. Districts that have or are considering allocating funds towards Wellness programming should think carefully about incorporating structure and objective data when making Wellness spending decisions.

Action Item: Shari will forward the document “Five Steps to Building a Wellness Program” to all committee members. Districts are encouraged to ensure their district website has a designated wellness page or section, and contact Shari to discuss other options.

4. Round Table: None

5. Next meeting date: Feb. 26, 2019 @ 11:30 am. A meeting invite will be emailed.