



Reduce harmful work stressors

Improve job quality and health

Work Stress Solutions

Improving rewards & benefits

When rewards do not match the required effort or responsibility of a job, this is a major stressor (“[effort-reward imbalance](#)”) which increases your risk of mental and physical health problems—even heart disease and thinking about suicide. Fair pay and living wages, recognition, respect, support and opportunity for advancement are important forms of “rewards.” Access to paid time off when sick or to take care of ill family members, and adequate health insurance and retirement benefits are also essential rewards for the health of working people.

I. Workplace Policies & Practices

These recommendations or resources provide ideas for increasing rewards and decreasing effort-reward imbalance. They may require greater resources from organizations (pay increases, benefits); however there are also practical ideas that can be implemented more affordably.

Earnings and Benefits

- **PAY LIVING/FAIR WAGES** - all workers deserve at least a “living wage.” (See the MIT [living wage calculator](#) based on your region’s cost of living.)
- **CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING A “PARITY POLICY”** - extend the same pay and benefits to non-standard/part-time employees as offered to permanent or full-time workers.

- **INCLUDE NON-STANDARD EMPLOYEES** (including part-time) in workplace health and safety training programs, wellness programs and employee assistance programs.
- **EXPAND BENEFITS** and programs to assist with managing personal and caregiving needs.
- **PROVIDE** vacation or [sick leave pool](#) programs to help employees during hardship.

Promotion/Advancement/Acknowledgment

- **ENSURE APPROPRIATE ADVANCEMENT** and growth opportunities for all employees.
- **TRANSPARENT PROMOTION** & seniority opportunities, applied fairly according to DEI principles.
- **ACKNOWLEDGE** work achievements on a regular basis, especially acknowledgment of work in meetings with supervisors.

Job insecurity

- **PROVIDE STABLE SCHEDULING**, and advance notice of rosters and schedule changes.
- **PAID TIME FOR ON-CALL SCHEDULING.**
- **ELIMINATE TOXIC, COMPETITIVE PERFORMANCE METRICS** that threaten layoffs to the bottom performers, heightening stress from job insecurity and potentially lowering performance of all.

Restructuring/Layoffs (address protections, mitigation during restructuring/layoffs):

- **THE KEY APPROACH** - consider **alternatives to layoffs** including temporary or long-term working-time reductions or furloughs (temporary lay offs).
- **COMMUNICATE EARLY** with employees, their representatives, and other local stakeholders (e.g. communities, local authorities).
- **INSTITUTE EMPLOYEE SKILL DEVELOPMENT** and job retraining or cross-training.

- **HELP WITH JOB-SEARCH**, including paid time off to search for jobs.
- **OFFER MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING** to survivors of layoffs.
- **CLOSELY EVALUATE WORKLOADS** after layoffs to ensure employees are not performing the jobs of two or more people.

II. Healthy Work Strategies Case Studies or Resources

- [Changing workplace policies and procedures reduced blood pressure among Quebec, Canada white-collar workers](#)
- [Increasing job control and reducing other job stressors among call center workers in England](#)

III. Making Changes Beyond the Workplace

Laws and regulations (city, state, or national) are widely-used strategies by employers, unions or worker advocacy groups to improve “rewards and benefits” including fair pay (living wages), fair and stable scheduling, and adequate benefits.

- [Paid Sick Day Statutes](#)
- [State Paid Family Leave Laws](#)
- [Work scheduling laws contribute to more stable employment](#)