

## **HOW TO CREATE A HAPPY, HEALTHY AND SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

In a great economy with plenty of jobs available and competition from other companies greater than ever, the field of good (attendant care) workers is shrinking quickly. Retention of good workers is key. Successful companies strive to provide their employees with a work environment that is healthy, safe and happy, because they know that there are two major factors that play a role in their company's success – the work environment and employee management. That focus is more important now than ever before.

At GSIL, we strive to make the corporate offices a workplace that is safe, healthy and happy. Happiness and being content is important because that is one of the primary factors that improves retention of employees. Employees who are happy and content in their positions stay in those positions much longer than employees who are not happy in their positions. Stressful, negative work environments decrease productivity and increase employee turnover.

In the business of a consumer directed program, the consumer's home is the workplace, and the consumer is the manager, and both play a vital role in determining the success of their employee's retention.

In a consumer directed program, again, the work environment is the home, yet many forget to think of it as such because it is their personal living space. The thought of their home as a workplace for someone else becomes overlooked. If you have paid employees (personal care workers) coming into your home to provide you with services, your home is their workplace. Making your home a safe, healthy, happy workplace will benefit everyone involved in your care.

So how does someone create a happy, healthy and safe work environment?

### **PROVIDING A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

We talk a lot about safety in the home, so you are most likely well versed in what safety entails, but here are a few reminders:

- Fire extinguishers should be current (not expired) and easy to locate
- Exit plans should be reviewed on a regular bases and all exits should be free and clear of clutter
- Your address should be posted next to the phone or in a highly visible place should 911 need to be called
- Do not overload outlets. Electrical cords should not be frayed. Keep electric heaters free of clutter.
- In the winter, pathways leading to your home should be shoveled and salted/sanded.
- Gloves must be provided to your workers.
- Let your workers know where working flashlights, first aid kits, matches or any other items needed in an emergent situation might be located.

### **PROVIDING A HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT**

A non-smoking environment is now the acceptable way to go with almost every workplace in the country. Those companies who allow smoking, have a designated smoking area so that non-smokers do not have to be subjected to second hand smoke. If you are a smoker, please keep in mind the health and safety of your workers. Many workers do not smoke but continue to inhale second hand smoke because their consumers smoke. Smoking is an individual choice. A couple of recommendations for you if you are a consumer who smokes:

- Offer to not smoke when a non-smoking worker is present.
- Purchase an air purifier to help clean the air.
- If possible, smoke outdoors instead of inside.
- Hire workers who also smoke and are not so bothered by your smoke

- Smoke sticks to everything, so regular cleaning of windows, walls, floors and furniture will help with the odor.
- Check with non-smoking workers regularly to ask if they are doing ok with your environment

Cleanliness and clutter matter:

The benefits of a clean and clutter free workplace are good for both the employee and the consumer. A dirty, cluttered environment can attract mold, mildew and a number of undesirable creatures, like mice, cockroaches, bed bugs and more. Keeping your environment clean and clutter free will help keep unwanted creatures out. A clean and clutter free home also allows for more room/space to utilize in a productive manner as well as making it easier to find things when you need them! And best of all, a clean and clutter free home is a healthier and a safer environment to live and work in!

### **Providing A Positive, Happy Work Environment**

Providing a positive, happy work environment is the easiest way to retain your employees. In this growing economy where people now have many choices for employment, what person would want to go to a workplace that is stressful, negative and depressing much of the time? This does not mean that every day has got to be perfect, but if you can provide an atmosphere that is positive, rewarding and enjoyable most of the time, you will be one step ahead in retaining good workers.

- Keep communication open and positive. Try not to use negative words (or tone) on a regular basis. Some people use a negative tone and negative words on a regular basis without even realizing they are doing so because it is natural for them to do so. Listen to yourself when you communicate to your workers and use positive words and phrases and a positive tone whenever you can.
- Be kind! Use thank you and please as often as you can...these 2 simple words, when meant, are very powerful...but don't just say them to say them...say them and mean them!
- Be understanding – everyone has their share of issues and troubles, so be understanding and patient, but do not get taken advantage of...set limits and communicate those limits so your workers know what they are.
- Ask nicely instead of demanding something. Again, there are some folks who do not even realize they are demanding. Asking someone nicely to do something instead of barking out orders will always produce better results!
- Be the manager **you** would want to work for!

Providing your workers with a great work environment is one of the unspoken benefits you have to offer. A recent comment I heard from a worker sums it up nicely, "I love working for my consumer (in the consumers home) because she treats me with respect and always shows appreciation for the work I do". And I hear this from many attendant care workers...so again, a simple thank you speaks volumes. Lastly, keeping good workers safe, healthy and happy will not only help your workers, it will help you as well!