

Fostering a Safe & Healthy Workplace

In hospitals, long-term care homes and paramedic services, ensuring a safe and healthy working environment for the staff, physicians and volunteers is as important as the safe high quality care that is provided to patients and residents. Through their Mississippi River Health Alliance relationship, Almonte General Hospital and Carleton Place & District Memorial Hospital are working together to provide a safe workplace in the Hospitals, Fairview Manor and Lanark County Paramedic Service.

Dawn Shorten assumed the role of Integrated Director of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) in April. With 20 years of experience, she brings a wealth of knowledge to the job.

Occupational Health and Safety is about fostering a safe and healthy work environment. “I’ve always been interested in this topic and what we can do to be supportive. It is important to create an environment where people want to work,” notes Dawn.

In her role, Dawn is responsible for ensuring that both organizations are in compliance with the Ontario’s Occupational Health and Safety Act. The goal is to prevent the exposure of employees to potential health and/or safety hazards that could result in occupational illness or injury.

“I have two main roles,” explains Dawn. “The first is to monitor and ensure that all of the Act’s requirements are met to help prevent people getting hurt or sick at work. My second role focuses on case management and supporting staff who are off work or sick for other reasons. We want to ensure that they have the support and resources they need to get back to work.” Dawn works closely with the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees in both organizations, which are comprised of worker and staff representatives.

To help keep staff safe, extensive training is provided to support them. Online and in-person courses are

provided about topics such as personal protective equipment, workplace violence and falls prevention. Staff who work with patients and residents also learn about techniques such as gentle persuasion.

Staff at both AGH and CPDMH benefit from the new integrated role. Planning and programs are being aligned, bringing together the best practices from both sites and addressing any opportunities for improvement. Staff who work at both sites benefit from the consistency of having the same rules and practices in each location.

“There is a lot of staff satisfaction when you see programs working and people aren’t getting hurt. If you create a work environment where an employee knows you are looking after their best interest, that fosters trust,” sums up Dawn. “Everyone has a lot going on and when I can help an employee be successful, that is a great day for me!”