



Reduce harmful work stressors

Improve job quality and health

Work Stress Solutions

Reducing high job demands/workload

High job demands include a combination of an unreasonable workload, work pace and/or conflicting demands (often interrupted by demands from different sources making it more difficult to finish tasks). Combined with low job control or lack of job resources, it is known as “**job strain**”, a source of stress which can increase your risk for many mental health disorders, high blood pressure, musculoskeletal problems and cardiovascular disease.

I. Workplace Policies & Practices¹

These are recommendations and resources employers can implement to reduce job demands.

1. **REVISE JOB DESCRIPTIONS**, so that there are:
 - a. clear responsibilities
 - b. clear lines of reporting
 - c. reasonable workloads
 - d. a variety of tasks
2. **ASSESS & ENSURE ADEQUATE STAFFING** to carry out work tasks with reasonable workloads and distributed fairly.
3. **ALLOCATE WORK** assignments to prevent excessive demands, or try team-based projects so employees have backup in case of sickness or an emergency.

4. **ENSURE ADEQUATE REST BREAKS** (to use the bathroom, to take breaks from extreme heat, for breastfeeding) are built into workload expectations and schedules.
5. **PROVIDE ADEQUATE NOTIFICATION OF SCHEDULE OR HOUR CHANGES**; especially minimize mandatory overtime, and provide advance rostering of schedules.
6. **EVALUATE MEETINGS** for quantity and quality; remove unnecessary meetings.
7. **RESTRICT EMAIL RESPONSES** after hours and on weekends.
8. **ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION** to regulate demands:
 - a. planning work tasks carefully to agree on achievable deadlines, work pace, and workload;
 - b. scheduling regular 1-on-1 and/or team check-in's about workload, following safe communication guidelines, between supervisors and employees;
 - c. providing an anonymous way for employees to report specific workload issues.
9. **EARN EXTRA "RECOVERY DAYS"** after "crunch" periods, or monthly "flex" days or "mental health days."
10. **TRAIN AND EVALUATE** managers/supervisors on these tasks, and how to educate and support workers under their supervision.

¹Adapted from the [Job Stress Intervention Guide](#), Total Worker Health [Center for Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace](#), 2015

II. Healthy Work Strategies Case Studies and Resources

- [Changing workplace policies and procedures reduced blood pressure among Quebec, Canada white-collar workers](#)
- [Redesigning the jobs of postal workers in Uppsala, Sweden](#)
- [Reducing work stress and improving the mental health of hospital](#)

workers (Quebec, Canada)

- Action research intervention with urban bus drivers in Copenhagen, Denmark

III. Making Changes Beyond the Workplace

Laws and regulations are widely-used strategies for reducing sources of stress at work including **high job demands/workload**.

- Establishing minimum staffing levels through state laws reduces high job demands and ensures public safety.
- Minimizing mandatory overtime and ensuring adequate recovery time between long shifts.
- Establishing required rest breaks for use of bathrooms, breaks from extreme heat, or for breastfeeding.
- Laws prohibiting mandatory overtime for nurses
- Laws to improve nurse staffing levels in hospitals in the U.S.
- Bathroom access for bus drivers in the US and Canada