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### **Capacity-building for joint occupational health and safety committees in under-resourced non-acute healthcare organizations**

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Many healthcare organizations do not have occupational health and safety (OHS) departments, nor extra funding and resources for OHS. At these workplaces, the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees (JOHSCs) are often the main drivers of health and safety. Many of these JOHSCs face various challenges, from struggling to cope with OHS issues at their workplace to not meeting legal requirements.

Because JOHSCs have a duty under the legislation to identify situations that may be unhealthy or unsafe for workers and to advise employers on effective systems for responding to those situations, educating JOHSCs to carry out their functions is paramount. This program will therefore focus on primary injury prevention, specifically, on assisting JOHSCs to build their internal capacity to deal with OHS issues at the workplace. Some of these issues include ergonomics, violence prevention, indoor air quality, emergency preparedness and working alone. Other characteristics of the project include an emphasis on proactive primary prevention, flexibility and sustainability.

Six long-term care facilities and five home and community agencies agreed to participate in the pilot project. Eight strategies have been developed which will assist the JOHSCs to function effectively. The strategies are:

1. Ensure a properly established JOHSC according to the legislation
2. Identify safety champions who can drive the program
3. Partner with external resources
4. Participate in networking and information-sharing
5. Increase training
6. Complete a site-specific needs assessment
7. Create a plan to address needs
8. Evaluate initiatives implemented

Each of the eleven JOHSCs will be encouraged to progress through the strategies at its own pace. Our role as researchers and practitioners will be to facilitate this process and to encourage the JOHSCs to feel ownership over the program.