

## A MODEL RESOLUTION FOR WORKPLACES

# FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND WEIGHT-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

### A RESSOURCE TO HELP YOU GET THERE

Living environments have an influence on people's behaviour, quality of life, and well-being. As such, human relations in the workplace can contribute to personal development if they are based on benevolence, respect, and mutual aid. On the other side, they can be particularly harmful to health if they include negative stereotypes, devaluation of others, and discriminatory behavior.



**Considering the significant amount of time we spend at work every week, it is important to create a healthy, safe, and weight-inclusive work environment.**



## DID YOU KNOW?

Comments about weight, even when they are positive or well intentioned, perpetuate the cult of thinness by emphasizing appearance. This is why, instead, it is important to value a person's achievements, personality, efforts and qualities.

### A HARMFUL CULTURE OF THINNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

The cult of thinness is the harmful association of thinness with beauty, health and success. The resulting social pressure can lead to excessive preoccupation with weight or body dissatisfaction, which can negatively affect physical and mental health.

In March 2021, 59% of women and 45% of men reported **DISSATISFACTION WITH THEIR WEIGHT**<sup>1</sup>.

The diet industry takes advantage of people's concerns about weight or dissatisfaction with their body size by encouraging them to try a variety of weight control products and methods, which are not without risks for physical and mental health<sup>2</sup>.

### WHAT ABOUT WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAMS IN THE WORKPLACE?

Some workplaces hold contests or offer programs to encourage weight loss. This can take the form of spaces sharing to discuss weight loss methods, collective weighing sessions and prizes to win. While these activities may be well intentioned, they participate in the cult of thinness and can feed the fear of gaining weight or being judged for one's corpulence.

Instead, workplaces should offer initiatives that promote health and well-being, without focusing on weight or appearance.

Why not offer physical activity sessions and relaxation activities or invite employees to share a collective meal with homemade food? In addition, these types of activities are good opportunities to socialize with colleagues and motivate each other to adopt lifestyle habits that promote health and well-being..

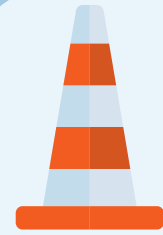
### FATPHOBIA IN THE WORKPLACE: A REALITY TO DECONSTRUCT

Fatphobia is a form of **stigma based on body size** that feeds on negative stereotypes and prejudices against fat people\*. Low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, increased risk of psychological distress, increased risk of developing eating disorders and barriers to the adoption of lifestyle habits conducive to health and well-being: these are all consequences that greatly affect the health and quality of life of people who are victims of fatphobia<sup>3,4,5</sup>



\* This term is used as a descriptive qualifier to designate size without pejorative connotation. We recognize, however, that some people may not be comfortable using it.

**Fatphobia is common and can manifest in the workplace in many different ways<sup>6</sup>:**



- **Inappropriate, even discriminatory attitudes or behaviors towards fat people**, whether amongst colleagues or by the employer.

**Nearly four out of ten Quebecers** say they have been **victims of inappropriate weight-related remarks or comments**. In 41% of cases, those responsible were colleagues or classmates<sup>7</sup>.

- **Discrimination in hiring based on stereotypes about weight.** Ingrained prejudices suggest that fat people are unhealthy, lazy, less competent, and have no willpower<sup>7,8</sup>.
- According to the International Labour Organization, people considered obese according to their body mass index (BMI) report having been **discriminated against because of their physical appearance four times more often** than people with a BMI considered normal<sup>9</sup>.
- Even once hired, these people do not always have the means to develop to their full potential since **workspaces, furniture or equipment are not always adapted and ergonomic to them**<sup>10,11</sup>.



**Everyone, regardless of body size, must benefit from a quality of life, comfort and a social environment free of fatphobia in the workplace. This is essential to the productivity and well-being of all employees.**

For a workplace to become healthier and more weight-inclusive, it is important to :

- to include fatphobia in the company's **anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies**;
- to offer a **safe and caring space** allowing anyone to express their needs (e.g., through the human resources department or a hiring questionnaire where specific needs in terms of equipment can be addressed);
- **to ergonomically adapt workspaces** according to the size and corpulence of each person (e.g., offer inclusive furniture with work chairs without armrests, adjustable and suitable for all weights)<sup>10</sup>.





## CHILDREN AND YOUTH LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

Schools, childcare services and summer camps, in addition to being work environments, are also important living environments. Considering these establishments' mission and the hours that children and youth spend there every day, it is important to ensure they offer inclusive and caring living environments.

Putting a lot of importance on appearance and weight causes children to worry about their image very early on. Therefore, if they regularly witness remarks or comments about weight coming from people around them, they risk reproducing them in their interactions with others. To promote a positive body image, it is important to ensure that children and youth's living environments are free of stigmatizing attitudes and behaviours concerning weight or appearance. It is also important to focus on their strengths, achievements and qualities, rather than on their appearance; and to value body diversity<sup>12</sup>.

## TAKE ACTION!

To encourage more workplaces to **implement concrete measures allowing everyone to flourish in a respectful, caring, and weight-inclusive environment**, a model resolution is included on the following page. Every workplace can use it or adapt it according to its specific needs.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Sondage Léger mené auprès de 1 601 Québécois.es du 18 au 27 mars 2021 pour l'Association pour la santé publique du Québec.
- <sup>2</sup> Association pour la santé publique du Québec. (2021). Produits, services et moyens amaigrissants - Portrait québécois de la publicité en ligne (p. 27).
- <sup>3</sup> Rubino F., Puhl RM., Cummings DE., et coll. (2020). Joint international consensus statement for ending stigma of obesity. *Nat Med* 26(4) : 485-497.
- <sup>4</sup> The Conversation. (2021). Grossophobie : un phénomène mondial aux conséquences néfastes pour tous.
- <sup>5</sup> Levy M. (2020). The Relationship between Weight Bias Internalization and Healthy and Unhealthy Weight Control Behaviours. Montréal (QC) : Concordia University.
- <sup>6</sup> Ravishly. (2017). Take The Cake: The 3 Levels Of Fatphobia.
- <sup>7</sup> Sondage Léger mené auprès de 1 500 Québécois.es du 18 au 27 mars 2021 pour l'Association pour la santé publique du Québec.
- <sup>8</sup> Levine, E. E., & Schweitzer, M. E. (2015). The affective and interpersonal consequences of obesity. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 127 : 66-84.
- <sup>9</sup> Organisation internationale du Travail. (2016). 9<sup>e</sup> édition du Baromètre du Défenseur des droits et de l'OIT sur la perception des discriminations dans l'emploi — « Le physique de l'emploi ».
- <sup>10</sup> Picard, A. (s. d.). Grossophobie au travail — Entrevue avec Edith Bernier | La ligne diagonale (N° 02).
- <sup>11</sup> Shaffer, M.-È. (2021). Plaidoyer contre la grossophobie dans les milieux de travail.
- <sup>12</sup> Équilibre. (s. d.). Trousse d'outils *Pour une image corporelle positive, agissons de la même façon avec les filles et les garçons*.

For other resources, check out the complete toolkit!



## MODEL RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION #

### FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND WEIGHT-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

**WHEREAS** the workplace is an important living environment that greatly influences quality of life and well-being;

**WHEREAS** the culture of thinness is deeply anchored in society, including in the workplace, and it can lead to excessive preoccupation with weight and body dissatisfaction;

**WHEREAS** fatphobia in all of its forms has negative consequences on the physical and mental health of its victims;

**WHEREAS** everyone deserves respect and should not be subjected to inappropriate or discriminatory behavior with regard to their weight or appearance in their workplace;

**WHEREAS the fact that, in order** to develop a person's full potential and ensure their productivity, a workspace adapted to their needs in terms of accessibility and ergonomics is necessary.

IT IS MOVED BY \_\_\_\_\_, SECONDED BY \_\_\_\_\_  
AND UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED OR RESOLVED BY A MAJORITY THAT:

\_\_\_\_\_ commits to adopt the following measures to ensure a respectful, caring and weight-inclusive living environment :

**1** Include the notion of fatphobia in its anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies.

**2** Encourage all employees, regardless of body size, to express their needs by offering a safe and caring listening space

**3** Offer inclusive workspaces and furniture that are and adapted to everyone's corpulence

**4** Have no tolerance for discriminatory comments or remarks regarding anyone's weight or appearance

**5** Ban weight loss programs from the workplace

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