

Testing the *Joint Health and Safety Committee Assessment Tool* in the Education Sector

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Joint health and safety committees (JHSCs) are worker-management advisory bodies that identify and help solve potential or existing workplace health and safety concerns. In Ontario, most workplaces with twenty or more workers are required by law to have a JHSC.

Issue: CREOD developed a tool to assess JHSC effectiveness with the ultimate goal of maximizing worker and workplace health and safety. The tool is a self-assessment tool designed to help JHSC members collectively “diagnose” various aspects of the key functions and activities of their own JHSC. This tool was previously tested in the healthcare sector.

Methods: Building on the successful results of testing in the healthcare sector, we assessed the feasibility and usability of the tool in the education sector. In total, 48 management, worker and resource members from three multi-workplace JHSCs across three Ontario school boards participated.

Participants used the tool to assess their own JHSC in three different ways. First, members used the tool to individually assess their JHSC (stage 1). A week later, each JHSC used the tool to work towards a consensus agreement of both the current and desired state of their JHSC (stage 2). Finally, a week after that, individual members used the tool to reflect on what they learned as a group, and had the opportunity to change their initial responses (stage 3). Usability was assessed at Stages 1 and 3. The JHSC meetings were observed and audio recorded by members of the study team.

Implications (see findings on right): The JHSC Assessment Tool is useful in the education sector as well as the healthcare sector. Changes to the tool’s wording would make it more relevant for multi-workplace JHSCs.

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Findings:

How easy was the tool to use?

- Participants rated the tool’s ease of use at least 3.4/5 across all twelve items of the tool
- The tool was as easy to use in the first stage as it was at the end of the evaluation process; participants gave the tool about the same “ease of use” score in stages 1 and 3
- Participants told us that certain items of the tool could be reworded to make it more relevant for multi-workplace JHSCs

How effective was the tool?

- The group stage (stage 2) didn’t affect participants’ individual evaluations of their committees; the responses stayed about the same between stages 1 and 3

How much time did it take?

- On average, it took committees about one hour to assess the effectiveness of their JHSC using the tool

Could the groups reach consensus?

- Committees reached consensus on 93% of items
- Committees reached a consensus on their top three improvement priorities, most of which pertained to:
 - Communication
 - Increasing member participation
 - Promoting the role of the JHSC