

Health promotion in Swedish Armed Forces

- a salutogenic strategy for good health and high performance

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Introduction

Health promotion (WHO definition): *“The process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health and thereby enabling people lead an active productive life towards wellbeing and quality of life”*

Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) are skilled and well organized for handling risks of illness and injuries related to work. However, it is unclear what health promotion contents, responsibility and skills needed. In particular there is a confusion of different concepts and ideas in the governing documents of the organization.

The project presented below proposes a strategy and implementation plan for developing the process of health promotion within the organization. The final purpose is to support the SAF to fulfil strategic goals.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a plan for health promotion in SAF that contributes to the fulfilment of documented strategic goals.



Methods

The work was organized as a project ordered by the Commander of the Training and Procurement Directorate. The project members were to represent different perspectives of health: Health Care, Human Resource, Sports and Fitness, Leadership and Military commanders, led by a project manager. Supervising the project manager was a steering group consisting of commanders from units involved in the project. Also, a network for references was set up, including unit commanders from the three different branches of the SAF, the manager of the Human Resources Centre, the Chief of staff of the Nordic Battle Group, the Head of the Department of Work Environment and union representatives.

The project utilized a learning process facilitated by the project manager. A literary review was undertaken to elucidate research done in the field, which contributed to the knowledge and experiences discussed by the project. The heterogenic approach was used in order to achieve a holistic and creative health promotion program adapted to the specific organization and culture of SAF.

The process was structured by working through the following objectives:

- Analyse the strategic documents to identify activities and processes for health promotion

- Find joint definitions for the SAF within the health field
- Identify health promotion actors within the organization
- Describe benefits from health promotion for the Training and Procurement Directorate and the Operations Directorate
- Suggest and identify methods for evaluation of impact and outcome of the suggested program
- Describe and identify structure and guidelines
- Suggest a training program to assure required competence

Results



The model above is illustrating results achieved according to the objectives presented. The white areas are work still needed to reach the goal of an implemented SAF health promotion program.

In summary, the following fundamental factors are needed to continue working towards a fully implemented health promotion program:

Platform (Predisposition)

- The spoken will of the strategic management of the Armed Forces
- Support in the governing strategic documents

Competence

- Health specialist in a strategic position
- Skilled commanders and managers throughout every level
- Health promotion specialists in cooperation

Goal-orientation

- Fulfillment of the operation tasks

- Strategy- resources - program components

Human development process - the key factors

Participation, enabling, process, shared responsibility

Goal-oriented activities with impact on key operations

• Goal fulfilment

- Unit commander owns the task



Healthcoordinator = link between unit commander and the specialists

• Strategy – resources / competence – program components

- Healthcoordinator responsible for guiding the group of specialists

Conclusions

The key factors of the results are:

- The process of health promotion is to be owned by the SAF commanders and managers. Increased awareness of the impact of health promotion to achieve set goals is necessary. They also need increased competence of methods to manage these human processes.
- The process needs structure, goal-orientation and evaluation methods for following process as well as results.
- The health promotion program - with a clear salutogenic approach - is to be included in the SAF governing documents and guidelines.

When implemented, the proposed strategy and program, is to be a support for commanders and managers to promote good health as well as high performance.

References

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