

MOEL to implement measures to manage horse care workers' depressive symptoms

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The Ministry of Employment and Labor (Minister Kim Young-joo) plans to actively implement a mental stress management program for horse care workers through Workers Health Centers as it has been found that such workers exhibit high levels of depression.

※ The Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency (KOSHA) conducted a survey on depression levels in horse care workers between Aug. 17 and Sept. 2. The results show that of 351 horse care workers who responded to the survey, 125 or 36% belong to the high-risk group.

In particular, for horse care workers of the Korea Racing Authority's Busan-Gyeongnam Horse Racing Park who reported trauma and depressive symptoms caused by their co-workers' suicides, MOEL will implement a trauma and job stress management program until the end of 2018.

Through the program, the high-risk group (61 workers) will be provided with medical care and treatment services at the Pusan National University Yangsan Hospital, and workers with mild symptoms will be able to receive continuous counseling at Workers Health Centers.

Meanwhile, MOEL's Northern Busan District Office asked for understanding and cooperation from the Korea Racing Authority (KRA), trainers associations, trade unions, etc., so that horse care workers can feel free to participate in the management program.

Moreover, MOEL advised and recommended KRA to set up a job stress prevention and management system (covering depression) at the national level according to KOSHA's guidelines* in order to protect the mental health of horse care workers in Seoul (Gwacheon) and Jeju.

* The guidelines include adopting the principle of actively supporting job stress prevention activities, setting up a dedicated implementation unit, identifying high-risk workers and establishing and implementing improvement measures.

Employment and Labor Minister Kim Young-joo emphasized, "KRA should pay attention to and put their efforts into protecting the health of workers in the horse racing industry as well as ensuring their employment security."

She added, "MOEL will make active efforts to protect the working conditions and health of horse racing workers. For example, we will thoroughly check whether KRA complies with recommendations, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs."