Impairment and Mental Health in the Workplace

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Defining the Issue

- What is mental health?

- What is mental illness?

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Common Misconceptions

- Treatment doesn't work for mental illness
- People with mental health disorders just need to "snap out of it" and they'll be fine
- Employees can and should leave their personal problems at the door
- Mental health doesn't impact the workplace

Mental Health Impacts the Workplace

- The bottom line

- Employee wellbeing

- Workplace culture

Supporting mental health in the workplace increases productivity, decreases cost, and contributes to the wellbeing of the community at large.

Workplace Impacts Mental Health

Key factors include:

- Workload (both excessive and insufficient work)*

- Role ambiguity or conflict*

- Conflicting home and work demands*

*commonly reported during the COVID-19 pandemic

Mental Health in the Workplace

Workplace Impacts Mental Health

Other factors include:

- Lack of participation and control in the workplace

- Monotonous or unpleasant tasks

- Lack of recognition at work

- Inequity

- Poor interpersonal relationships

- Poor working conditions

- Poor leadership and communication

- Uncomfortable physical working conditions

- Fatigue at work

Construction and Mental Health

- At least 20% of construction workers report struggling with mental health issues

- Construction and extraction industries have the second highest rate of suicide; for men aged 25 to 54, suicide is the second biggest cause of death

- Many risk factors lead to these increased rates of mental health issues and suicide

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Mental Health and COVID-19

During late June, 40% of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance use*
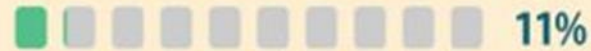
ANXIETY/DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS — 31%

TRAUMA/STRESSOR-RELATED DISORDER SYMPTOMS — 26%

STARTED OR INCREASED SUBSTANCE USE — 13%

SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED SUICIDE† — 11%

*Based on a survey of U.S. adults aged ≥18 years during June 24-30, 2020
†In the 30 days prior to survey

For stress and coping strategies: **bit.ly/dailylifecoping**

CDC.GOV   bit.ly/MMWR81320   MMWR

Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020

Mental Health and COVID-19

- Economic vulnerability and job loss

- Increases in overdose fatalities

- Impacts of grief and trauma

- Capacity of treatment and recovery systems

Signs and Symptoms

- Mental and physical fatigue

- Difficulty staying focused

- More easily frustrated

- Arguing more with family and friends

- Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely or worried

- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns

- Increased anxiety

Mental Health and Safety Impacts

- Substance use

- Fatigue

- Risk recognition

- Chronic stress

For Employers

- Strengthen workplace prevention interventions

- Increase treatment accessibility

- All play a role:
    - Leadership and supervisors
    - Human resources
    - Employees

For Leadership

- Provide training and learning opportunities

- Communicate

- Connect

- Encourage employee-led resource and support groups

For Leadership

- Set the tone – embody workplace culture

- Increase access to care

- Enable balance

- Celebrate and recognize

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For Human Resources

- Increase quality of, access to, and utilization of EAP use

- Ensure benefits cover screenings and treatment

- Review PTO policies

HR Should Address…

- Flexibility in scheduling / PTO / leave policies

- Bereavement policy questions

- Benefits questions about mental health

- Mental health community resources

- Financial questions in event of leave:

    - Short notice absence flexibility / LOA flexibility

    - Requests for cash advance / 401k hardship provisions

How to Protect the Mental Health of Your Employees During COVID-19

Employee Assistance Programs

- Consultations, programs and services to provide tools, guidance, and **options for employers** to deal with employee and productivity issues

- Consultations, programs and services to provide tools, guidance, and **options for employees** to resolve personal concerns that may affect job performance, health, and/or well-being

EA is not just counseling. The key is providing consultation, options, and solutions.

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EAPs Should Provide Resources For…

- Substance use

- Mental health

- Housing instability

- Food insecurity

- Domestic violence

- Legal questions

- Financial assistance and planning

- Workplace consultations for leadership and supervisors

How to Protect the Mental Health of Your Employees During COVID-19

A Good EAP Should…

- Offer licensed clinicians delivering individualized services

- Average multiple sessions of individual consulting

- Go beyond assessment and immediate referral to health insurance

- Avoid online "self-service" options

- Provide reports on number and types of problems seen and volume of services provided

- Be a proactive tool for the organization

How to Protect the Mental Health of Your Employees During COVID-19

Increasing EAP Utilization

- Communicate the same message, multiple times, on multiple mediums

- Don't assume employees will remember how to access

- Reassure that no information will be reported back to anyone at the organization

- A proactive EAP will provide support and resources without being asked or waiting for employee engagement

COVID-Related Questions

HR and EAPs should be able to address these COVID-specific questions:

- Exposure to others that might come home with me
- FMLA – household compositions may have changed
- Concerns about testing / disclosing PHI / quarantines
- "Must-return" vs voluntary return
- Transportation assistance options

For H&S Staff and Supervisors

- Communicate!

- Empathy and personal support

- Lead by example

- Encourage PTO use

- Know signs and symptoms – what happens when someone is experiencing mental health distress?

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For H&S Staff and Supervisors

- Take advantage of company resources and trainings

- Share and facilitate access to support and resources

- Promote mindfulness and stress management strategies

- Encourage "non-work" team activities

For Employees

- Take advantage of resources

- Stay connected and informed

- Establish a work-life balance

- Know signs and symptoms

- Adopt healthy behaviors

- Reach out for support

Do Employees Feel Safe and Supported?

Building a Safe, Resilient Culture

- Empowerment

- Purpose

- Trust

- Accountability

- Building resiliency into each workplace process, program, and policy leads to a more resilient workforce

What is Stigma?

Defining stigma:

- Public stigma

- Structural stigma

- Self-stigma

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Stigma and Mental Health

Stigma can have several impacts on a person's experience with mental health distress or mental illness, including:

- Waiting to seek needed treatment or support

- Not acknowledging an issue to self or others

Addressing Stigma When at Work

- Start at the top

- Educate and inform; challenge misconceptions and stereotypes

- Speak with dignity and respect when discussing mental health

- Support your co-workers

- Openly promote services

Addressing Stigma When at Work

- See the whole person

- Be proactive – if someone is struggling, connect them to resources early

- Openly discuss mental health and mental illness in the workplace

- Prioritize physical and mental health on the same level

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Addressing Stigma Yourself

- Speak out when you hear something stigmatizing

- Listen to people living with mental illness when they share their story

- Support your family and friends

- Speak with dignity and respect

- Learn the facts

In Closing…

- Employee mental health impacts the workplace – workplace finances, safety and culture

- The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted and will continue to impact employee mental health

- Addressing mental health in the workplace requires a team effort from the top down – and also from the bottom up

In Closing…

- Education and awareness are critical, as is increasing access to treatment and building robust policies

- Building a resilient workforce can buffer a workplace and strengthen its employees mental wellbeing

- Stigma reduction efforts are essential for success

If nothing else, compassion and communication can change someone's life.

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Q&A

Thank you!