

Dealing with Mental Illness in the Workplace

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Mental Health: Overview



Mental Health Overview: What is Mental Health?

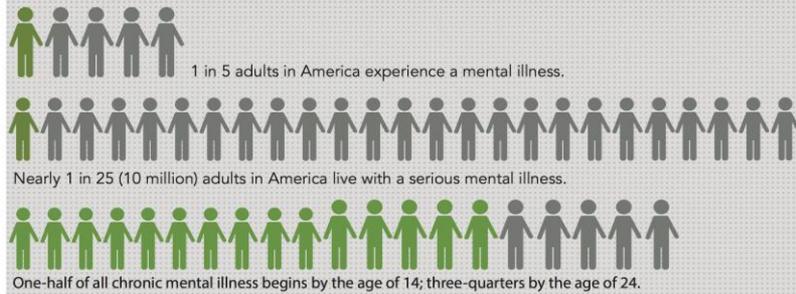
Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

Mental Health Overview: Who does it affect?

Fact: 43.8 million adults experience mental illness in a given year.



Prevalence of Mental Illness

- Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S.—**43.8 million**, or 18.5%—experiences mental illness in a given year.
- Approximately 1 in 25 adults in the U.S.—**10 million**, or 4.2%—experiences a serious mental illness in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.

Mental Health Overview: Who does it affect?

Mental illness can strike anyone.
***It knows no age limit, economic status,
race, creed, or color.***



Mental Health Overview: Stigma

Individuals with serious mental illnesses want to work but are significantly underrepresented in the workplace. Numerous studies have shown a consistent pattern – people with disabilities have high unemployment rates and people with serious mental illnesses have the highest unemployment rate of any group with disabilities, despite the fact that most of these people have both the desire and the capacity to work.

Stigma brings experiences and feelings of:

- Shame
- Blame
- Hopelessness
- Distress
- misrepresentation in the media
- Reluctance to seek and/or accept necessary help

Mental Health Overview:

Indirect Cost of Untreated Mental Illness in the Workplace

The indirect cost of untreated mental illness to employers is estimated to be as high as **\$100 billion** a year in the U.S. alone, according to the National Business Group on Health.

More days of work have been lost or disrupted by mental illness than by many chronic conditions, including arthritis, diabetes and heart disease. In certain industries, improperly managed mental conditions also can affect employees' safety.

Need for Mental Health Workplace Policies



Need for Mental Health Workplace Policies and Supports: ADA Compliance

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment against a qualified individual with a disability.

- If an employee has a disability and is qualified to do a job, the ADA protects them from job discrimination on the basis of their disability. Under the ADA, an employee can have a disability **if they have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity**. The ADA also protects them if they have a history of a disability, or if an employer believes that you have such a disability, even if you don't.

Need for Mental Health Workplace Policies: Developing a Policy

A workplace mental health policy usually comprises a vision statement, a statement of the values and principles on which the policy will be based, and a set of objectives.

These components need not be dealt with sequentially; often they are developed simultaneously.

Need for Mental Health Workplace Policies and Supports: Policy Statement

Policy statement

The business recognizes that stress can be brought about by excess pressure at work or from domestic situations, and can result in poor work performance and deteriorating physical and mental condition. It is committed to working towards a healthy organization, which places high value on both physical and mental health and therefore seeks to eliminate stress.

Need for Mental Health Workplace Policies and Supports: Vision, Principles, and Objectives

Vision

The business will improve its efficiency by promoting the mental health of all employees and responding rapidly to the needs of employees who develop a mental health problem.

Values and principles

- Employees are the most important asset of the organization: the business should provide support services for employees.
- The efficiency of the business will be improved if employees have good emotional health. Programs should address the mental health of all employees.
- People should have access to treatment for mental health problems. It is cost-effective for a business to ensure the early treatment of employees with depression.

Objectives

- To decrease absenteeism as far as possible, by eliminating organizational factors that contribute to poor mental health.
- To improve the productivity of the business by providing better emotional support to employees after critical incidents.
- To minimize the disability of workers by ensuring that depression is recognized early and effective treatment made available.

Need for Mental Health Workplace Policies: Creating a Stigma-Free Workplace

Creating a Stigma-Free Workplace

To support employees with mental illnesses, the National Mental Health Association and the National Council for Behavioral Health recommend the following actions:

- **Educate** employees about the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders.
- **Encourage** employees to talk about stress, workload, family commitments and other issues.
- **Communicate** that mental illnesses are real, common and treatable.
- **Discourage** stigmatizing language, including hurtful labels such as “crazy,” “loony” or “nuts.”
- **Invest** in mental health benefits.
- **Help** employees transition back to work after they take leave.
- **Consult** with your employee assistance program.

Need for Mental Health in the Workplace: Benefits

“Good health equals good business”

Investing in a mentally healthy workforce is good for business. Countless studies show that the behaviors and emotional issues of your workforce directly impacts the productivity, morale, and health of your organization. Below are other business arguments for a positive, inclusive approach to mental health issues in the workplace:

- gaining important skills
- reducing absence
- creating better work relations
- enhancing productivity and motivation
- employing the best person for the job
- retaining knowledge and skills
- fostering acceptance and diversity
- making your workplace more efficient

Mental Health Friendly Workplace Outcomes



Mental Health Friendly Workplace Outcomes

Mental Health-Friendly Workplace makes good business sense. It benefits owners, managers, and employees in ways that affect the bottom line. Consider the following outcomes:

- **Higher productivity and motivation.** Employees feel valued and secure and work more effectively when employers demonstrate a commitment to their well-being.
- **Reduced absenteeism.** Workplace stress is a major cause of absenteeism. Helping employees manage their stress and overall mental health can boost productivity.
- **Health insurance cost containment.** Instituting health and wellness programs can help hold down health insurance rate hikes.
- **Preparedness for disasters.** Assisting employees in times of sudden unexpected trauma with counseling, peer support groups, and links to needed community services can help businesses become productive again sooner.

Mental Health Friendly Workplace Outcomes (continued)

- **Hiring and promoting the most qualified people.** By openly supporting mental health-friendly policies, employers can increase the pool of qualified applicants.
- **More efficient workplace practices and policies.** The process of thinking about mental health can generate helpful internal policy and benefit reviews, and more effective workplace systems and procedures for employees as a whole.
- **Better workplace relations.** Awareness of and openness to mental health issues help create a positive climate for understanding, conflict resolution, and support.
- **Diversity, acceptance, and respect in the workplace.** Embracing diversity includes people who live with mental illnesses. In becoming more inclusive, businesses can both thrive and set a standard for others.

Mental Health Friendly Workplace Resources



Resources: Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health (ADAMH) Boards



Alcohol Drug Addiction, and Mental Health (ADAMH) Boards are statutorily empowered to plan develop, fund, manage, and evaluate community-based mental health and substance abuse services. Boards are funded through a combination of federal, state, and local sources.

The Boards are responsible for ensuring that alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services are available to those who need them, regardless of their ability to pay.

Resources: Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)



MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID®

MHFA FOR THE WORKPLACE

DOES YOUR WORKPLACE HAVE A
MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID OFFICER ?

Mental Health First Aid is an 8-hour course that teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis.

To take a course, visit
<http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/take-a-course/>

Resources

New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003). *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America: Final Report*. Rockville, MD, DHHS Pub. No. SMA-03-3832.

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