

A Seat at The Table for Mental Health



Creating a Mentally Healthy Workplace

Workplaces should support mental health and wellness. Companies can improve employees' well-being, organizational productivity, and the health and success of communities by fostering a workplace that supports mental health and wellness.

Key Facts

- 1 in 5 Americans lives with mental illness, yet only 1 in 3 people who need mental health help actually seek it out. ⁱ
- Treatment for the most common conditions is effective 80% of the time. ⁱⁱ
- Patients with depression miss an average of 4.8 workdays and suffer 11.5 days of reduced productivity in a three-month period. ⁱⁱⁱ
- Mental illness is the leading cause of disability in the U.S. ^{iv}

Possible Questions for Discussion

- What behavioral health benefits does your employer health plan provide?
- How do these benefits compare with benefits for physical health conditions?
- Do employees know what coverage is available to them in their plan?
- Do you have an EAP service? Do you know how to access it?

What You Can Do to Create a Mentally Healthy Workplace^v

1. *Know the Impact at Your Organization (for Leadership, HR and Benefits professionals)*
 - Measure the impact of health on productivity to identify problem areas using tools such as the Work Limitations Questionnaire. ^{vi}
 - Does usage of your organization's mental health and substance use disorder benefits reflect the fact that 1 in 5 Americans lives with a mental illness?
 - Look at your organization's pharmacy spending to check adherence rates for medications that treat mental health illnesses.
 - Determine the impact of mental illnesses on short- and long-term disability.
2. *Break the Silence*
 - Train leaders to identify emotional distress and refer people to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) or other behavioral health resources.
 - Have leaders model work/life balance.
 - Ensure senior leaders routinely include language about emotional well-being when they talk about business issues.
 - Train leaders on responding promptly and constructively to behavioral performance issues
 - Put in place a program to reduce stigma and end silence that often surrounds mental illness (e.g. ICU Program – workplacemetalhealth.org).

3. *Deliver Affordable Access*

- Provide Health Risk Appraisals to employees that include mental health questions and provide information and EAP to those who screen positive.
- Examine the adequacy of insurance plan's behavioral health networks.
- Provide information about mental health benefits, available work accommodations, and community resources.
- Be certain your plan complies with Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (many plans do not), which requires employers that offer mental health and substance use disorder coverage to do so on an equal basis with medical/surgical benefits.^{vii}

4. *Build a Culture of Well-Being*

- Take a holistic approach that goes beyond traditional wellness programs and creates a culture of well-being that focuses on leadership, values, communication, and environment.
- While specific programs can be helpful, it is most important for an organization to demonstrate commitment to core values, employees to treat one another with respect, and leaders to model healthy behaviors and habits.
- Trust and communication are essential for an emotionally healthy work environment.

About The Kennedy Forum

Just as President Kennedy rallied the nation to dream big and set audacious goals 50 years ago, The Kennedy Forum in Illinois is working toward lasting change in the way mental health and addictions are considered and treated. Our mission is to end stigma against mental health and substance use disorders in both attitudes and practice. We believe that strong, bold leadership, strategic collaboration with partners and concerted action, it is possible to build a future with a health system that fully recognizes that the brain is part of the body and all persons are treated with dignity. Join us at www.thekennedyforumillinois.org

RESOURCES

- The Kennedy Forum, Working Well: Leading a Mentally Healthy Business: http://thekennedyforumillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/workingwell_toolkit_FINAL_4.11.16.pdf
- Willis Towers Watson Behavioral Health Survey: <https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en-US/Insights/2017/04/infographic-employers-focus-on-improving-quality-and-access-for-behavioral-health-services>
- American Psychiatric Association Center for Workplace Mental Health: <http://workplacementalhealth.org/>
- U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Discussion Guide: <https://www.samhsa.gov/community-conversations>

ⁱ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Mental Health Findings, NSDUH Series H-49, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4887.

ⁱⁱ The Kennedy Forum, *Working Well: Leading a Mentally Healthy Business*, http://thekennedyforumillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/workingwell_toolkit_FINAL_4.11.16.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Valenstein M, Vijan S, Zeber JE, Boehm K, Buttar A. The Cost utility of Screening for Depression in Primary Care. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2001; 134(5): 345-360.

^{iv} The World Health Organization. *The World Health Report 2004: Changing history*. Estimates for 2002; A126-A127.

^v Materials in this section from The Kennedy Forum's *Working Well: Leading a Mentally Healthy Business*, http://thekennedyforumillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/workingwell_toolkit_FINAL_4.11.16.pdf

^{vi} For a description of this Questionnaire see: <https://www.tuftsmedicalcenter.org/Research-Clinical-Trials/Institutes-Centers-Labs/Center-for-Health-Solutions/Available-Questionnaires.aspx>.

^{vii} U.S. Department of Labor, *The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 Fact Sheet*, January 29, 2010, <https://www.dol.gov/sites/default/files/ebsa/about-ebsa/our-activities/resource-center/fact-sheets/fsmhpaeca.pdf> and The Kennedy Forum and Scattergood Foundation, Parity Track, <https://paritytrack.org>