



News Notes

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Local Resources Help Employers Make Mental Health a Priority



Mental health issues have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorders for adults in the United States have increased 25% over the last year, from 11% in 2019 to 36.5% in June of 2020.*

The coronavirus pandemic has focused our attention on health. This includes mental health as people struggle to manage illness, isolation, loss of loved ones, loss of jobs, and re-entering the workplace. As with all mental health concerns, finding the right assistance is immensely important. People need to feel supported, with resources such as counseling, and by their employers, who can play a critical role in fostering employee stability and resilience.

Since the average person spends 90,000 hours at work over a lifetime, it's safe to say a job and its related activities make a huge impact on quality of life. Whether employees return to work in-person or remotely, "the job" has unintentionally become a first-line source for communication, education, and support. When employers prioritize mental health with company-sponsored programs, there are positive results across the board.

Virtual resources reach everyone

As we adapted to social isolation with technology, the reformatting of health services expanded the scope of access. Virtual platforms mean we can literally reach everyone, everywhere. For example, if employees are experiencing stress, virtual health coaching gives them one-to-one, confidential access to a health coach who can guide, motivate, and reassure them, regardless of where they are. Health coaching sessions are all driven by the participant's needs, on topics such as stress management, chronic disease management, weight management, and smoking cessation. Similarly, if employees are experiencing high levels of stress, anxiety, and/or depression, they can take advantage of remote mental health counseling, provided by licensed, professional counselors.

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Employers lead the effort

Mental health and well-being services are easy for employers to incorporate. They are turnkey programs that, in the case of health coaching, include aggregate reporting. This allows employers to track the health of their employee population so leaders know exactly where to focus ongoing efforts. The best programs are customized for each organization and their specific employee population, and are developed by certified health educators based on science, not trends.

Employers who take the lead, discussing health openly and offering programs that foster improved physical and mental health, understandably find themselves with happier, more able employees. We have learned from the pandemic that health can have a huge impact on business, profitability, and productivity. Those employers who embrace a healthier company culture going forward are those who will be more apt to succeed in an increasingly unpredictable future.

**<https://www.kff.org/statedata/mental-health-and-substance-use-state-fact-sheets/>*

For more information about well-being services for employers, call (local) 484-862-3500 or (toll-free) 866-733-6158, or visit <https://www.populytics.com/benefit/>

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