



Promoting Mental Health in the Workplace: **A Competitive Advantage**

WISCONSIN DISABILITY PROGRAM
NAVIGATORS

In partnership with Wisconsin Disability Program Navigators and
Wisconsin United for Mental Health Work Place Symposium Series

Mental health



Mental Illness

Real. Common. Treatable

Why is This a Business Issue?

- Rising health care costs. People with untreated mental health issues use significantly more general health services.
- Mind/body connection is undeniable. Most medical illnesses reported to physicians (50-80%) have a strong emotional or stress-related component.
- Job stress is frequently identified as the leading cause of stress. 43% of adults suffer adverse health effects from stress.

Why is This a Business Issue?

- Depression is a leading cause of disability. Second leading cause for ages 15-44, both sexes.
- Indirect costs of lost productivity and direct costs of medical services. Indirect costs are two-thirds higher than direct costs.
- Nearly every family and/or workplace is affected in some way. 20-25% of workforce is affected.

Why is This a Business Issue?

- Affects people in prime working years.
- Chronic nature.
- Type of impairment caused.

Benefits to Business

- Higher productivity and motivation
- Reduced absenteeism
- Health insurance cost containment
- Preparedness for disaster
- Loyalty and retention
- More efficient workplace practices and policies
- Diversity, acceptance, respect in the workplace

Risk Factors

- Biochemistry
- Genetics/Family history
- Thinking patterns
- Environmental factors
- Other medical conditions
- Birth of a baby
- SAD

Signs in the Workplace

- Decreased productivity
- Lack of cooperation
- Excessive fatigue
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Safety/Accidents
- Irritability
- Trouble completing projects
- Absent-mindedness
- Change in behavior
- Tardiness
- Absenteeism
- Alcohol/Drug use
- Low morale

Treatment

- Low rate of treatment
- Stigma
- Success rate is higher (60-80%) than for other illnesses such as heart disease (40-50%)
- You cannot “will it away”
- Treatment depends on severity and personal preference
- Work can play a therapeutic role

Issues Related to Mental Health

- No coverage, limited coverage, or different coverage.
- 90% of workers with private insurance are enrolled in plans that impose increased costs or decreased services for behavioral health.
- Pay now or pay later illnesses.
- First thing cut.
- Employers don't take this seriously. "Doesn't apply to our business."

Promising Statistics

- In Minnesota, Blue Cross Blue Shield reduced its insurance premiums by 5-6% after one year's experience with mental health parity.
- In North Carolina, mental health expenses decreased for years under the state's parity law passed in 1992
- Illinois recently passed parity laws making it the 37th state to do so.

Promising Statistics

- An economic analysis comparing depression treatment costs vs. lost productivity costs found that 45-98% of treatment costs were offset by increased productivity.

What Can Employers Do?

- Gain senior management support.
- Find out what your mental health benefit actually covers.
- If you don't have an EAP, get one!
- Provide training for managers and supervisors.
- Conduct an employee survey.
- Offer learning opportunities.
- Challenge yourself to go further than "stress management"

What Can Employers Do?

- Support treatment/encourage screening.
- Clearly communicate available benefits and resources.
- Respond to changes or crises.
- Access local mental health organizations for educational material.
- Involve all stakeholders in changing health care system.
- Provide mental health insurance parity in your plan.

The Mental Health-Friendly Workplace

- Welcomes all qualified job applicants; diversity is valued.
- Includes health care that treats mental illnesses with the same urgency as physical illnesses.
- Has programs and practices that promote and support employee health and wellness.
- Provides training for managers and supervisors.

The Mental Health-Friendly Workplace

- Safeguards confidentiality.
- Provides an EAP or other referral resource.
- Supports employees who seek treatment.
- Ensures “exit with dignity”.
- Provides all-employee communications.

Next Steps

- Assess your own company. Have you noticed excess absenteeism, low morale, or low productivity?
- How were situations dealt with?
- What elements do you already have in place?
- What additional elements could help in the future?
- How will the worth or value to your business be measured?

Resources

Content for this presentation provided in part by:

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness – Wisconsin**
<http://www.namiwisconsin.org>
- **Wisconsin United For Mental Health**
<http://www.wimentalhealth.org>
- **Mental Health America of Wisconsin**
<http://www.mhawisconsin.org>
- **Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services – Mental Health Resources**
<http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/mentalhealth>

Contact Information

Presented by:

Wisconsin Disability Program Navigators

For more information or to locate a Navigator near you, go to www.eri-wi.org/Navigators.htm.

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