



The Business Case for Workplace Mental Health

The psychological fallout of the COVID pandemic is in full swing. Stress, burnout, anxiety and depression are major drivers of employee exits and absenteeism. This is a long-term issue and fast becoming a top priority for employers trying to compete in an extremely tight labor market. Mental health, while not as visible, should be treated with the same sense of urgency as an employees' physical health with the same access to benefits and mental healthcare services.

- In a 2022 survey by Willis Towers Watson, **86% of employers** say mental health is a **top priority**.¹

Why Mental Health in the Workplace Matters?

- **1 in 5 U.S. adults** experience mental illness each year.²
- Depression, anxiety and burnout accounted for **62%** of missed work days.³
- **Productivity** is greatly reduced to the tune of **11.5 days** every 3 months and **1-2** hours of every 8-hour shift in decreased performance.⁴
- **Depressed** employees miss up to **25** more days per year than other employees.⁴
- **Depression** decreases **productivity**, increases absenteeism/presenteeism, raises healthcare spending and impacts the severity of other costly **conditions** like diabetes and heart disease.⁴
- Lost **productivity**, health care costs and turnover costs employers **\$15,000** yearly.⁵
- Mental health impacts **performance**: **43%** of 1,079 employees surveyed said their mental health negatively impacted their job performance.⁶
- Mental health is as big a challenge for HR as retaining and recruiting employees.
- The workforce shortage may have made **access to care** more difficult and there may also be a lack of providers available to address cultural needs.
- **Barriers to Care** included cost-related issues and convenient provider location and availability. **59%** of U.S. adults said it was faster to get care if you pay out-of-pocket versus using insurance.⁷
- **Delays** in getting timely care can stop an employee's mental health treatment journey before it begins.
- **Executive 82%** and **C-level 78%** respondents were more likely to report at least one mental health **symptom**, compared to managers **71%** and individual contributors **71%**.⁸
- Half **50%** of study respondents reported having **left** previous roles at a **company** due, at least in part, to mental health reasons. This number grows to **81%** for **Gen Z** and **68%** for **Millennials**.⁸
- **Presenteeism**: 2021 study respondents reported performing at **72%** of their full capacity in the past year. **Underrepresented** groups were significantly more likely to report lower rates of working their full capability due to mental health.⁸
- Roughly **37-41%** of study respondents feel comfortable **talking** about their mental health to other colleagues, their manager, and HR.⁸

- The most commonly reported **obstacle** to being more proactive around mental health **self-care** was leaders not promoting mental health at work.⁸
- Factors affecting employee **stress** levels at work: Compensation **56%**, long hours **54%**, workload **50%**, and paid time off or sick leave **50%** among others.⁹
- **Loneliness** is a prevalent **social determinant of health** among employees with mental health conditions. The likelihood of loneliness increased by **50%** when physical **health conditions** were present. Nearly **25%** of individuals suffering from loneliness struggled with **sleep disorders** and **15%** with **weight**.¹⁰
- **Loneliness** has consequences in the **workplace**, causing lower **productivity** and higher dissatisfaction.¹⁰
- Only **26%** of 3,000 US workers felt **psychological safe** during the pandemic and experienced higher levels of burnout, stress, and greater feelings of loneliness.¹¹
- **8 in 10** workers say shame and **stigma** prevent them from seeking treatment for a mental health condition.¹²

Employers Can Help By Setting the Tone and Investing in Workplace Mental Health

- Every **\$1** invested by employers for MH treatment and support earns an **ROI** of **\$4.5**
- Build a **Culture of Well-Being** that fosters open & empathetic dialogue and promotes psychological safety, which is one of the building blocks of **inclusion**.
- The **most in-demand** resource by employees surveyed was a “**more open**” mental health **culture** at work.⁸
- **Employee recognition**, when received regularly, was rated as **important** as mental health resources.⁹
- **7 out of 10** employees said it was their employer’s responsibility to provide mental health resources and benefits.¹³
- **Thriving employees** are **7x** more likely to work for a company that prioritizes the well-being of its employees.¹⁴
- **Implement** a variety of **mental health strategies**:¹⁴
 - Conduct training on how to identify and support employees facing mental health challenges
 - Provide tools that help build coping skills like resilience and mindfulness
 - Offer digital tools to help lower barriers to access and utilization of mental health services (e.g., virtual mental health counseling via text or video chat)
 - Offer insurance coverage for mental health treatments
 - Develop strategies with a DEI lens
- **Employers** have a **responsibility** to deliver affordable access by advocating and updating policies, benefits and treatment options, and by addressing provider and healthcare services payment barriers.

Employers Call-To-Action:

Employers must tackle the mental health epidemic by building and promoting connection and community in the workplace, extending flexibility and accommodations to employees, offering robust mental health benefits, pursuing DEI in the workplace to ensure access and foster belonging among employees, while

reducing workplace stressors. These actions will help build a Culture of Well-Being and a healthier, engaged and more productive workforce.

Sources:

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