# Mental Health in the Workplace

MINDING OUR BUSINESS

**BUILDING THE BUSINESS CASE**
**ADDRESSING THE STIGMA**
**IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS**

DMEC
Disability Management
Employer Coalition

PACiFIC
RESOURCES

sedgwick®

The statistics and research findings are compelling: Approximately 1 in 5 people is dealing with a mental health situation on a daily basis, and studies show that people with depression have a 2.5 times higher risk of on-the-job injury. Many companies continue to struggle with the best ways to address behavioral health issues in the workplace, including managing absenteeism and presenteeism, driving down medical costs and related costs for these issues, and supporting employees in distress.

Recognizing the importance of addressing these concerns, DMEC, Pacific Resources, and Sedgwick convened three panels of experts and facilitated a collaborative preconference workshop before the 2016 DMEC Annual Conference in New Orleans. The following is a summary of key presentations and discussions held during the DMEC conference.

**1 |** Building the business case to address mental health and well-being and create a culture of health in the workplace;

**2 |** Acknowledging and addressing the mental health stigma in a company's culture to ensure mental health and well-being programs generate meaningful outcomes; and

**3 |** Implementing effective programs to address mental health in the workplace and improve the employee experience and engagement.

## PANELISTS

- ACCOLADE, INC.
- AETNA
- BEACON HEALTH
- COMCAST
- JETBLUE AIRWAYS
- PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC
- PACIFIC RESOURCES

- SEDGWICK
- U.S. PREVENTIVE MEDICINE
- INTEGRATED BENEFITS INSTITUTE
- TUFTS MEDICAL CENTER
- WELLNESS WORKS, MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF CALIFORNIA

## BUILDING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Absence professionals are acutely aware that disability management and health promotion solutions require broad organizational support to ensure success. However, when it comes to building the business case to address mental health and well-being and create a culture of health in the workplace, the question most often asked is "How do I start?"



Each panelist shared compelling reasons as to why mental health is a business performance driver and how to begin to build the business case:

- **THOMAS PARRY, PHD,** *President, Integrated Benefits Institute* underscored the importance of this topic: "I've never seen a time when data are so important as they are today. Making a business case has never been as important, and there has never been more at risk for everyone in making that business case. It's all now about the value of programs and benefits. Cost is important, but the value of what these are driving for the company is what is on the minds of every CFO."

- **DEBRA LERNER, PHD,** *Director, Program on Health, Work and Productivity, Tufts Medical Center* reminded the audience that around 15 years ago, researchers started to see a big change in the rise of mental health problems in the workplace due to the greater capability of measuring them. Using the Work Limitations Questionnaire (WLQ) she had created, research teams collect data to assess absenteeism, presenteeism, and employee performance. Findings show that "It didn't matter which industry, which company, which part of the United States, what your age or gender mix was, or what your occupational mix was, depression was always in the top five reasons for absenteeism, presenteeism, and for productivity loss in the workplace. And right behind that was always psychological distress, which is not a diagnosis so it doesn't always get counted."

- **RON LOEPPKE, MD, MPH, FOCOEM, FACM,** *Vice Chairman, US Preventive Medicine, Inc.* emphasized a key point that **DR. CATHERINE BAASE,** *Global Director, Health Services, The Dow Chemical Company* had made in a recent presentation: "Mental health and healthcare strategies are at the C-suite level interest in most companies because of the following items: employee performance, engagement, loyalty, morale, attraction and retention, corporate reputation, reliability, and sustainability."

- **HARRY SPENCER,** *VP, Compensation, Benefits, & Corporate Social Responsibility, JetBlue Airways* cited the extreme stress that many of his company's crew members and people in the airlines industry face on a daily basis. "The business case is obvious. What can we do as an employer? With JetBlue our values are safety, caring, integrity, passion, and fun. The caring value makes it easy to make the business case, along with the facts of the reality of the public who look for all transportation to be safe."

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- THOMAS PARRY, PHD
  *President Integrated Benefits Institute*

## UNDERSTAND WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO CFOs

It's important to understand what's on the minds of CFOs. Dr. Parry shared the perspective from the C-suite with key findings from a recent IBI study that surveyed almost 350 CFOs about their thoughts on health and healthcare post Affordable Care Act (ACA).

"Employers have historically equated health with healthcare costs, but our research shows that healthcare costs typically represent less than half of the economic impact of health for a company. Clearly we need to change the conversation about health and broaden it, and certainly mental health and behavioral health are a big part of that. And making the CFO part of the conversation is key."

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Mental health impacts both the top line and the bottom line of a company.
- Understand the world of the CFO and talk the business language of the CFO to make your case.
- Link health to business operation metrics.
- Don't be afraid to have a seat at the table. **If you're not at the table, you may be heading to the door in the near future.**

## COLLECTING DATA AND NUMBERS TO PROVE YOUR BUSINESS CASE

Dr. Lerner emphasized that the first question to be addressed is "How big of a problem is mental health in my population?" She said numbers are imperative in making the case for mental health programs, but many companies cannot afford to collect their own data. Federal sources of data can be used and applied to a company's population data. Information and studies are also available for download on the DMEC website.

In one study, Dr. Loeppke worked with Dr. Parry and IBI to analyze ten large employers by looking at over one million data points that employers paid out to the related productivity losses. They found on average that for every dollar of medical cost paid on medical and pharmacy claims, there is a health-related productivity cost of $2.30 in absenteeism and presenteeism. Depression and anxiety were both on the top ten list.

A surprising finding in this study was that executives had the highest case of presenteeism impacts from burnout because they were taking their work home. They also had the highest rates of depression, anxiety, and stress related and mental health related illnesses. The impact of comorbidities was significant.



*Source: Loeppke, R.*
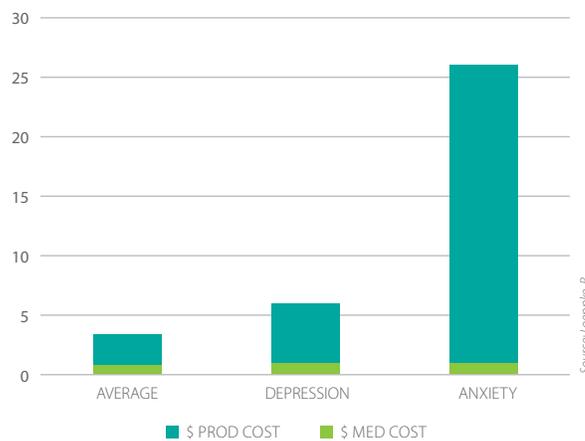
Research shows that people with depression have a 2.5 times higher risk of on-the-job injury.

### WORKERS' COMPENSATION COST
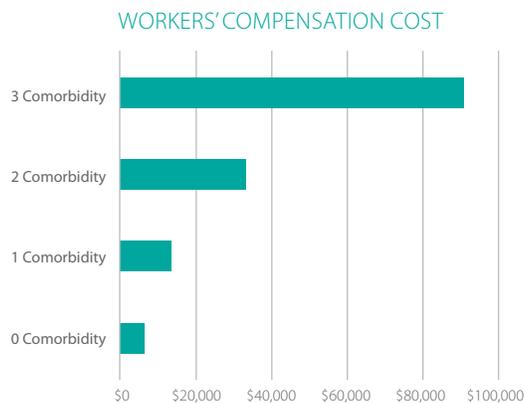


In a second study, Dr. Loeppke assessed the correlation between musculoskeletal on-the-job injuries and the financial impact of comorbidity conditions on workers' compensation (WC) costs. As the chart indicates, if there is no comorbidity, an average WC cost would equate to $7,000. However, if three comorbid conditions exist, those costs skyrocket to $91,000 per claim.

> *"Most progressive companies have to rethink strategies from the consumer back."*
>
> - JACK STODDARD, MBA
>   *Chief Strategy Officer, Accolade*

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> - RON LOEPPKE, MD, MPH, FOCOEM, FACM
>   *Vice Chairman, US Preventive Medicine, Inc.*

## ACKNOWLEDGING AND ADDRESSING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA
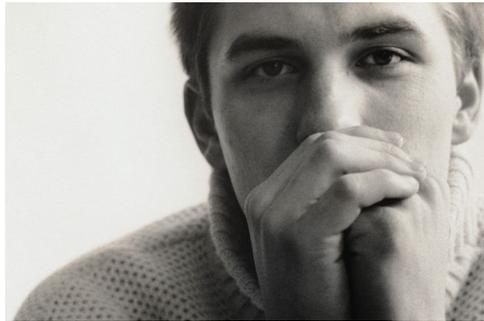


Mental illness, even if it is not acknowledged, is prevalent. Studies show that 20% of people are dealing with a mental health issue on a daily basis. Regardless of whether it is situational or chronic, mental illness is fraught with societal stigma that stifles diagnosis, treatment, open dialogue, and awareness of mental health and caring for those impacted. The workplace is no different. Addressing stigma within a corporate culture should be an essential part of the business plan for mental health programs. Organizations are beginning to raise awareness of stigma and are bringing this topic to the forefront. Each panelist presented compelling information about the impact of stigma, the barriers to addressing stigma, and programs that can be implemented to create a culture of acceptance and encouragement for individuals who need help.

**BRYON BASS,** *SVP of Disability and Absence Practice & Compliance, Sedgwick* discussed the impact that stigma has in keeping people from seeking treatment for mental health issues: "In 2015, a national survey on drug use and health found that over 35% of respondents cited societal concerns as a reason why they were not seeking help with their mental health issues, and that was second only to the cost of healthcare. From a workplace perspective, 9.5% cited the work environment as a reason why they were afraid of what their supervisors and peers might think of them and their ability or their inability to be productive."

**RICH PAUL, MSW, CEAP,** *SVP, Employer Strategy & Development, Beacon Health Options* expressed concern that less than 1/3 of people suffering from a mental illness get help. "The unfortunate thing is that 80-90% of people who suffer from a mental health issue can actually improve and get better and live very productive and healthy lives. A sobering statistic is that 40-60% of those who die by suicide have seen their primary care physician just 30 days prior to death. We still have a long way to go in terms of addressing stigma and really getting people to get the help that they need."

**DONNA HARDAKER, CPC** *Director, Wellness Works, Mental Health America of California* candidly shared her personal story of living with the label of mental illness to bring the idea of stigma to life. "Our world has a negative, pervasive, and deeply entrenched view of those who are inside that group. I live in that room. There is implicit bias."

**HEATHER HOLLADAY,** *Integrated Health Manager, Pacific Gas & Electric* highlighted the positive "FaceBook" version of the corporate culture at PG&E that encourages the use of their EAP and how well informed supervisors are about mental health and its impact on safety. On the flipside, she said, "No one is talking about the issues and how they are suffering from mental illness. It's a scary thing to say out loud to other people. You might feel judged and afraid you will miss out on that next promotion and appear unstable. You should be able to speak out about it and get the support you need."

# BARRIERS TO ADDRESSING STIGMA:

## THE LACK OF EDUCATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

**DONNA HARDAKER, CPC** provided unique insight into this barrier. She explained that stigma researchers refer to three types of stigma: public, self, and systemic. The public's perception and lack of knowledge perpetuates a stigma that negatively impacts the individual and causes a systemic flaw within the workplace in structures to encourage help-seeking behavior.

| PUBLIC STIGMA | SELF STIGMA | SYSTEMATIC STIGMA |
|---|---|---|
| *Deeply entrenched, constant, and insidious assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs about people with mental health issues* | *People with mental health issues assume negative thoughts about themselves and their condition* | *The micro and macro structures do not consider the experience of a person with mental health challenges* |

## ACCOMMODATION POLICIES

Many companies offer accommodation processes; however, the employee must request the accommodation, and stigma can discourage that action.

In order to reduce the stigma with a mental health issue, leadership engagement is needed to create a culture that supports and encourages individuals to seek help. Leaders also need to ensure that the workforce is educated about mental health. Effective programs include contact education and peer volunteer programs.

> ## KEY TAKEAWAYS
>
> **1** | Incorporate training for managers about mental health.
>
> **2** | Encourage the use of an employee assistance program.
>
> **3** | Create support groups.
>
> **4** | Consider utilizing free educational programs such as those listed on **www.thekennedyforumillinois.org** to create a campaign to address stigma in the workplace, such as:
> - IWILLLISTEN
> - B4Stage4 Mental Health Screenings
> - In Our Own Voice
> - Live Your Life Well Campaign
> - NAMI StigmaFree
> - Working Minds
>
> *The programs listed above are described in more detail within The Working Well Toolkit which can be downloaded on www.thekennedyforumillinois.org. The tenets of these different programs are similar and focus on educating the workforce around mental illness and substance abuse. The programs also provide tips on creating campaigns on how to talk about mental health effectively and the right words to use.*

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- RICH PAUL, MSW, CEAP, SVP
  *Employer Strategy & Development, Beacon Health Options*

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  *CPC Director, Wellness Works, Mental Health America of California*

## IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE AND IMPROVE THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT



Engaging employees in their health is critically important to their well-being, productivity, and ultimately, corporate successes. Three common considerations for workforce well-being are: advocacy, mindfulness, and resilience, which address the employee experience and employee engagement.

**SCOTT DANIELS, JD,** *Director of Disability Benefits, Comcast* noted, "When we think about pragmatic solutions, there is no one size fits all. Creativity and proactivity are important. The challenge is utilization and engagement of the tools you launch."

**HYONG UN, MD,** *Chief Psychiatric Officer and Head of Aetna Employee Assistance Program* emphasized that companies tend to approach workplace issues and health issues within the specific confines and contexts of a medical model. "There's so much more beyond the medical model that will help us look at determinants of health and workplace productivity."

**ADELE SPALLONE, LMHC, LMFT,** *VP, Business Integration & Strategies, Disability and Absence Management Services, Aetna* stressed the importance of data. "Make data part of your solution. Understand your data and get comfortable with numbers. Without understanding what your absent trends are, it will be difficult to rally and support the programs your company might need."

**JACK STODDARD, MBA,** *Chief Strategy Officer, Accolade* shared that "most progressive companies have to rethink strategies from the consumer back."

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Design the program from the consumer back and include advocacy as part of the program.
- An advocate or concierge can help the employee navigate complexity of options and benefits.
- Address the challenge of utilization of the tools and employee engagement of mental health programs by providing education and positive communication that will change the culture and encourage help-seeking behavior.
- Integrate the vendors and start with resources you already have in place today.

## CONCLUSION

Despite challenges and stigmas, it is essential for employers to build and sustain cultures of health and well-being in their organizations, which can lead to improved workforce and employee health, increased productivity, decreased health and disability costs, and enhanced employee engagement and experience.

The 2016 DMEC Annual Conference workshop provided insightful information, case studies, and solutions to assist employers as they build the business case, address the stigma, and build effective programs to address behavioral health and well-being in the workplace.

*"The caring value makes it easy to make the business case, along with the facts of the reality of the public who look for all transportation to be safe."*

- HARRY SPENCER
  *VP, Compensation, Benefits, & Corporate Social Responsibility, JetBlue Airways*

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Mental health issues are prevalent and impact the top and bottom lines of a company.
- Data and numbers are imperative to build a business case for mental health and well-being programs.
- Speak the language of the CFO and understand the C-suite perspective.
- Mental health issues remain an entrenched public stigma.
- Leadership support is paramount in creating and supporting an accepting culture that is engaged and encourages help-seeking behavior.
- Educating the workforce can help reduce the stigma of mental health challenges through contact education and peer volunteer programs.
- Offer online resources for mindfulness and resiliency training.
- Integrate the vendors and start with resources already within your company.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

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