Defining the Issue

• What is mental health?
• What is mental illness?
Common Misconceptions

• Treatment doesn’t work for mental illness
• People with mental health disorders just need to “snap out of it” and they’ll be fine
• Employees can and should leave their personal problems at the door
• Mental health doesn’t impact the workplace
Mental Health Impacts the Workplace

• The bottom line
• Employee wellbeing
• Workplace culture

Supporting mental health in the workplace increases productivity, decreases cost, and contributes to the wellbeing of the community at large.
Workplace Impacts Mental Health

Key factors include:

- Workload (both excessive and insufficient work)*
- Role ambiguity or conflict*
- Conflicting home and work demands*

*commonly reported during the COVID-19 pandemic
Workplace Impacts Mental Health

Other factors include:

- Lack of participation and control in the workplace
- Monotonous or unpleasant tasks
- Lack of recognition at work
- Inequity
- Poor interpersonal relationships
- Poor working conditions
- Poor leadership and communication
- Uncomfortable physical working conditions
- Fatigue at work
Construction and Mental Health

• At least 20% of construction workers report struggling with mental health issues

• Construction and extraction industries have the second highest rate of suicide; for men aged 25 to 54, suicide is the second biggest cause of death

• Many risk factors lead to these increased rates of mental health issues and suicide
Mental Health and COVID-19

During late June, 40% of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance use.

- Anxiety/Depression Symptoms: 31%
- Trauma/Stressor-Related Disorder Symptoms: 26%
- Started or Increased Substance Use: 13%
- Seriously Considered Suicide: 11%

†In the 30 days prior to survey.

For stress and coping strategies: bit.ly/dailylifecoping
Mental Health and COVID-19

- Economic vulnerability and job loss
- Increases in overdose fatalities
- Impacts of grief and trauma
- Capacity of treatment and recovery systems
Signs and Symptoms

- Mental and physical fatigue
- Difficulty staying focused
- More easily frustrated
- Arguing more with family and friends

- Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely or worried
- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Increased anxiety
Mental Health and Safety Impacts

• Substance use
• Fatigue
• Risk recognition
• Chronic stress
For Employers

• Strengthen workplace prevention interventions
• Increase treatment accessibility
• All play a role:
  • Leadership and supervisors
  • Human resources
  • Employees
For Leadership

• Provide training and learning opportunities
• Communicate
• Connect
• Encourage employee-led resource and support groups
For Leadership

• Set the tone – embody workplace culture
• Increase access to care
• Enable balance
• Celebrate and recognize
For Human Resources

- Increase quality of, access to, and utilization of EAP use
- Ensure benefits cover screenings and treatment
- Review PTO policies
HR Should Address...

- Flexibility in scheduling / PTO / leave policies
- Bereavement policy questions
- Benefits questions about mental health
- Mental health community resources
- Financial questions in event of leave:
  - Short notice absence flexibility / LOA flexibility
  - Requests for cash advance / 401k hardship provisions
Employee Assistance Programs

• Consultations, programs and services to provide tools, guidance, and *options for employers* to deal with employee and productivity issues

• Consultations, programs and services to provide tools, guidance, and *options for employees* to resolve personal concerns that may affect job performance, health, and/or well-being

EA is not just counseling. The key is providing consultation, options, and solutions.
EAPs Should Provide Resources For...

• Substance use
• Mental health
• Housing instability
• Food insecurity
• Domestic violence

• Legal questions
• Financial assistance and planning
• Workplace consultations for leadership and supervisors
A Good EAP Should...

- Offer licensed clinicians delivering individualized services
- Average multiple sessions of individual consulting
- Go beyond assessment and immediate referral to health insurance
- Avoid online “self-service” options
- Provide reports on number and types of problems seen and volume of services provided
- Be a proactive tool for the organization
Increasing EAP Utilization

• Communicate the same message, multiple times, on multiple mediums
• Don’t assume employees will remember how to access
• Reassure that no information will be reported back to anyone at the organization
• A proactive EAP will provide support and resources without being asked or waiting for employee engagement
COVID-Related Questions

HR and EAPs should be able to address these COVID-specific questions:

- Exposure to others that might come home with me
- FMLA – household compositions may have changed
- Concerns about testing / disclosing PHI / quarantines
- “Must-return” vs voluntary return
- Transportation assistance options

How to Protect the Mental Health of Your Employees During COVID-19
For H&S Staff and Supervisors

- Communicate!
- Empathy and personal support
- Lead by example
- Encourage PTO use
- Know signs and symptoms – what happens when someone is experiencing mental health distress?
For H&S Staff and Supervisors

• Take advantage of company resources and trainings

• Share and facilitate access to support and resources

• Promote mindfulness and stress management strategies

• Encourage “non-work” team activities
For Employees

• Take advantage of resources
• Stay connected and informed
• Establish a work-life balance
• Know signs and symptoms
• Adopt healthy behaviors
• Reach out for support
Do Employees Feel Safe and Supported?
Building a Safe, Resilient Culture

- Empowerment
- Purpose
- Trust
- Accountability
- Building resiliency into each workplace process, program, and policy leads to a more resilient workforce
What is Stigma?

Defining stigma:

- Public stigma
- Structural stigma
- Self-stigma
Stigma and Mental Health

Stigma can have several impacts on a person’s experience with mental health distress or mental illness, including:

• Waiting to seek needed treatment or support
• Not acknowledging an issue to self or others
Addressing Stigma When at Work

• Start at the top
• Educate and inform; challenge misconceptions and stereotypes
• Speak with dignity and respect when discussing mental health
• Support your co-workers
• Openly promote services
Addressing Stigma When at Work

• See the whole person

• Be proactive – if someone is struggling, connect them to resources early

• Openly discuss mental health and mental illness in the workplace

• Prioritize physical and mental health on the same level
Addressing Stigma Yourself

• Speak out when you hear something stigmatizing
• Listen to people living with mental illness when they share their story
• Support your family and friends
• Speak with dignity and respect
• Learn the facts
In Closing...

• Employee mental health impacts the workplace – workplace finances, safety and culture

• The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted and will continue to impact employee mental health

• Addressing mental health in the workplace requires a team effort from the top down – and also from the bottom up
In Closing...

- Education and awareness are critical, as is increasing access to treatment and building robust policies.
- Building a resilient workforce can buffer a workplace and strengthen its employees' mental wellbeing.
- Stigma reduction efforts are essential for success.

If nothing else, compassion and communication can change someone’s life.
Thank you!