



DEPRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE:

The Unexpected Threat to your Company

As a first-of-its-kind initiative, *Right Direction* has received national attention for its leadership in addressing depression in the workplace. To validate the societal and economic burden of how depression impacts employers, Employers Health launched the results of *The Impact of Depression at Work Audit (IDeA) survey (Ipsos, 2014).**

Survey results revealed that nearly a quarter (23 percent) of U.S. respondents indicated they have been diagnosed with depression in their lifetime.

Depression is shown to negatively impact performance in the workplace. Of those respondents who had depression, two in five missed an average of 10 work days per year, due to their condition. Sixty-four percent reported that cognitive-related challenges, defined as difficulty concentrating, indecisiveness, and/or forgetfulness, had the most impact on their ability to perform tasks at work as normal. Presenteeism, or being at work but not engaged/productive, has been found to be exacerbated by these cognitive-related challenges.

Even though symptoms of depression make it difficult to perform adequately in the workplace, most employees with depression don't seek help due to the stigma associated with the condition. As an example, the IDeA survey found that more than half (58 percent) of survey participants who had received a diagnosis of depression indicated they had not informed their employer of their disease. This reluctance to discuss a diagnosis of depression is concerning because such fear could

discourage people from seeking treatment and/or a flexible accommodation when needed. While they need not necessarily name the specific diagnosis, employees with depression should feel comfortable requesting a modification in work hours in order to go to medical appointments, for example.

The effect of depression on employee performance is directly affecting the financial bottom line. Data indicate that:

- **Depression costs employers \$44 billion annually in lost productivity.**
- **Depression ranks among the top five disability claims globally (among cancer and cardiovascular conditions).**
- **Short-term disability claims for mental illness are growing by 10 percent annually.**
- **Two to four times more health care resources are used by employees with depression who do not receive treatment.**

Unfortunately, the survey reveals that 35 percent of managers lack resources to address depression with their employees.

Given the data, it is important that employers identify ways in which to address depression and mental health in the workplace through safe and confidential means to help employees get the help they need, while also realizing improvement in work performance.

For more information on *Right Direction*, visit rightdirectionforme.com

Resources for employers

Most employers offer an employee assistance program (EAP), designed to address employee wellness in the company. However, on average, only three percent of employees use counseling services available through their company's EAP.

The Right Direction initiative, developed by Employers Health and the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health, a program of the American Psychiatric Foundation, has become a valuable and free resource for employers. The initiative is designed to provide employers with the tools needed to educate employees about depression, reduce stigma and increase the chances of people seeking help. It offers employers a wealth of turn-key resources ranging from content for intranet sites to template PowerPoint presentations that can be customized to communicate the importance of addressing depression with the C-suite and managers.

"While employers play a vital role in leading the conversation of mental health with employees, unfortunately, many employers simply do not have the tools to address this sensitive subject," says Marcas Miles, senior director of marketing and communications with Employers Health. "The Right Direction initiative provides employers with the resources that raise awareness and reduce stigma around depression in order to provide a more productive workplace and supportive company culture."

Taking a step in the Right Direction: one organization's journey

Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC) is a nonprofit, membership, computer library service and research organization employing approximately 950 employees in the U.S. and 1,300 globally. OCLC connects libraries using a global network to collectively innovate and drive efficiencies in metadata creation, interlibrary loan, digitization, discovery and delivery.

Beginning in 2010, OCLC took a thorough look at its top claim drivers to determine where to focus its wellness program. As with most U.S. employers, OCLC found the following:

- One of the top three medications used through its medical plan were antidepressants.
- Depression was the fourth-highest diagnosed condition for employees on OCLC's medical plan.
- Over the past three years, there was a rise in disability claims related to mental health.

OCLC realized that even though EAP utilization by its employees was strong overall, there was a need for focused education on depression and mental health for employees and their dependents. OCLC rolled out Right Direction during Mental Health Awareness Week in October 2013, which coincided with onsite wellness screenings, as well as the company's Open Enrollment period. OCLC also hung posters throughout its office locations, incorporated Right Direction into management orientation training, hosted an awareness booth at its employee benefits fair, and included information about mental health in its communications campaign for several health-related awareness months.

Through these efforts, the company was able to personally talk to employees, as well as their spouses, to provide additional details about the initiative and the benefits involved. Following its depression awareness rollout, the team received emails from employees expressing happiness that OCLC was starting to address the issue; some even volunteered to help with future programming efforts around the initiative. There wasn't a single negative comment or question received.

Employers Health and the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health are working closely with the companies implementing Right Direction to ensure successful adoption of the initiative in their workplace.

"We're finding that employers are hungry for tools to increase awareness about depression and help encourage employees to use the EAP, mental health benefits and other services available through their company. Right Direction works beautifully to help an employer get the word about the availability of their resources to increase engagement" says Clare Miller, director of the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health.

By tackling depression in the workplace head on, employers will retain valued employees, secure less turnover and support a healthier, more productive workforce. All while improving the company's bottom line.

Signs of depression include deep feelings of sadness, loss of interest in activities, difficulty concentrating and loss of energy.

