



Human Resource Professional: An Agent for Change

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A Human Resource (HR) professional wears many hats in his or her organization. They recruit and train staff, manage payroll, benefits, rewards and compensation, address performance issues...

...the list could go on and on.

But an HR professional as an agent for change? That's new. Add that to the long list of job responsibilities.

An army of Employers Health team members just returned home from the Human Resource Executive Health & Benefits Leadership Conference. As a first-time attendee, I was blown away at how great the entire conference was. Everything from location, to the speaker pool, to the content presented was an A+ in my book. It was truly a world-class event.

One theme that stuck with me as I attended each of the sessions is that HR professionals truly have the power to ignite change within their organization. We have the resources and materials to start the discussion around some of the most stigmatized topics: mental health, opioid abuse and employee well-being.

Mental Health: It's estimated that one in five people experience mental illness each year. Chances are someone in your organization is suffering from a mental illness right now. More work days are lost because of depression than any other chronic health condition. It is our responsibility to start the conversation and create an environment that encourages openness. There are also some great, free tools to get started. Check out rightdirectionforme.com to help reduce the stigma of depression in your workplace.

Opioid Abuse: There is no denying it, prescription misuse and abuse is prevalent in the workplace. According to the National Safety Council, three quarters of those struggling with addiction to alcohol, pain medication and other substances are employed, often missing 50 percent or more work days a year. The steps to making a difference can start with simply recognizing that there is a problem and that through promoting and educating your employees with tools like an Employee Assistance Program can make a great impact.

Employee Well-being: Work is an influencing factor to our overall health and well-being, in fact, work-related stress is the number one workforce health issue. In his opening keynote session, Casey Chosewood, director for office for total worker health at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, said that by creating a culture of health within a workplace, you are one step closer to total worker health. By adopting a healthier culture, you are promising employees a safer, healthier and more productive environment to flourish and thrive.

It is our continuous responsibility to adopt a workplace culture that embraces the entire worker – mentally, physically and emotionally. Start the discussion and make a commitment to move towards a healthier environment for all.