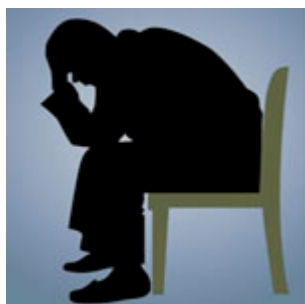


How to Remove the Stigma of Mental Health in Your Workplace



Your workers' mental health is just as important as their physical health. And mental health issues may be more common than you think among your workforce.

A survey by Morneau Shepell found that 33% of Canadian employees are now suffering or have suffered from a mental health condition, such as depression or an anxiety disorder. And another 27% are experiencing significant symptoms of stress.

Why should employers be concerned by these findings? Because 58% of employees said their productivity has been negatively impacted by stress at work, while 45% said they'd thought about leaving their job due to workplace stress and its impact on them.

In addition, almost one-third (31%) of workers have taken time off work because of workplace stress and 25% have become ill in the last six months due to such stress. And employers are obligated to accommodate workers with disabilities, including mental disorders.

These results are consistent with other studies that have shown the various psychological and mental health issues workers are suffering from, such as depression, and their impact on the workplace (see, how psychologically unsafe workplaces cost companies millions).

Workers may be reluctant to reveal their mental health issues and to seek appropriate help out of concern about the stigma attached to such issues. In fact, in the survey, 71% of workers expressed concern about workplace stigma.

Stigma occurs as a result of stereotypes and negative perceptions, and is often associated with mental health conditions. So what can employers do to remove this stigma in the workplace? Morneau Shepell recommends that employers:

- **Educate and inform.** Communicate about mental illness across the whole organization to reduce fear, stigma and discrimination in the workplace.
- **Foster a healthy workplace environment.** Establish a culture that's conducive to supporting employees' mental health by raising awareness of workplace programs and policies that promote mental and physical health and wellness.
- **Strengthen people leader skills.** Train managers on how to identify the signs and symptoms of mental distress, and on available employee tools and

supports.

- **Start at the top.** Encourage senior management to demonstrate leadership on mental health.
- **Promote accessibility.** Provide access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other appropriate referral resources to assist employees.

You should also consider using CSA Z1003/BNQ 9700, the first Canadian standard for psychological health and safety in the workplace, to set up a psychological health and safety management system. (Watch this recorded webinar on this standard.)

And for more information on mental health and psychological safety in the workplace, go to the OHS Insider's Psychological Safety Compliance Centre for:

- A model psychological harassment policy
- An infographic on psychological safety
- 10 tips for improving workers' mental health
- A stress prevention at work checklist
- A psychological health and safety survey.