

# Mental Health in the Workplace

## Workplace Facts



# Making Mental Health a Priority

- ▶ Mental illness has a profound impact on all areas of our lives and needs to be actively addressed
- ▶ Mental illness costs the Canadian economy an estimated \$52 billion annually



# Workplace Facts

- ▶ The fastest growing category of disability costs to Canadian employers is Depression; 10% of the Canadian labor force, (about 1.4 million) have the illness
- ▶ Only 31% of employers have plans to address mental health and mental illness in the workplace
- ▶ Currently, 64% of Canadian organizations have no structured process for supervisors to support employees' return to work after any illness or disability



# Why Mental Health Issues are Often Hidden in the Workplace

## Stigma & Fear:

- ▶ of losing employer's respect
- ▶ of losing one's job
- ▶ of not being promoted
- ▶ of being isolated or shamed by co-workers and colleagues
- ▶ of asking for accommodation
- ▶ that long-term career goals may be affected
- ▶ of admitting to an illness



# Reluctance to Disclose can be Harmful

- ▶ If an employee is reluctant to come forward with a mental health issue; it can lead to more serious problems
- ▶ While the decision of employees to take time off work involves varying social and economic factors, low levels of time off sick are also not necessarily a good thing for an individual employee



# How Unaddressed Mental Health Issues Affect Your Workplace

- ▶ According to *Stress at Work: a guide for employers*: the consequences of mental health problems in the workplace can be summarized in the following four categories
  - ▶ Absenteeism
  - ▶ Work Performance
  - ▶ Staff Attitude and Behaviour
  - ▶ Relationships at Work



# How Unaddressed Mental Health Issues Affect Your Workplace

## 1: Absenteeism

- ▶ Increase in overall sickness absence, particularly frequent short periods of absence
- ▶ Poor health, (depression, stress, burnout)
- ▶ Physical conditions, (high blood pressure, heart disease, ulcers, sleeping disorders, skin rashes, headache, neck and backache, low resistance to infections)



# How Unaddressed Mental Health Issues Affect Your Workplace

## 2: Work Performance

- ▶ Reduction in productivity and output
- ▶ Increase in error rates
- ▶ Increased amount of accidents
- ▶ Poor decision-making
- ▶ Deterioration in planning and control
- ▶ Presenteeism





# How Unaddressed Mental Health Issues Affect Your Workplace

## 3: Staff Attitude and Behaviour

- ▶ Loss of motivation and commitment
- ▶ Poor timekeeping; e.g. extended breaks
- ▶ Labour turnover, (particularly expensive for companies at top levels of management)



# How Unaddressed Mental Health Issues Affect Your Workplace

## 4: Relationships at Work

- ▶ Tension and conflicts between colleagues
- ▶ Poor relationships with clients
- ▶ Lack of sense of team
- ▶ Increase in disciplinary problems



# Front Line Managers

- ▶ Managers have a key role in identifying and reducing stress within the workplace. They are often the first point of contact when an individual is feeling stressed
- ▶ Managers need to be continually aware of potential signs which may indicate a problem. It is essential that they have adequate training to be able to spot these situations quickly and address them without delay



# Approaching *Potential* Mental Health Issues with Employees

- ▶ Behaviour or performance indicators may suggest an employee may be dealing with a mental health issue
- ▶ You have an obligation as an employer to address this
- ▶ Must be approached as a performance issue
- ▶ Concerns need to be discussed privately



# Separating Performance Issues from Mental Health Issues

- ▶ Know that performance issues may be tied to a mental health condition, but do not make any preliminary assumptions
- ▶ Always approach workplace performance issues as performance issues only
- ▶ It is **never your role** as an employer to **diagnose** an employee
- ▶ Know what steps to take if an employee informs you of having a mental health issue
- ▶ Make sure that you are aware of, and can tell them about, resources in the community



# Discussing Mental Health Issues with Employees

## Prepare for the meeting:

- ▶ Ensure Managers understand basic mental health
- ▶ Make the employee feel SAFE and comfortable
- ▶ Allow the employee to talk, and remain focused on the performance issue itself
- ▶ Know what resources the company can offer to the employee; have them handy
- ▶ Know your company accommodation policies



# Meeting with the Employee

- ▶ Be honest, compassionate, upfront and caring in approach
- ▶ Use open ended questions: Stay away from going in to the employee's personal life, don't try to diagnose a problem, nor act as a counselor
- ▶ Discussion may be emotional and include surprise, anger, denial or defensiveness
- ▶ Reaffirm the employee's strong points and value to the company



# Taking Positive Steps

- ▶ Be flexible and discuss the possibility of providing accommodations if needed
- ▶ Provide access to an Employee Assistance Program or offer a referral to community services
- ▶ Detail to the employee that meetings with an EAP provider are confidential
- ▶ Set a time to meet again to follow up with the employee
- ▶ Maintain confidentiality





# Educational Resources

The image displays seven educational resource cards from the Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSOC). Each card is presented in a light blue frame and includes the MDSOC logo at the top. The cards are as follows:

- Medications and You:** Features a collage of four small photos showing people in various settings.
- What is Depression?:** Features a photo of a woman looking down with her hand to her face.
- Workplace Mental Health:** Features a photo of a diverse group of people smiling.
- What is Bi-Polar Disorder?:** Features a close-up photo of a person's face with a yellow and blue background.
- Quick Facts Mental Illness & Addiction in Canada:** Features a collage of photos showing people in different environments.
- Cannabis and You:** Features a photo of hands holding green cannabis plants.
- Operational Stress Injuries & Other Traumatic Stress: Therapies and Treatment for Veterans:** Features a photo of a Canadian flag and a red maple leaf.



# Contact Info

The Mood Disorders Society of Canada offers a vast amount of support, resources and information to help.

Please visit or contact us for further information on mental illness and mental health.

[www.mdsc.ca](http://www.mdsc.ca)  
[info@mdsc.ca](mailto:info@mdsc.ca)

Mood Disorders Society of Canada  
Hope Crescent, Belleville ON K8P 4S2  
(613) 921-5565

