

# Mental Health & Well-Being in the Workplace

## Why is this important?

- 1 in 4 Ontarians will have a diagnosed mental health condition in their lifetime.
- 7 out of 10 Canadians with depression are in the work force (Stats Canada 2006).
- Stress, burnout and physical or mental health issues are the main issues limiting productivity in Canada, Canadian CEO's say.<sup>1</sup>
- Based on McMaster University disability claims the most common mental health conditions are depression, anxiety and alcohol dependency.
- Burnout costs Canadian business an estimated \$12 billion every year in health claims, lost productivity and absenteeism.

## Business suffers when employees don't have work/life balance.

- The Conference Board of Canada found that workers who reported a high degree of stress balancing their work and family life missed 7.2 days of work each year, while those who reported very little stress only missed an average of 3.6 days.

As a supervisor, your primary concern is the success of your department and your staff. Success for most organizations means controlling costs and optimizing performance. But have you considered the impact that work/life balance – both for you and your staff – has on that bottom line? This includes but is not limited to:

- Employee productivity & wellness
- Co-worker perceptions of fairness
- Organizational effectiveness

When a person experiences a mental health issue and they obtain treatment in the first few months of their illness, early recovery is more likely; early detection and treatment also reduce the likelihood that their mental health issue will become chronic.<sup>2</sup>

## How balanced is your work area?

Mental well-being means striking a balance in all aspects of one's life; social, physical, spiritual, economic and mental. The best thing you can do as a leader is to model good work-life balance yourself.

- Are your employees familiar with the policies and programs available to help with work/life balance?
- Does your department provide flexible hours to help employees balance their responsibilities at work and at home?
- Do supervisors in your area encourage employees to stay home with sick children or elderly relatives when necessary?
- Do employees feel supported in the workplace?
- Are you familiar with return to work and accommodation strategies for employees with mental health issues?

1 Productivity Through Health: A FGIworld CEO Study on Health and Productivity in Canadian Industry. (2005). FGIworld. Retrieved September 9, 2005.

2 Wilson, M., Joffe, R., & Wilkerson, B. (2002). The unheralded business crisis in Canada: Depression at work. An information paper for business, incorporating 12 steps to a business plan to defeat depression. Toronto: Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health, p. 4, 18.

# Recognizing the Problem

If you recognize an employee is behaving differently than usual, struggling to complete work assignments, taking increased time off or sick days, there are some things you can do as a supervisor.

The best way to approach an employee, is to first recognize the problem and then address it with them.

## Having Difficult Conversations

### How to frame the first conversation with an employee

1

#### **I notice ...**

Early observation and identification of workplace behaviours

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2

#### **I'm concerned ...**

Open communication with the employee about the situation

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#### **Let's focus on solutions at work.**

Identify employee needs, including:

- Increased knowledge, skills or resources
  - Engaging in behavioural changes
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#### **If a health issue is revealed, offer accommodation:**

(Are you unsure? Speak with Human Resources Services)

- Ask what is required for employee to get job done
  - Brainstorm options and limitations
  - Collaborate on solutions that work
  - Develop a clear agreement
  - Ensure ongoing monitoring and adjustment if necessary
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#### **Remember when having these conversations:**

- It is not your role to diagnose.
  - Validate the employee. Comment on their strengths and value to organization.
  - Use appropriate tone of voice. Listen. Allow pauses. Do not interrupt. Be open to having the employee explain their situation and perspective.
  - You are expected to work with them on solutions that allow them to be productive.
  - You are not expected to solve their problems yourself.
  - Have a list of McMaster University resources (see back cover) to offer.
  - You may require a lot of patience when helping an employee. Find the support you need so that you can manage.
  - Always stick to the issue at hand, rather than discussions about character or personality.
  - Always document discussions and any verbal agreements.
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#### **Employee's role:**

- Seek wellness
- Consider the impact on others
- Commit to the process
- Speak up when change is required

## Employees in Crisis

Employees requiring urgent assistance due to emotional distress or mental health issues should receive immediate medical care.

### For immediate assistance contact:

#### Security Services

On campus: **Ext. 88**

Off campus: **905-522-4135**

Downtown Centre and other off site buildings: **911**

Hospital Security: **5555**

McMaster University Medical Centre,  
Chedoke Hospital (Wilcox, Holbrook),  
Hamilton General Hospital,  
Henderson General Hospital and  
Juravinski Cancer Centre.

St. Joseph's and St. Peter's: **7777**

#### Human Solutions, Employee & Family Assistance Program

**1-800-663-1142**

#### Human Resources Services

**Ext. 24554**

The first priority is to ensure the safety of the employee and other employees. Do not allow the employee to leave the workplace by themselves, without an attendant.

The employee should seek assistance from a mental health professional before returning home and/or to work.



# McMaster University Resources

## CAW Local 555 Women's Advocate

Available to assist women CAW members who are faced with situations of violence or abuse in their personal lives by referral to community services.

[womensadvocate@cawlocal555.ca](mailto:womensadvocate@cawlocal555.ca)

## Chaplaincy Centre

Offers responsive pastoral support to the whole community with personal counselling, bereavement support groups, public memorial services, and participation in McMaster University networks and programs.

Ext. 24207

Email: [chaplain@mcmaster.ca](mailto:chaplain@mcmaster.ca)

## Employee Health Services

Offering services to employees and supervisors in managing workplace disability issues, workplace accommodation, medical leave, Workplace Safety & Insurance Board claims, healthy workplace initiatives and on-site occupational health services.

Ext. 26965 or 23564

[www.workingatmcmaster.ca/ehs](http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/ehs)

## Employee & Labour Relations

The Employee/Labour Relations Team leads in the provision of Human Resources Services (HRS) in the areas of collective bargaining, collective agreement administration, labour relations, employee relations, manager training, compensation programs, and support for other HRS programs.

Ext. 23850

## Environmental & Occupational Health Support Services

EOHSS is a team of health, safety and risk management specialists committed to supporting the University's commitment to creativity, innovation and excellence in the areas of environmental & occupational health and safety and loss prevention and mitigation.

Ext. 24352

## Human Solutions, Employee & Family Assistance Program

Offering, confidential counselling services at no charge to employees and their families on a wide range of issues, including but not limited to relationships, financial, nutritional, workplace stress. Service delivery is offered face to face, via telephone counselling, and online, in addition to online e-learning courses.

1-800-663-1142

Key Person's 24hr. Hotline – Contact a psychologist for just in time consultation.

[www.humansolutions.ca](http://www.humansolutions.ca)

## Office of Human Rights & Equity Services

Receives enquires and complaints concerning any form of harassment or discrimination and attempts resolution in a confidential manner. Human Rights & Equity Services ensures that the Sexual Harassment Policy and the Anti-Discrimination Policy are administered efficiently, effectively and fairly.

Ext. 27581

## Security Services

On Campus call 88 – Off Campus call 905-522-4135

# External Resources

## Assaulted Women's Help Line

1-866-863-0511 / 1-866-863-7868

## COAST Crisis Line Hamilton

905-972-8338

(Crisis Outreach And Support Team)

The goal of COAST is to provide 24 hour crisis services to individuals with mental health concerns. The COAST team provides assessment, treatment, support and referral for people experiencing crisis.

## Distress Centre Hamilton

905-525-8611

Serviced by trained volunteers, offering 24 hour telephone support, crisis intervention, and referral to other agencies where appropriate, for people in distress.

## Drug and Alcohol Registry of Treatment

Provides information about drug and alcohol treatment services in Ontario. Services are confidential, anonymous and available 24 hours a day.

1-800-565-8603

[www.dart.on.ca](http://www.dart.on.ca)

## Emergency Psychiatry, St. Joseph's Hospital

905-522-1155 Ext. 3243

## Hamilton Police (general inquiries)

905-546-4925

## Mental Health Service Information Line

Provides free, confidential, and anonymous support available 24 hours a day on mental health services across Ontario.

1-866-531-2600

[www.mhsio.on.ca](http://www.mhsio.on.ca)

## Suicide Crisis Line

905-522-1477

