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MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS
MEGHAN HENRY, EDITOR

Mental health affects all workplaces in a variety of ways. When mental health is supported in the workplace, employers see improved morale and increased productivity. When mental health is ignored, employers see problems with on-the-job concentration, absenteeism & rising healthcare costs.

The Holman Group is the key to quality mental health care plans. For more information, please call The Holman Group at (800) 321-2843.



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Behavioral Health Care News for the Insurance Brokerage Industry

November 2008

HEALTH MATTERS

Importance of Critical Incident Stress Management

Traumatic events or disasters can occur at any time, anywhere and to anyone. Coping with a traumatic event can often be difficult unless given professional assistance.

What happens to people after a disaster or other traumatic event? Shock and denial are typical responses to disasters and other kinds of trauma, especially shortly after the event. As the initial shock subsides, reactions vary from one person to another. Reactions include intense & unpredictable feelings, strained personal and professional relationships, physical illness and varied behavioral patterns.

Employers should recognize when employees has experienced a traumatic incident. If it appears as though his disaster has or may have the potential to affect employee behavior or productivity, the employer should consider scheduling a Critical Incident Stress Management session at the worksite.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is designed to help people deal with their trauma one incident at a time by allowing the individual to talk about the incident when it happens, without judgment or criticism.

While the type of intervention used depends on the situation, the number of people involved, and their proximity to the event, typically the CISM includes

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an on-site debriefing, facilitated by a mental health professional, for those affected individuals. The debriefing is normally done within 72 hours of the incident and gives the individual or group the opportunity to talk about their experience, how it has affected them, brainstorm coping mechanisms, identify individuals at risk, inform the individual or group about services available to them in their community and through their mental health or EAP plans. The final step is to follow up with them the day after the debriefing to ensure that they are safe and coping well or to refer the individual for professional counseling.

To learn more about The Holman Group's Critical Incident Stress Management program, please call the Sales Department at (800) 321-2843 or log on to www.holmangroup.com.

EMPLOYEE MATTERS

The Effects of Alcoholism in the Workplace

Alcoholism in the workplace has a profound impact on safety and productivity. Most heavy and binge drinkers have jobs, with more than sixty percent employed as full-time workers.

According to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the cost of alcoholism in the workplace ranges from \$33 billion to \$68 billion a year with absenteeism estimated to be four to eight times greater among alcoholics and alcohol abusers.

Alcohol does not just affect the user: One in five employees have reported injuries or exposure to dangerous conditions because of a co-worker's drinking, or have had to go beyond their regular work responsibilities to compensate for an employee who was alcohol-impaired.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reports, however, that a place of employment can be an effective location for preventing or identifying alcohol-related problems.

To combat alcoholism in the workplace, many employers are creating comprehensive drug-free programs. Typically, these feature five components:

- A policy that explains why the program is being implemented (such as protecting worker health and well-being); what behaviors are not allowed; and a clear explanation of what will happen if the policy is violated.
- The training of supervisors so that they recognize and keep track of performance problems that may be the result of alcohol abuse, and can make referrals for testing. Supervisors should not take it upon themselves



to diagnose or counsel employees who may have alcohol issues.

- Providing employees with a thorough alcohol education program to include a review of the company's policy, an explanation of alcohol addiction, how that addiction can affect work performance as well as one's personal and family life, and how to get help if they suspect they have a problem.
 - Creating a means of support for employees who have an alcohol problem. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) have proven to be a very effective means for workers and their families to get counseling and other services, and are a much more constructive option than firing the employee.
 - Drug testing can be a constructive tool for finding conclusive evidence of alcoholism at work, opening the way for confronting the employee, getting them into treatment, or bringing about disciplinary action. Employers should check to ensure their alcohol and drug testing procedure is in compliance with local, state and federal law before that testing is instituted.

Creating an alcohol and drug-free workplace should be a collaborative effort between employers and employees where the needs of both parties are recognized, the right to privacy is protected, and mutual respect is a constant.

For more information about helping your clients ensure an alcohol-free workplace, please call The Holman Group at (800) 321-2843.

CORPORATE MATTERS

Creating a Mental Health-Friendly Environment

A mental health-friendly business environment makes good business sense. It benefits owners, managers, and employees in ways that affect the bottom line. Consider the following outcomes, as noted by the Center for Mental Health Services at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

- **Higher productivity and motivation.** Employees feel valued and secure and work more effectively when employers demonstrate a commitment to their well-being.
- **Reduced absenteeism.** Workplace stress is a major cause of absenteeism. Helping employees manage their stress and overall mental health can boost productivity.
- **Health insurance cost containment.** Instituting health and wellness programs can help hold down health insurance rate hikes.
- **Preparedness for disasters.** Assisting employees in times of sudden unexpected trauma with counseling, peer support groups, and links to needed community services can help businesses become productive again sooner.
- **Loyalty and retention.** Businesses with mental health-friendly practices have documented remarkably low turnover rates, along with cost savings in recruitment, new employee orientation, and training.
- **Hiring and promoting the most qualified people.** By openly supporting mental health-friendly policies, employers can increase the pool of qualified applicants.
- **More efficient workplace practices and policies.** The process of thinking about mental health can generate helpful internal policy and benefit reviews, and more effective workplace systems and procedures for employees as a whole.
- **Better workplace relations.** Awareness of and openness to mental health issues help create a positive climate for understanding, conflict resolution, and support.
- **Diversity, acceptance, and respect in the workplace.** Embracing diversity includes people who live with mental illnesses. In becoming more inclusive, businesses can both thrive and set a standard for others.

If you are interested in learning more about encouraging a mental health-friendly workplace for your clients, please contact The Holman Group at (800) 321-2843.

