Return to Work: Mental Health Supports for Employees and Families

Your example and leadership are vital to your company's recovery and Return-to-Work plan success.

Workplaces in crisis impacts team function and employee wellbeing. Including social and emotional health in business strategies positions companies to emerge stronger and more resilient, with staff who feel supported and more connected to their company and their colleagues.

The information below can serve as a guide in helping you address some of the keystones in supporting employee mental health and wellbeing in your Return-to-Work plan.

<u>Resilience vs Burnout</u>

An important component of managing crisis is monitoring the stress of your employees. The World Health Organization defines burnout as a "syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." Employees suffering from burnout have higher rates of

- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Broken relationships
- Poor physical health
- Anxiety or Depression
- Suicidal ideation

Leaders can build supports for themselves and their employees to reduce the risk of burnout and the negative behaviors associated that impact work and family life.

- Improve social supports while maintaining physically distancing. Building and maintaining strong social connections in the workplace reduces risks associated with feelings of isolation, disconnection, or loneliness. **Ask managers to prioritize regular, less formal contact with staff in their Return-to-Work planning.**
- Resilience is the ability to cope despite difficult situations. Building resilience takes teamwork, courage, and patience. **In your Return-to-Work plan, encourage employees to ask for help when the need it; offer help to others; and find positive ways to decompress.** (see Appendix xxx Resilience Wheel)
- Set the example.
- **Monitor employee fatigue/burnout** during the Return-to- Work transition, especially those engaged in helping others. **Include respite in your Return-to-Work plan** to recharge staff and reduce the negative impact of chronic or toxic stress. (see Appendix xxx for the Professional Quality of Life Scale Assessment)

Connect Staff to Mental Health Resources

Everyone needs help sometime. Directing staff to resources and prioritizing their mental and emotional wellbeing shows them you understand the toll of the many changes in workplace routines.

- Recognize the challenges of uncertain times in business and family life facing all of us. **Assure staff that while episodes of anxiety, fear, or depression may occur, company and/or community resources are available to support the individual and their family.**

- o Include emotional wellbeing as a priority in your company's COVID recovery planning
- o Identify key staff as a point of contact for more information on accessing mental health supports
- o Post mental health warm-line and crisis information (see Appendix xxx for a list of resources)
- Review employee health insurance plans; **ensure access to mental health supports is available under your employee benefit plan.**
- Tele-health services allow employees to access mental health providers without leaving their workplace or home. **Ask your insurer about telemedicine access and rate parity within your insurance plan.**

Examples of communication from leaders to staff conveying support can be found here: www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID_leaders_support_staff.asp