Federal Workplace Supports Mental Health

Information for Supervisors

Mental health is critical to employee well-being, workplace effectiveness, and community strength. Supervisors play a vital role in understanding what it means to be mentally healthy, ensuring a positive work environment, and supporting employees who may be facing mental health or substance abuse challenges.

Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, works productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Individuals with mental health problems may exhibit changes in their mood, interactions, or performance at work. Signs of a decline may include an inability to make decisions, repeatedly missing deadlines, being late to work, reduced quality of work, distractibility, or a general lack of interest and focus.

Nearly one quarter of the U.S. workforce experiences a mental or substance use disorder each year. Additionally, many have children, spouses, or other loved ones facing mental health or substance abuse issues. This year, approximately one in five Americans over age 18 will experience a mental health problem, including depression, mood swings, and anxiety disorders. Some of these individuals and others will experience a substance abuse problem. There is a very good chance that every employee in your workplace knows someone affected by mental illness or addiction.

Mental illness and substance use disorders cause more lost work time than any other serious health condition. Fortunately, there are effective treatments that enable most people to recover. Left untreated, these disorders can have tragic consequences. Sadly, an average of 100 Americans die each day as a result of suicide, a leading cause of death among working aged Americans.

Worksite programs can play a critical role through:

- Educating workers on the basics of mental health and the signs of distress
- Decreasing concerns associated with seeking help
- Training on social connectedness, resilience, problem-solving, and well-being

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential program that assists in managing individual, family, or workplace stress before a crisis develops. EAP provides support, access to short-term behavioral health services, and referrals to ongoing care. Federal employees and their families can also receive care for mental and/or substance abuse problems through their Federal Employees Health Benefits insurance plans.

People with mental health and/or substance abuse problems, exposure to traumatizing events, prior suicide attempts, chronic pain, or serious medical conditions may be at increased risk for

suicide. Supervisors can recognize warning signs and know what to do when concerns arise.
While some warning signs are specific to suicide, any of these signs may be worrisome in their own
right and cause for concern.

What are the warning signs of suicide?

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped, in unbearable pain, or being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated, or reckless
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

What can I do if I believe someone is at risk?

*If the individual is in immediate danger, call 911. Otherwise, consult the National Suicide
Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).* You will be connected to a trained crisis worker
immediately. You can also reach out to those you believe need help. Asking if an individual is
thinking about killing themselves communicates your concern and will not put the idea into their
heads or make it more likely that they will attempt suicide. If the individual indicates they are
having thoughts of harming themselves, do not leave them alone. Seek help and stay with the
individual until help is available.

For additional information, visit:

http://www.mentalhealth.gov	http://nimh.nih.gov
http://samhsa.gov	http://nida.nih.gov
http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org	http://niaaa.nih.gov
http://sprc.org	

**Please consider adding the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's logo (featured below)
(available at *http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/GetInvolved/logos*) to your website.
It may be the key to saving a life!**