

Benefits Insights

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5 Mental Health Employee Benefits Trends for 2023

Between the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation and evolving job duties, more employees are experiencing mental health challenges. In fact, a 2022 Lyra survey revealed that 84% of employees experienced at least one mental health challenge over the past year. They're feeling anxious, burnt out, stressed and depressed. As such, organizations are expected to take more responsibility for workers' mental health and help employees on a personal level.

In 2023, employers are poised to address burnout, explore ways to help employees struggling with mental health, and foster a healthy, supportive and understanding working environment. Employers can consider the following trends that may influence workers' mental health in 2023.

1. MORE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Employers should expect to see more mental health programs cropping up in the new year. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation's (KFF) 2022 Employer Health Benefits Survey, large employers, in particular, note a growing need for mental health services. Nearly half (48%) of large companies saw an increase in workers using mental health services, and 29% say that more employees requested family and medical leave in the last year because of increasing mental health issues. This year, employers are expected to take more responsibility for workers' mental health and well-being by expanding employee assistance programs and offering mental health education and support.

Furthermore, many employers feel they don't have enough in-network providers to offer timely mental health care access. While 82% of large organizations said they had a sufficient number of primary care providers, only 44% said the same of behavioral health providers. Separate from resources available through health plans, more than three-quarters (81%) of large employers offered employee assistance programs for mental health.

2. INCREASED SCHEDULING FLEXIBILITY

Scheduling flexibility remains a top workplace desire for employees. During the pandemic, many employees were sent home to work remotely for the first time; now, many want to retain that perk at least some of the time. According to the Lyra survey, nearly 70% of employees said work-from-home days and

flexible scheduling options are "very important." That's because having work flexibility allows employees to better manage their personal responsibilities, creating a better work-life balance.

Workplaces have changed over the past three years, and today's are much more connected and better suited to support a dispersed workforce. The Lyra report further noted that employees are increasingly expecting to set their own schedules, having autonomy over when and where they work. Even the formerly rare practice of a four-day workweek is likely to be adopted by more companies in 2023.

3. EXPANDED ACCESS TO VIRTUAL DOCTOR VISITS

Remote access to mental health professionals can be critical for employees who may otherwise not have time to seek help. Such specialists can often be accessed through telemedicine resources, which have been gaining significant popularity recently. Many employers had embraced telemedicine, especially when COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns prevented people from seeking nonemergency health care.

According to the 2022 KFF survey, 96% of large employers with 50 or more workers offered health care services through telemedicine, while 87% of small firms did. The number of organizations covering telemedicine services is much higher than three years ago. As virtual health care services are expected to continue to grow, employers can consider how providing access to on-demand health professionals may benefit their employees.

4. GREATER MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

While mental health concerns have risen dramatically in recent years, education on such topics hasn't always kept pace. Employees might be feeling burned out or depressed and not understand why or what to do about it. This demonstrates the need for greater mental health literacy. In 2023, employers can expect a greater focus on education in this area.

Examples of mental health education include:

- Training managers to spot employees who may be struggling with their mental health
- Providing employee communications that address and help explain mental health issues
- Offering seminars or educational sessions that explain signs of mental health issues and what to do about them

Employers should consider what resources or solutions may best serve their employees in the new year.

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5. IMPROVED FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALS

Mental health needs to be nurtured, just like physical health—it's impossible to improve something overnight. Employers are understanding this and taking steps to address issues before they worsen.

For instance, 48% of employees and 53% of managers reported that they're burned out at work, according to a 2022 Microsoft report. Employers are trying to curb this trend by checking in with employees more frequently about how they're feeling. Instead of annual or quarterly one-on-one meetings, managers are encouraged to touch base more regularly. Organizational leaders can also empower managers to actively listen and make better decisions to improve their teams' overall performance and well-being. Having candid communication can help address mental health issues before they get worse.

SUMMARY

Mental health is a serious concern for employees and their employers. Not addressing mental health issues can lead to a host of other problems down the road, including burnout and depression.

In 2023, employers should be ready to help their workers with their mental health. This means educating employees and managers about these issues and providing solutions for individuals to seek professional help.

Reach out to Brady, Chapman, Holland & Associates for mental health-related resources.

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