Knowledge Download:
How COVID-19 is impacting employee mental health (and why you should care)

It's easy to see how COVID-19 impacts our personal lives—maybe it changed your kids' school schedule, shortened your daily commute, or limited your gatherings with family and friends. But it may be more challenging to decipher how COVID-19 affects our work lives.

That's what Mental Health America (MHA) set out to examine with its Work Health Survey, which gathered data from more than 5,000 U.S. employees from Feb. 13, 2020 to Sept. 9, 2020. MHA recently released the results in its Mind the Workplace 2021 Report.

Results show that COVID-19 placed significant strain on employees. They worried more than ever about their (and other's) physical and mental health, felt isolated, and experienced financial stress. At the same time, they felt that there was no room to talk about these concerns in the workplace. This lack of openness about mental health concerns can create more than unhappiness at work; unresolved stress can lead to more serious concerns, like clinical depression or anxiety.

Here are a few key takeaways from the report and what they mean for you:

1. **Nearly 83 percent of respondents indicated that they felt emotionally exhausted by their work, and of those individuals, 71 percent said that stress in the workplace impacts their mental health.** When left unaddressed, these feelings can impact productivity, overall wellness, and satisfaction. Employers can help by addressing employee concerns, modeling healthy stress management techniques, and sharing available resources. This may be as easy as reminding an employee about your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), directing them to the MHRB website at www.mhrb.org to help them find a pathway to care, or taking a few minutes to talk with your employee about what they're experiencing.

2. **Almost 9 in 10 employees say that workplace stress impacts their mental health.** Yet, being able to talk with a supervisor about workplace stress was most strongly linked to the healthiest overall workplace scores, which were calculated using 16 questions about workplace stress, burnout, and financial security. Learn how to ease workplace stress in this SHRM article or about how to talk about mental health in the workplace in this Harvard Business Review article.
3. **Nearly 60 percent of employees do not believe that their work environment is safe for those living with mental illness.** Creating a safer workplace for mental health issues can make employees happier, healthier, and reduce turnover at the same time. Learn how you can respond when your employee brings up a mental health concern in this Harvard Business Review article. If you'd like to learn more MHRB offers free trainings for businesses, including Mental Health First Aid, QPR Suicide Prevention Training, and Trauma 101. Learn more and request a training on our website at www.mhrb.org/events-training.

No matter where you and your employees are, MHRB is here to help. Visit our website at www.mhrb.org/resources for content curated specifically for businesses and employers.