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Ways to Support Wellness

- Paid Time Off/Sick Leave
- Scheduled meetings with agendas
- Note-taking during meetings for review afterwards
- No video option on virtual meetings
- Regular mental health check-ins
- Reasonable Accommodations
- Flexible scheduling
- Clear communication
- Medical and behavioral health benefits and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
- Clear boundaries between work and personal time
- A work culture that openly speaks about mental health
- Listening! Employees are experts on their mental health

Supporting Employees with Mental Health Conditions

Tip Sheet: Dealing with Disclosure

Thinking about talking to your employer about your mental health? This guide provides information and resources to help you navigate this important conversation.

It's based on a discussion from a CAFÉ TAC webinar from Navigating the Workplace: A Four-Part "Case Scenario" Series on Dealing with Disclosure which you can find online at cafetacenter.net/navigating-the-workplace-a-four-part-case-scenario-series/.

What Does Disclosure Mean?

Disclosure involves informing your employer or supervisor about a mental health condition you've been diagnosed with, such as anxiety or depression.

Why Disclose?

Disclosure can have significant benefits:

Access to Accommodations: You may be eligible for adjustments to your work situation, such as flexible hours or the option to work remotely. These accommodations can help you manage your condition and perform your job effectively.

Building a Supportive Workplace: Openly discussing mental health helps reduce stigma and creates a more understanding and accepting work environment for everyone.

Legal Protections: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides legal protections for employees with disabilities, including those with mental health conditions.

Find more resources to help employers understand mental health and support employee wellness at cafetacenter.net.

Supporting Mental Health

Understanding Your Rights

The ADA is a crucial piece of legislation that requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified employees with disabilities.

- **Qualified Employee:** You are considered a qualified employee if you can perform the essential functions of your job, with or without reasonable accommodations.
- **Reasonable Accommodation:** These are adjustments to your work environment or responsibilities that enable you to perform your job effectively. Examples include flexible work schedules, remote work options, modified workloads, or quiet workspaces.

The Importance of a Supportive Workplace

While legal requirements are important, a truly supportive workplace goes beyond simply meeting legal obligations.

- **Promoting Inclusivity and Diversity:** A supportive workplace embraces all employees, regardless of their mental health status.
- **Prioritizing Employee Well-being:** Your employer should recognize that your mental health is important and that supporting your well-being benefits both you and the company.
- **Reducing Stigma:** The workplace should actively challenge stereotypes and biases related to mental health.
- **Maintaining Confidentiality:** Your employer has a responsibility to keep your personal medical information confidential.

Challenges You May Face

Many employees experience concerns about disclosing their mental health condition. These may include:

- **Stigma and Discrimination:** Fear of being judged, treated differently, or perceived as less competent.
- **Career Progression Concerns:** Worry that disclosure may negatively impact your career advancement opportunities.
- **Forced Disclosure:** Feeling pressured to disclose your condition in order to receive necessary accommodations.
- **Privacy Concerns:** Hesitation to share personal medical information with your employer.



Workplace Accommodations: Exploring Your Options

If you disclose a mental health condition, your employer has a responsibility to explore and implement reasonable accommodations. These can include:

- **Flexible Work Schedules:** Adjusting your start and end times to accommodate medical appointments or personal needs.
- **Remote Work Options:** The ability to work from home to reduce stress and improve focus.
- **Modified Workloads:** Adjusting the number of tasks or deadlines to accommodate your needs and limitations.
- **Quiet Workspaces:** Providing a less stimulating environment to help you manage potential triggers for your mental health condition.

Strategies for Employers

To create a truly supportive environment, employers can take several important steps:

- **Active Listening and Validation:** Employers should demonstrate genuine attentiveness and acknowledge your experiences and concerns.
- **Offering Support and Resources:** They should provide information on available resources, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), mental health professionals, and other relevant support services.
- **Maintaining Confidentiality:** Employers have a responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of your medical information.
- **Avoiding Assumptions and Stereotypes:** Each employee's situation is unique. Employers should avoid making assumptions about your condition or your needs.

Creating a Supportive Workplace Culture

Building a truly supportive workplace requires a multifaceted approach:

- **Education and Awareness Campaigns:** Organize events like Mental Health Awareness Month to promote open discussions about mental health.
- **Role Model Visibility:** Encourage leaders to share their own experiences with mental health challenges (if comfortable) to normalize disclosure.
- **Inclusive Language:** Use respectful and non-stigmatizing terminology when discussing mental health within the workplace.
- **Implementation Tips:**
 - **Preparation:** Educate managers and supervisors on legal and ethical obligations related to mental health disclosures.
 - **Collaborative Problem-Solving:** Work closely with your employer to identify and implement suitable accommodations that meet your individual needs.
 - **Proactive Policies:** Establish clear policies that support mental health disclosures and outline the process for requesting and receiving accommodations.

The Benefits of Supporting Mental Health

Investing in mental health support within the workplace offers significant benefits:

- **World Health Organization (WHO):** Research indicates that for every \$1 invested in mental health treatment and workplace accommodations, there is a \$1.40 return in improved health and productivity.
- **Gallup Report:** Companies with strong mental health policies have experienced a 41% decrease in employee absenteeism.
- **American Psychological Association (2019):** Workplaces that encourage open communication and support around mental health have seen a 75% improvement in employee morale and overall company culture.
- **ROI Data (2020):** Businesses that have implemented comprehensive mental health programs have seen an average return on investment of \$5 for every \$1 spent over a three-year period, driven by increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and improved employee retention.



DID YOU KNOW?

93% of Employees say an “open-door” policy that allows for face-to-face communication with leadership is important to addressing mental health