

Mental Health Works

A resource to support employers create a mentally healthy workplace, and recruit and retain employees with mental health conditions.



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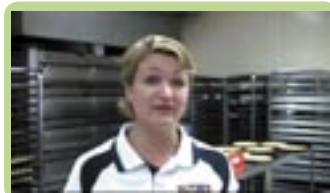
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About mental health



Myths & Realities



Healthy workplaces



Workplace strategies



Recruiting & retaining staff



Employer support

1 in 5.

Mental illness is more common than you may think.

The 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing found that one in five Australians had experienced a common mental illness in the year prior to the survey. Mental illness is real, treatable, and can affect anyone.

Family, friends, neighbours, co-workers and employees.

Mental health conditions range in severity from mild mental health problems caused by stress to diagnosed mental illness, such as depression or bipolar disorder.



“There was no reason for me to be depressed....”

Most people successfully manage their condition.

They work in management, the professions or the trades.

They have families and are part of their local communities.

Mental health is a workplace issue.

Employers who manage a healthy workplace, help all staff maintain their mental health.

This is not only best practice for employers, it is good for business.

02 Myths and Realities



Myths and fears are barriers to employment for people with mental health conditions.

Myths about people with mental health conditions

Unsafe

Unreliable

Adversely affects team members, team culture and productivity

Fears

Unknown

Costly special arrangements

Additional costs, time and effort to manage

Discrimination

Realities

- Most people who experience mental illness recover
- People with a mental health condition can, and do, work.
- You may already be managing employees with mental health conditions without even knowing it.
- Employment has a positive effect as there is a strong link between good mental health and workforce participation.
- People with mental health conditions are no more likely to be dangerous than any other group in society.
- People with mental health conditions have the same intellectual capacity as anyone else.

There are lots of reasons employees ask for flexible work arrangements, such as employees with carer responsibilities.

Almost half of the total population has experienced a mental illness at some point in their lifetime.

(2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing).

20% of Australians are affected by a mental health condition in any year.

Anxiety and depression are the most common forms of mental illness.

For more information visit the following websites:

03 For more information

Websites - click to visit.

Information about Mental Health conditions

Lifeline Australia	www.lifeline.org.au
Sane Australia	www.sane.org
The National Depression Initiative	www.beyondblue.org.au
Mental Health First Aid	www.mhfa.com.au
Mental Health Council of Australia	www.mhca.org.au
Australian Government Mental Health and Wellbeing	www.health.gov.au/mentalhealth
National Institute of Mental Health, USA	www.nimh.nih.gov

Depression

Beyond Blue	www.beyondblue.org.au
Blue Pages	www.bluepages.anu.edu.au
DepressionNet	www.depressionservices.org.au
The Mood Gym	www.moodgym.anu.edu.au
WORC Project Valuing Employee Health	www.qcmhr.uq.edu.au/worc

Multicultural

Multicultural Mental Health Australia	www.mmha.org.au
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Anxiety

Anxiety Network Australia	www.anxietynetwork.com.au
Panic Anxiety Disorder Association	www.panicanxietydisorder.org.au

Eating Disorders

Beyond Blue	www.beyondblue.org.au
The Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria	www.eatingdisorders.org.au

Safe and healthy workplaces are good for business because they:

- Comply with the law
- Reduce costs
- Enhance staff loyalty
- Provide a return on investment in staff training
- Reduce workplace stress
- Avoid litigation & discrimination claims
- Avoid industrial disputes
- Improve productivity

Appropriate intervention and treatment of mental illness has been shown to increase workplace productivity which would offset the cost of treatment.

Because mental illness can affect anyone.

Costs of ignoring a healthy and safe workplace

- 3.2 days per worker, per year, lost through workplace stress
- Stress related workers compensation claims have doubled and cost over \$10b each year
- 25% of workers surveyed took time off each year for stress-related reasons

(Reference: Office of the Australian Safety and Compensation Council and the Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008)

04 Healthy workplaces



“Because society and workplaces are diverse”

Employers must

- Provide a healthy & safe workplace
- Avoid discrimination
- Ensure privacy

For further information, visit the websites listed or contact your employer organisation or legal advisor. Click for websites.

Legal Issues

Australian Human Rights Commission www.hreoc.gov.au
Privacy Legislation (Federal) www.privacy.gov.au

Harassment / Bullying

Bullies Down Under www.bulliesdownunder.com
Beyond Bullying www.beyondbullying.com.au

Stop the violence www.stop-the-violence.netfirms.com
Bully on Line www.successunlimited.co.uk
Campaign Against Workplace Bullying www.bullybusters.org
Workplace Bullying www.workplacebullying.com

Employees' responsibilities

Disclosure is a choice people with mental health conditions make about whether to tell another person or organisation information about their condition.

Employees with mental health conditions are not legally obliged to disclose, unless it is likely to affect their performance or ability to meet the requirements of the job, including their ability to work safely and ensure the safety of co-workers.

Those who are informed of the employee's condition are legally obligated to keep the information confidential, unless the employee gives written permission for them to share the information.

Strategies to promote mental health in the workplace

Target Audience	Strategy
Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employ a diverse range of people• Promote your business as a friendly & caring workplace• Be responsive to individual needs of employees• Be flexible with start and finish times, offering part time roles, time off for appointments, changing employee's duties or work environment• Respect employee's privacy. DO NOT disclose information about their illness unless given consent• Seek advice from your employee assistance program provider, a psychologist, a mental health service or a community counsellor
Manager / Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure supervisors are aware of employee's needs• Support supervisors with information on assisting employees
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage self-awareness of employee's own wellbeing & that of their colleagues• Make information about mental health accessible• Respect employee's privacy. DO NOT disclose information about their illness unless given consent• Have a plan. If a health issue occurs, ensure employees know what to do and who to talk with



“You don’t need to be a psychologist...”

Strategies to recruit and retain staff with mental health conditions in small business

Be aware there is no requirement for an applicant or employee to disclose they have a mental health condition. However disclosure is however more likely to take place in an environment of trust, open communication and in the absence of stigma and discrimination.

For further information, see the Job Access Website www.jobaccess.gov.au

Recruitment & selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview in a relaxed style encouraging discussion• Link up with a disability employment agency in your area
Induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide one on one training• Adjust training as required• Show the new employee how to do the work and repeat if necessary• Written lists or instructions may help• Regularly check how the employee is progressing• Write an agreed plan for managing any known mental health condition including phone numbers of people to contact
Ongoing support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talk regularly with the employee to see how they are getting on• Have an open door policy or someone that the employee can talk to easily if they have concerns• Encourage a friendly and supportive team environment• Provide access to counselling if needed• Seek advice or assistance from the employee's case worker

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Early Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be aware of the early signs of mental illness• Don't ignore any changes in behaviour or other signs• Implement agreed action plan• Refer for counselling and treatment if needed• Work together with the employee, GP, counsellor and others involved in their care
Return to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a Return To Work Policy• Maintain contact with employee during absence• Encourage early return to work• Discuss return to work with the employee, their GP or other health professional• Prepare the work team for the employee's return• Have a gradual return to work if needed

Strategies to recruit and retain staff with mental health conditions in medium to large organisations

Be aware there is no requirement for an applicant or employee to disclose they have a mental health condition. Disclosure is however more likely to take place in an environment of trust, open communication and in the absence of stigma and discrimination.

For further information, see the Job Access Website www.jobaccess.gov.au

Recruitment & selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote equity and diversity• Link with specialist employment agencies• Provide assistance and adjustment in selection process if required
Induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adjust induction to individual needs• Include information about equity policies• Provide mentor• Encourage open communication with line manager• Develop agreed plan for managing mental health condition
Ongoing support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide regular opportunity for debrief• Encourage supportive team environment• Access to an Employee Assistance Program

Strategies to recruit and retain staff with mental health conditions in medium to large organisations

Early Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure manager and key co-worker are aware of early signs of mental illness• Implement agreed action plan if needed• Refer for counselling & treatment if needed• Work together with employee, GP, counsellor
Return to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a Return To Work Policy• Maintain contact with employee during absence• Encourage early return to work• Collaborate with employee, GP, counsellor or other treating professional• Return to work plan• Prepare manager and team for employee's return• Staged return to work

07 Recruiting and retaining staff



“The thing that kept all of us there was that genuine commitment to our wellbeing...”

08 Employer support



There is support for employers.

Australian Government Employment Services and Programs

Information and advice (JobAccess)

- Job Access provides workplace solutions for the employment of people with mental health conditions. To find out more information call a JobAccess Advisor on 188 464 800 or visit www.jobaccess.gov.au

Other supports available include

- Disability employment services provide flexible, tailored assistance for job seekers. These services assist to find and maintain employment
- Workplace modifications
- Job in Jeopardy assistance

Support with recruitment

- Advisors who can assist employers on recruitment issues over the phone
- A single point of contact for the recruitment of people with mental health issues
- Assistance with job design and job descriptions

Support for retaining employees

- On the job training and awareness raising for staff and co-workers
- Assistance with job design, restructure and workplace adjustment
- Wage subsidies and supported wages
- Apprenticeships and incentives for employees - intermittent and ongoing

09 Acknowledgements

We wish to thank and acknowledge:

We wish to thank and acknowledge Worklink Employment Support Group as the developers of *Managing Diversity! Mental Health in the Workplace*, a training workshop for employers. Material from this training package was made available during the development of Mental Health Works.

We also thank and acknowledge:

- Staff and the Board of Worklink Employment Support Group, including Margaret Frederick and Dorothy Dunne.
- Queensland Alliance staff -in particular Louise Villanova and Georgina Lawson.
- Interviewees Rachel, Catherine, Christine, Dorothy, Phoebe, Kathy, Tania, Wolf, Brian, Richard and EPIC Employment Service.
- Employers, consumers and Disability Employment Services who participated in focus groups.
This resource was funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
The views expressed in this resource do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government or departments thereof.

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