

# THE Advisor

## Mental Health at Work

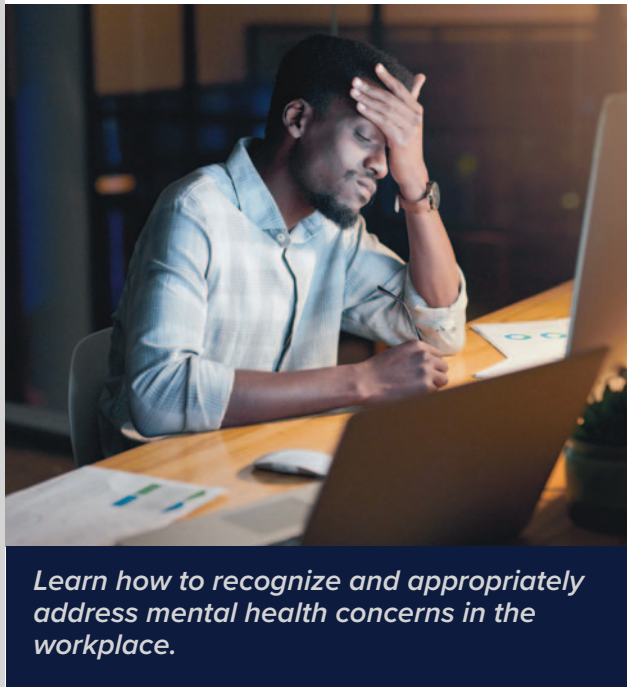


### In this Issue:

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*Learn how to recognize and appropriately address mental health concerns in the workplace.*

At any given time, approximately one in five adults is coping with some form of mental health issue. Common concerns include:

- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Bipolar disorder
- Borderline personality disorder (BPD)
- Schizophrenia

As with a physical illness, a person with a

mental health concern may have periods of relatively good health where they can work without difficulty. At other times, managing a work schedule may be challenging. These steps may be helpful in ensuring that the person can stay on track:

- Be aware of indications that a team member is struggling, such as:
  - Irritability or anger
  - Inability to concentrate
  - Missed deadlines
  - Withdrawal or disengagement
  - Poor decisions
  - Arguments with co-workers
  - Increased use of sick time
  - Frequent requests to start late or leave early
- If a worker is missing deadlines, producing substandard work, or behaving inappropriately, address it promptly. Set clear performance expectations that will help the person determine where to focus their energy.
- Should an employee disclose a mental health issue, protect their privacy. Do not share any information about the worker's medical situation with other members of your team.



*Remember, it is not your role to diagnose a person's mental health concern, but to help them keep their work performance on track.*

- If the employee chooses to reveal their condition to colleagues, establish clear expectations for respectful behavior. Encourage your team to be supportive.
- A diagnosed mental illness is a condition that may require “reasonable accommodation.” If an adjustment to the individual’s responsibilities or schedule is necessary, coordinate with HR to ensure that you are in compliance with company policy and all relevant laws.
- Remain calm if the team member behaves in an unusual or out-of-character way. Check in regularly and consult with HR. In addition, the LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can provide

an objective opinion and suggest effective ways to support the person.

- Encourage your team to maintain their emotional and physical wellbeing by taking scheduled breaks and making appropriate use of vacation time. In addition, remind team members that LifeMatters is available 24/7/365 to provide assistance with any concern.

Creating a safe environment is one of the best ways to support an employee who is having mental health or other personal difficulties. Being respectful, encouraging use of company-sponsored resources, and assisting the employee with keeping their performance on track will help them to remain a productive member of your team.



*The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service is available to assist with any management concern. Call 24/7/365.*

## How Do I Say That? Out-of-Character Behavior

If an employee is engaging in erratic or out-of-character behavior:

- 1. Don't ignore the behavior.** Unusual behavior is often the first sign that an employee is having difficulty with meeting performance expectations.
- 2. Document the behavior.** If the frequency of incidents is increasing, or if you see a pattern forming, consult with Human Resources.
- 3. Review company policy.** Human Resources will provide guidelines for addressing the situation and familiarize you with any relevant policies.
- 4. Arrange a private meeting.** Hold this meeting early in the day so the employee has time to access any relevant services.
- 5. State your observations.** Outline the behaviors you have documented.

**Sample language:** "I have concerns about (describe behavior) and its impact on your job performance. Please help me understand what's going on."

- 6. Allow the employee time to respond.** If the person discloses that their behavior is being affected by a mental health or other medical issue,



*The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can help you prepare to discuss your concerns with the employee.*

express appropriate concern and refer the person to LifeMatters, HR, and company resources. Avoid asking detailed questions about the person's health.

- 7. Establish performance expectations.** Offer specific guidelines for workplace behavior and outline the consequences if these standards are not met. Consult with HR before taking any disciplinary action.

**Sample language:** "These are your priorities. How can I help you meet these goals?"



*LifeMatters offers 24/7/365 assistance with management concerns. We're here to help.*

- 8. Make a performance referral to LifeMatters.** LifeMatters will coach the employee on how to address performance issues and provide helpful resources to manage personal concerns.

**Sample language:** "LifeMatters can help you address any personal issues that may be affecting your work performance. I recommend you call."

- 9. Schedule a follow-up meeting.** Check in with the employee to monitor performance improvement efforts.

## Management Consultation

Whenever you need it, as often as you need it. Reasons to call:

- Confronting an employee about performance issues
- An employee's personal problem
- Suspected drug or alcohol use on the job
- Interpersonal conflicts between team members
- Establishing expectations for performance
- Addressing crisis situations, such as a violent incident, the death of an employee, or a natural disaster
- Your own personal concerns
- Any other work-related issue

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