
Helping Employees Deal with Stress

The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted numerous aspects of daily life and, for many, has resulted in increased anxiety and stress. According to the American Psychiatric Association, people's responses to an infectious disease outbreak may include "insomnia, reduced feelings of safety, scapegoating, increased use of alcohol and tobacco, somatic symptoms (physical symptoms, such as lack of energy and general aches and pains), and increased use of medical resources" (<https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/apa-blog/2020/02/coronavirus-and-mental-health-taking-care-of-ourselves-during-infectious-disease-outbreaks>). As restrictions on social distancing lift and employees begin to return to the worksite, employers need to be aware of the added strain employees may be facing.

Use Employee Assistance Programs

If your organization offers an employee assistance program (EAP), a service that provides free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services for employees, make sure employees are aware of it and know how to access it. Employees may be overwhelmed by news of the virus, worried about their health, or concerned about finances, so it is not enough to simply post the information on the company website for them to find. Encourage employees to take advantage of these programs and get help when needed.

Counties who are members of the County Health Pool have access to Resource Advisor, a member assistance program, and LiveHealth Online, a service that provides telemedicine visits with physicians and mental health professionals.

Share Available Resources

There are numerous other resources available in addi-

tion to EAPs, the National Safety Council (NSC) recommends that employers provide employees with a list of available benefit providers and community programs such as behavioral health support groups, resources for financial counseling, food assistance programs, childcare resources, etc. The NSC also recommends that employers create a confidential helpline or email address where employees can raise concerns or ask for help.

Be Flexible

The COVID-19 Pandemic has forced organizations and employees to adapt quickly to new working conditions and rules. Many working parents are supervising schoolwork or struggling to find childcare in addition to doing their jobs. Employers should acknowledge these challenges and, when possible, offer flexible schedules or other accommodations. Employees in high-risk groups may need to continue working from home for the foreseeable future. Supervisors should communicate with remote employees regularly to assess how they can help employees deal with their unique challenges and remain productive.

What This Means for Counties

The scope of the COVID-19 Pandemic may seem overwhelming and make people feel helpless; however, there are services available to help people cope. Employers should be sensitive to the needs of employees as they return to the worksite and, when possible, allow flexibility. For more information, contact CTSI at (303) 861 0507 or visit the CTSI COVID-19 resource page at www.ctsi.org/node/217. 