

Benefits Insights

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Maximizing Mental Health Benefits During Economic Uncertainty

While there have been various economic impacts in recent years, employers and employees alike are feeling significant effects from inflation and rising health care costs. Because of these effects, employees' mental health is more vulnerable, and many are feeling stressed. As a result, employers are making mental health benefits a higher priority.

This article explores mental health benefits trends and ways employers can support mental health in the workplace.

Mental Health Benefits Trends

An increasing number of employers are prioritizing mental health by adding related employee benefits. According to the 2023 Workplace Mental Health Trends Report by Calm Business, half (49%) of organizations say they're adding benefits in the next year. Of that number, 41% are adding preventive mental health benefits, and 38% are adding digital mental health therapy. Preventive benefits and tools can address stress, burnout, anxiety and sleep, while digital mental health clinical therapy benefits can increase accessibility and help close patient care gaps.

Consider additional key findings from the report:

- The economic climate has not negatively impacted benefits budgets; most benefits leaders report that budgets are staying the same (25%) or increasing (58%).
- More than half (61%) of benefits leaders say mental health is a higher priority in the current economic climate.

- Benefits leaders believe workplace stress and financial loss have the biggest impact on employee mental health.
- The most common reasons employees seek mental health support include facing challenges at work (42%), undergoing personal illness (33%) and the changing health of a family member (21%).
- The most common workplace economic impacts are inflation (51%), rising health care costs (44%) and budget cuts (42%), all of which can increase employee stress levels.

Fortunately, employers can actively identify stressors in their workplace and then change workplace policies or offer mental health tools that best meet their specific workforce's needs.

Employer Considerations

While some employers are maintaining or expanding their current benefits offerings, others are considering ways to control costs and optimize their benefits strategy. Methods include doubling down on employee awareness of benefits offerings and integrating wellness solutions into a one-stop hub for easier navigation.

Employers can also solicit and listen to employee feedback as they prioritize benefits. Employee feedback is one of the most popular factors employers can use to influence their benefits decisions. Aside from direct feedback, employers can review employee utilization and engagement data along with employee health and well-being outcomes.



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Keep in mind that benefits will continue to shift to reflect workforce needs. More employers report ensuring that their benefits adequately support the needs of LGBTQI+ and Generation Z workers. Employee feedback can help make sure that employees' needs are heard and benefits are designed to support their specific workforce holistically. This extra step can also help retain and attract talent focused on finding the best benefits that support their lives.

It's common for employers to offer an employee assistance program (EAP) that includes therapy benefits to address depression and anxiety. However, they may be missing preventive benefits for their workforce to address stress, burnout, mild anxiety or sleep issues. The addition of preventive self-care tools can help employees take a proactive approach to their mental health. In fact, the Calm Business report states that for every \$1 invested in prevention, employers can expect to save \$4 in downstream health care and employee productivity costs. While EAPs can be effective, adding preventive benefits may allow employers to optimize offerings and help employees before they experience a mental health crisis.

Summary

Mental health is being more generally recognized as the foundation of employee health and supports physical health. As a result, more employers are considering adding preventive mental health benefits to their portfolios. Even more critical amid the current economic climate, employers are prioritizing employee mental health and aiming to address stress, burnout, anxiety and sleep.

Contact us for more workplace resources.