

# BENEFITS AND RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

## Provide and Educate Employees About Benefits

An employer can take concrete steps to ensure that employees understand and can access quality health care and other benefits. According to a survey, health insurance is the most important employee benefit.<sup>1</sup> Not only is health care important to employees, but employers who invest in health care understand its financial and health implications on rates of absenteeism and presenteeism. According to research, the cost of employee absences, planned and unplanned per year, could be as much as 36% of payroll, more than twice the cost of health care.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, employees who have access to affordable and comprehensive health insurance are far less likely to miss work and are more likely to be productive when at work.<sup>3</sup> Simply put, investing in employee health is better for business.

At a minimum, the employer-sponsored health care and disability benefits offered should cover mental health and substance use services. Health care options offered to employees should include a sizable number of in-network behavioral health providers and cover various mental health services. Employers should also educate employees about their health care options and the services offered by their Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other resources.

In addition to health care, an employer can support its workforce by providing paid time off (PTO). Employers who offer and encourage PTO usage allow employees to care for themselves or a sick family member, prevent burnout from a demanding workload, and reduce rates of presenteeism – the hidden cost of reduced productivity.<sup>4</sup>

Employers that are invested in employee mental health should offer benefits with the following outcomes in mind:

- Employees and their families have access to affordable, high-quality, and easy-to-understand health insurance covering mental health and substance use services at parity with physical health services.
- The employer offers a robust and accessible EAP that supplements, not replaces, the employer's efforts to support employee mental health.
- Employers measure the utilization of mental health benefits, including insurance, PTO, disability benefits, and EAP.
- Employees are provided PTO and are actively encouraged to use it for vacation, sick days, holidays, or to care for a family member with a physical or mental health condition.
- The employer offers paid disability benefits and adequate mental illness and substance use recovery leave.

**Download the following materials to help improve existing mental health offerings and educate employees about available benefits and resources:**

- **19 Questions to Ask Your Benefits Broker and EAP (Checklist)**
- **Introducing Mental Health During New Hire Orientation (Checklist)**
- **Educate Employees about Benefits that Support Mental Health (Internal Email Template)**
- **Encourage Employees to Take Time Off (Internal Email Template)**
- **Workplace Mental Health Solutions for Small Employers (Fact Sheet)**

## Employer Spotlight: 2021-22 Bell Seal Recipients

EMPLOYER	INDUSTRY	PROGRAM
Alkermes	Biopharmaceuticals	Alkermes waives copays for behavioral health visits for covered family members on their health plan to support employees and their family members' mental health care.
Edward-Elmhurst Health (EEH)	Health care	EEH's Employee Support Coordinators (ESC) provide direct staff support while prioritizing employee well-being and emotional health in the workplace. ESCs provide confidential emotional support sessions while connecting employees with resources and referrals within the community, including their Employee Assistance Program.
Happy Endings Hospitality (HEH)	Food and beverage	During the COVID-19 pandemic, HEH started a program to link its team members to online therapists and encouraged all 170 staff to utilize their "Mental Wealth" benefit, allowing 50% of therapy session costs to be reimbursed (up to \$200 per month).
Mental Health Minnesota	Nonprofit	As a small non-profit employer, Mental Health Minnesota provides its workforce, which includes many part-time employees, additional pay to help cover the cost of premiums offered through the exchange. As a result, their workers can obtain better health insurance with lower deductibles and take advantage of certain tax credits.
NewYork-Presbyterian	Health care	In 2022, NewYork-Presbyterian added a paid day off for employees to use as their "Cultural Heritage Day," a day that is culturally significant to the employee. NewYork-Presbyterian fosters an environment where everyone who comes to them for care and every employee feels a true sense of belonging.
NYU Langone Health	Health care	At the end of each calendar year, NYU Langone Health rewards eligible employees who don't use all of their sick time by allowing them to convert all or some of their prior year's unused sick allowance into "Bonus Vacation Hours" at the rate of two to one (two sick days equal to one bonus vacation day).

1. Chamberlain, Andrew, et al. "Which Benefits Drive Employee Satisfaction? Glassdoor Research." Glassdoor Economic Research, [www.glassdoor.com/research/studies/benefits-drive-employee-satisfaction/](http://www.glassdoor.com/research/studies/benefits-drive-employee-satisfaction/).
2. Hastings, Rebecca R. "Expert: Cost of Absenteeism Rivals Health Care." SHRM, SHRM, 11 Apr. 2018, [www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/expertcostof.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/expertcostof.aspx).
3. Lofland, Jennifer H, and Kevin D Frick. "Effect of Health Insurance on Workplace Absenteeism in the U.S. Workforce." Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Jan. 2006, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16404205](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16404205).
4. Levin-Epstein, Jodie. "Presenteeism and Paid Sick Days." Clasp.org, Center for Law and Social Policy, 28 Feb. 2005, [www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/files/0212.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/files/0212.pdf).