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COMCARE Article

ISSUES & articles

about Mental Health in Sedgwick County Government

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Maintaining Mental Health in Tough Economic Times

My husband was laid off from his job six months ago. Lately, I have notice he's not sleeping well, he's seems more irritable and has lost interest in some of life's simple pleasures. Is this depression?

Economic turmoil, such as increased unemployment, foreclosures, loss of investments and other financial distress can result in a host of negative health effects. It also can be particularly devastating to your emotional and mental well-being. Although each of us is affected differently by financial downturns, these problems can add tremendous stress, which can increase the risk for developing depression, anxiety, and compulsive behaviors, such as over-eating and excessive gambling, spending and substance use.

Today's economic crisis is taking its toll on the mental health of people all over the country. A study by the American Psychological Association revealed that 52 percent of Americans are lying awake at night worrying about finances.

The unemployed are four times more likely than those with jobs to report symptoms of depression or anxiety; and four in 10 out-of-work parents have noticed behavioral changes in their children that parents attribute to their own difficulty in finding work.

If you have been laid off from your job there are things you can do to help you manage your mental health. Strengthen your connections with family and friends who can provide important emotional support. Engage in activities, such as physical exercise, sports or hobbies that you enjoy, which can help relieve stress and anxiety. Keep your skills sharp or develop new ones and consider volunteering in your community.

Any type of stressful event, such as our current economic crisis or a job loss can impact our mental health. Feeling sad for a few days here and there is normal. Stressful situations can increase our risk of depression. Frequently, depression reveals itself in physical symptoms, such as headaches, gastrointestinal distress and sexual dysfunction. When you're suffering from depression, you and others close to you may notice some of the following changes in your overall demeanor: increased irritability, sleep deprivation, anxiety, physical complaints and lack of motivation to complete tasks. The stress association with debt can also cause muscle tension, back pain, migraines, tension headaches, ulcers, severe anxiety and even heart attacks.

Sometimes these problems can seem overwhelming and you may need additional help to get through "rough patches." Fortunately, there are professionals and services that can provide help. These may include a mental health professional, health care provider or spiritual leader. If you don't know where to start you can call COMCARE of Sedgwick County, a licensed Community Mental Health Center at 316-660-7540. COMCARE will speak with you confidentially and assist you with your next step.

Unemployment and other kinds of financial distress do not "cause" suicide directly, but they can be factors that interact dynamically within individuals and affect their risk for suicide. In fact, 13 percent of the unemployed population has self-harm thoughts – a rate four times higher than those with full-time jobs. If you or someone you care about is having suicidal thoughts SEEK IMMEDIATE HELP by calling the Suicide Prevention Hotline at 316-660-7500 or 9-1-1.