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SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
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WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – The rate of depression among full-time workers is highest for employees in the personal care industry, service jobs and food preparation according to a report released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Of those employees, approximately 10 percent have experienced one or more major depressive episodes in the past year. Overall, seven percent of full-time workers have faced depression this year.

While many companies recognize the human and business costs of mental illness, more could be done to help employees recover. In a recent survey of more than 500 HR executives, conducted by the American Psychiatric Foundations' Partnership for Workplace Mental Health, responders overwhelmingly said that mental illness has more effect on indirect costs such as increased absenteeism and lost productivity than any other health condition.

In recent years there has been a shift in the number of employers aware of the impact of mental illness. A number of employers are taking action by instituting education on depression and other mental illnesses and opening the door to mental health treatment. When employees seek needed treatment, improvement can be seen in performance. Also evident is a reduction in costs that can result when treatment is not only available, but used without fear of stigma by those who need it.

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For many companies, the first step is to determine how much mental illness is costing them.

- A worker with major depressive disorder averages 27.2 lost workdays annually due to absences or poor functioning on the job. Someone with bipolar disorder averages 65.5 days lost. (National Institute of Mental Health).
- Annual indirect costs per employee are \$4426 for someone with major depressive disorder and \$9619 for bipolar disorder.
- More work loss and impairment are caused by mental illness than chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma and arthritis.

Considering mental illness costs, one would expect that companies would be doing everything they can to raise awareness and encourage employees to seek assistance. However, a number of factors still stand in the way. Many employers underestimate the prevalence of mental illness in the workforce. Given today's work pace, competition discourages any sign of employee vulnerability, and stigmas continue to stand in the way of recovery.

COMCARE of Sedgwick County is the community mental health center for residents of Sedgwick County. COMCARE is dedicated to providing awareness and education about mental health and mental wellness. If you or someone you know needs information about mental health assistance, call 660-7540.

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