

Mental Health **WORKS**

Background

Mental health problems have personal, social and financial consequences for Canada. While the health and social service systems address the immediate medical and personal problems, the resolution of workplace productivity issues has been left to managers, consultants and ultimately market forces.

There are few resources for employers and employees on how to deal with mental illness in the workplace and there is very little guidance available to help businesses create a workplace that sustains or helps to restore mental health.

In addition to the economic impact of mental health problems, the lack of accommodation in the workplace has come at a considerable personal expense to people who have experienced serious mental health problems.

Unemployment rates associated with mental illness are commonly in the range of 75-85 percent. This is despite the fact that up to 80 percent of people with mental health problems could return to work in flexible work environments.

About the Project

Mental Health Works is a joint project of the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship.

This project will assist employers and employees by providing information about the impact of productivity losses from mental illness in the workplace and specific advice and tools to help improve that picture. *Mental Health Works* is founded on the belief that raising awareness about mental health issues in the workplace will benefit employers and employees alike.

**THE GLOBAL BUSINESS &
ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE
ON ADDICTION & MENTAL
HEALTH**



**CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION**
**L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE**
(Ontario Division)

Mental health claims have overtaken cardiovascular disease as the fastest growing category of disability costs in Canada, topped by

psychiatric claims -primarily depression.

— *ManuLife Financial Group*

Canada's economy experiences an annual loss of \$16 billion due to lost productivity caused by mental health problems.

— *The Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health*

Over the next two years, *Mental Health Works* will develop strategies, a public awareness plan, and resources and tools that are directly applicable to the Canadian workplace. Research and strategies will focus on as many varieties of workplace settings as possible: office, retail, service industries and factories, urban and rural. Pilot testing and evaluation of these tools will be conducted on site by participating businesses.

Benefits to Employees and Employers

Mental Health Works is expected to produce benefits for employees and employers by:

1. Improving the ability of employers to respond to workplace mental health issues
2. Providing relevant, specific information on methods to reduce costs associated with lost productivity, burnout, absenteeism, turnover and disability insurance claims
3. Helping people return to productive work after an absence caused by mental illness
4. Creating tools and resources to create healthier and more productive workplaces

Project Goals

- *Reduce workplace barriers for persons with mental health problems*
- *Increase employer and employee awareness of mental health issues*
- *Build the capacity of organizations to address the needs of persons with mental health problems and to better manage mental health issues*
- *Make workplaces more mentally healthy*
- *Provide employers with services and resources to meet their needs, and*
- *Reduce the stigma attached to mental health problems in the workplace.*

For more information about the project, or to become a sponsor or active participant, contact:

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