



# Executive Summary

## THE PROBLEM



**Increasing Prevalence**



**Rising Costs**



**Mental health challenges are a growing concern for employers worldwide.**

**Global rates of depression and anxiety have increased from 15 percent to 20 percent between 2005 and 2015.<sup>1</sup>**

**The World Economic Forum projects that mental health disorders will cost nations \$16.3 trillion between 2011 and 2030, which represents a staggering loss in economic output.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, approximately one in five adults (almost 45 million) has a mental disorder.<sup>3</sup>**

**The economic burden of major depressive disorder alone is estimated to be \$210 billion in the U.S., with 50% of this cost shouldered by employers (2010).<sup>4</sup>**

**These costs are probably underestimated because roughly four in 10 adults with mental health disorders do not seek treatment.<sup>5</sup>**

**The American Heart Association CEO Roundtable (CEO Roundtable) commissioned this report to underscore the business imperative to employers for providing comprehensive, science-based support for employee mental health.**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

## Key Insights

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- **Mental health disorders are very common and rising.** This causes human suffering and depletes the economic vitality of communities and nations.



- **Employers have a unique opportunity to improve the mental health of the approximately 158 million working U.S. adults<sup>6</sup>** who spend more time working than any other activity apart from sleeping.<sup>7</sup>



- **Clinically effective treatments for most mental health disorders exist in primary care,** including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which many employers subsidize with medical benefits.



- **Training leaders and managers to reduce the stigma** associated with mental health is a promising organizational approach to help create a psychologically healthy workplace. Overall, few studies have evaluated organizational-level programs to improve employee mental health outcomes and more research is urgently needed in this area.



- **Overall, many types of mental health interventions delivered in the workplace are effective at improving mental health outcomes,** although the size of the effect is small to medium. Stress management programs for individuals are especially effective at reducing stress and improving overall mental health.



- **The growing number of digital interventions** offered by third party vendors and insurance carriers to employees are promising ways to tailor programs for different populations based on their risk for mental health disorders.



- **Employees expect their employers to support mental health** as strongly as physical health and offer policies, programs, and an environment that is mental health-friendly.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

Employers have a compelling interest for promoting positive mental health in the workplace, because adults spend most of their waking hours at work.<sup>7</sup>

Poor mental health not only exacts a high toll on workforce health and well-being, it also negatively impacts productivity.

The costs of depression and other mental health disorders are often underestimated because the indirect costs such as work absenteeism and poor performance at work (presenteeism) are costlier than the direct costs associated with medical care and prescription drugs.<sup>8</sup> Because depression often occurs with other expensive chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease, the economic burden on employers and the health care system are amplified.

(See publication: *Comorbid conditions and Employer costs associated with mental health disorders.*)

Investing in mental health treatment in general has been shown to be cost-effective. Many evidence-based treatments can save \$2 to \$4 for every dollar invested in prevention and early intervention.<sup>9, 10, 11</sup> Interventions offered in the workplace have generally been targeted at reducing symptoms in individuals rather than modifying the work conditions that are risk factors for poor mental health such as job strain or unsupportive relationships between supervisors and employees.

(See publication: *Table 4. Cost of mental health disorders and cost-effectiveness of treatments.*)

Adults spend most of their waking hours at work.



Costs are often underestimated



and include both direct and indirect expenses.

Cost-effective investments can improve outcomes.

Many evidence-based treatments offer valuable returns on investment.

Every \$1 invested in prevention

can yield \$2-\$4 in saved costs



and better functioning

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

## Highlighted Findings

A national poll of U.S. employees conducted by Harris Poll for the CEO Roundtable found:

### A Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders

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**76%**



- Roughly three in four employees (76 percent) indicate they have struggled with at least one issue that affected their mental health.

**42%**



- About two in five employees (42 percent) answered yes when asked if they have ever been diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

**63%**



- Although many were willing to divulge their disorder in this confidential survey, 63 percent of those diagnosed with a disorder say they have not disclosed it to their employer.

### Perceptions of the Employer's Role

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**9 in 10**



- Nearly nine in 10 survey respondents agree that employers have a responsibility to support mental health. Although more than eight in 10 employees say their employers provide at least one mental health offering, they also say those employers can do more.

**42%**



- 42 percent of employees would like their employers to provide more information about mental health benefits, accommodations, and resources.

**40%**



- 40 percent want their employers to train managers and supervisors to identify emotional distress among workers  
*(See results from a national survey on Employees' Perceptions and Attitudes on Mental Health In the Workplace)*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED



Mental health program summaries provided by 19 CEO Roundtable companies indicate that employers are implementing a range of science-based prevention programs to support workplace mental health and well-being. (See *Company Mental Health Program Summaries*.)



## Recommended Actionable Strategies for Employers

The American Heart Association's Center for Workplace Health convened a panel of a dozen mental health experts to review information in this report, as well as published guidelines and standards for workplace mental health.<sup>12</sup> The panel, which consisted of individuals from academia, industry, a labor union, and consumer advocacy groups, evaluated the feasibility and impact of workplace mental health strategies documented in the occupational health, public health and epidemiology literature. Based on their review, this report sets out high-level strategies and tactics organized around seven workplace health pillars to guide employers who wish to create and sustain mental health-friendly workplaces.



### Leadership

Leaders demonstrate visible and proactive actions to build a diverse and inclusive culture that supports a mental health-friendly workplace.



### Policies and Environmental Support

Develop a broad Mental Health Plan for the organization that can be fully implemented, understood, and available to all employees.



### Communication

Develop a plan to communicate clearly and often to employees about the organization's mental health policies, medical benefits, programs, education resources and training opportunities.



### Programs and Benefits

Offer a comprehensive package of medical and behavioral health benefits and programs based on caring for and supporting employees.



### Engagement

Involve all employees in all aspects of workplace decision-making.



### Community Partnerships

Use community partnerships to promote the internal and external objectives of the Mental Health Plan.



### Reporting Outcomes

Collect and analyze a variety of data to identify strengths and opportunities to continually improve the mental health and well-being of employees.

Each strategic area is supported by several evidence-informed tactics. For more information, see *Actionable Strategies*.

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