Managers Lack Training On How to Manage Mental Health Illness

Episodes of mental health illness are prevalent within the Canadian workplace

44% of People Reported Experiencing a Mental Health Issue

In 2011 the Conference Board of Canada surveyed over 1000 individuals about their experience with mental health, included in the survey were workers, supervisors and managers. The survey discovered what most people already know, that mental health touches many people and is often present in the workplace. In fact, 44% of respondents indicated a current or past personal experience with a mental health issue.

In 2009–10, 78 per cent of short-term disability claims and 67 per cent of long-term disability claims in Canada were related to mental health issues.

Leaders believe they are promoting mental health at work, workers disagree!

82% of senior executives surveyed believed their companies promote a mentally healthy work environment yet only 30% of employees (working in occupations such as service, labour and production) agreed with this assessment.

44% of managers have no relevant training to recognize or address mental health concerns, but the majority, 81% believe they know what they are doing when it comes to managing mental health issues in the workplace

Managers Identify 3 Training Gaps

When asked the managers felt they would benefit from training to help them better manage mental health concerns in the workplace they indicated they would like better training to:

1. Recognize the signs and symptoms of specific mental health issues
2. Manage difficult conversations
3. Increase knowledgeable about their legal obligations and constraints.

And they are smart to recognize their need for information and training as across Canada the rights of employees with mental health challenges are being upheld. This includes their right to work and their right to accommodation.

Employees Often Do Not Find Managers Supportive

In the research a group of individuals who had experienced mental health challenges were interviewed in more depth and reported many negative perceptions of and treatment from managers reporting:

- their manager was insensitive and non-supportive
- they were made to feel guilty about their time away from work
- they were sometimes isolated and ignored or “given the cold shoulder” by managers and staff

Performance Issue or Mental Health Concerns

Within the workplace it will become increasingly important that managers are trained to consider mental health issues when dealing with performance management issues. Not every performance issue will of course be tied to mental health concerns but some will. As a result a manager and the human resources department needs to be equipped to identity the possibility. If they are not they may find themselves on the wrong side of legal action by a more informed and proactive population of individuals experiencing mental health concerns.

Mental Health Concern by Industry

How is your industry represented by the data? The experience of mental health issues cut across industries ranging from a low of 25% in the chemical/pharmaceutical industry to a high of 63% in the not-for-profit sector.

Sources

Conference Board of Canada

Building Mentally Healthy Workplaces

Perspectives of Canadian Workers and Front-Line Managers