

# Stigma-Free Workplaces Help All

## New Toolkit for Employers Available



**Jennifer Pferrer**

It's become imperative for employers to create a healthy work environment for their employees and cultivate positive outcomes among their workforces. This not only includes building a safer physical work environment but also creating a stigma-free workplace culture. Accomplishing that can foster employee loyalty and retention as well as enhance awareness and acceptance.

In a workplace culture where mental illnesses or substance use disorder (SUD) isn't stigmatized, employees are more likely to be aware of available resources, enter treatment sooner and begin recovery earlier.

A new toolkit, "A Stigma-Free Workplace Culture Toolkit" from the Wellness Council of Indiana guides employers on steps they can take to reduce the stigma associated with mental health conditions as well as SUD.

In this toolkit, "recovery" means returning to a better condition. According to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), recovery is a process of change through which people improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives and strive to reach their full potential.

Additionally, when discussing a "recovery friendly workplace" within this toolkit, it means a workplace supporting its communities by recognizing recovery from SUD as a strength and being willing to work intentionally with people in recovery.

Last, a stigma-free company within this toolkit refers to an employer with a culture of openness, acceptance and understanding about employees' overall health and well-being.

### Mental health matters

One in five U.S. adults – including one in four Hoosiers – suffers from some form of mental health disorder. Millions of Americans live with a mental health condition, but most aren't getting the treatment they need. One of the reasons is stigma: negative stereotypes about mental illness that persist in and out of the workplace. Taking steps to eliminate stigma at work also can foster employee loyalty and retention.

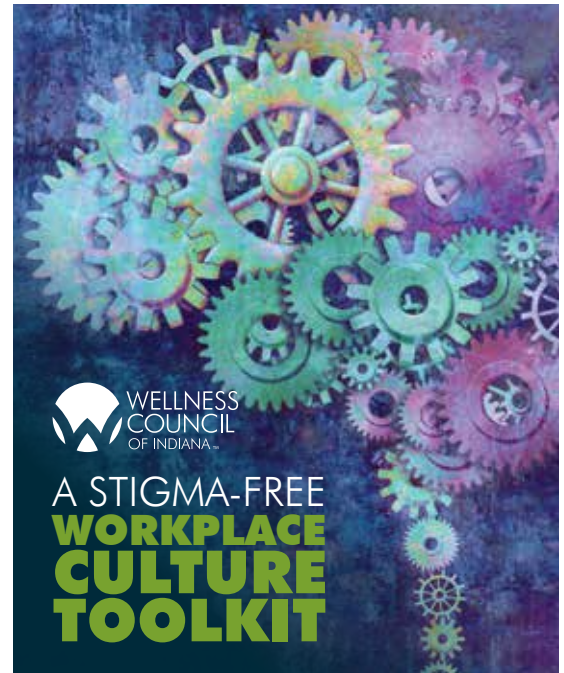
Mental illnesses directly affect an employee's ability to perform effectively at work and are associated with absenteeism and lost productivity. In fact, 80% of people with depression report some level of functional impairment.

The good news is that treatment works, with many mental health conditions treated with talk therapy and/or medication. Treatment has been shown to improve productivity and effectiveness on the job.

As an employer, you can't afford to ignore mental health. Investing in the mental health of your employees is critical to taking care of your biggest asset – your workforce. Employers who invest even \$1 on mental health can see a \$4 return.

### Effect of substance misuse

Employers have felt the impact of substance misuse



for decades through absenteeism, loss of productivity, safety issues and poor job performance. By being a recovery friendly workplace, you can accomplish several things. For example, it encourages a healthy and safe environment where employees and their communities can create positive change and eliminate barriers for those affected by addiction.

SAMHSA states that SUDs occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically significant impairment, including health problems, disability and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school or home.

SUD is a chronic disease that does not discriminate based on socioeconomic status, gender, age or race.

SUDs are more common than you may think.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use & Health, more than 20 million people in the United States are affected by a SUD – that's one in three American households directly impacted by this disease.

Fortunately, SUD is a treatable, manageable disease. Just like treatment for other chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma and heart disease, SUD treatment should be ongoing and frequently assessed. There are an estimated 23 million Americans in recovery who are creating healthy lifestyles, relationships and communities.

Download the toolkit at [www.wellnessindiana.org](http://www.wellnessindiana.org).

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### FREE CONSULTATIONS:

The Wellness Council of Indiana provides free, virtual consultation services and support to Indiana organizations that seek guidance in evolving their workplace mental health and overall well-being efforts. Learn more at [www.wellnessindiana.org](http://www.wellnessindiana.org).