

BREAK THE STIGMA: MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Mental health can be a difficult topic. The stigma of having a mental illness, or the potential of sharing details of that illness, comes with the fear of judgment and embarrassment. However, this is a wide-spread problem that is impacting 1 in 5 adults nationwide, and we are not talking about it enough. “What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, and more unashamed conversation” –Glenn Close



The Problem

The State of Missouri needs to prioritize wellness by creating a common culture of awareness in each department that reduces the stigma surrounding mental health. The barriers identified include stigma, disconnect and inconsistency. Stigma most often refers to a set of negative and often unfair beliefs or disapproval. Mental health comes with a heavy stigma and often times, people are not comfortable opening up about it, even when it is an isolated event. There is disconnect for our supervisors around supporting team members during difficult times. Supervisors do not feel comfortable or prepared to have these types of conversations and also do not feel trained to provide necessary resources or guidance when a staff member needs assistance. There is inconsistency between state departments in how they are promoting mental wellness and supporting their staff. A clear and consistent set of best practices would be invaluable to the team members in the State of Missouri.

The Solution

The State of Missouri can encourage its workforce by implementing a few simple recommendations that invites team members to start the conversation, become more comfortable with difficult topics and create a culture of awareness, acceptance and support.

- **Badge Buddy:**
 - The Badge Buddy is a quick reference card that team members attach to their MO State ID.
 - It provides a list of signs that a team member who may be struggling might be exhibiting and what to look for as a supervisor or peer.
 - The back side lists resources and phone numbers so team members can quickly and effectively provide support even if they are not a mental health professional.
 - The Badge Buddy can be customizable for each department or as programs or resources change.
 - The Badge Buddy would cost approximately \$0.15 per card and be produced at OA State Printing.
- **Engage Conversation Starters**
 - Engage is a great time for Supervisors to check on their team members.
 - These additional Engage Conversation Starters go beyond regular conversations and give supervisors recommendations on how to start difficult conversations using common language.
 - These conversation starters also focus on particular times of the year in which staff may be having a difficult time.
- **MO Learning Recommended Trainings**
 - All staff have access to MO Learning.
 - Each department has a list of recommended MO Learning trainings broken down into categories, and no department has a Health and Wellness category.
 - This category should be added to their MO Learning lists along with at least 5 MO Learning trainings related to mental wellbeing and communication
 - This will support supervisors and peers in building trust and creating a safe environment that reduces the stigma of mental health