

Meet an unexpected productivity boost: mental health care



You care about your employees' mental, emotional and behavioral health—that's why more than half of employers offer time off for personal mental health and 31% offer virtual mental health coaching.¹

But while compassion might be your main concern, you can't ignore the effect poor mental health can have on your business. As you develop [ways to foster mental health in the workplace](#), remember that your efforts aren't just about supporting them. It's about supporting your business, too. Here's the connection between mental health and staying in the black.

- **Mental health affects how people think.** You might think of conditions such as depression and anxiety as being about emotions. And while some people with depression feel persistently sad, for example, that's not the only way depression plays out. It can also make people feel unfocused, exhausted, irritable and apathetic—none of which are conducive to work.² Even mild depression can have these same effects.³ That's not to say that people with mental health conditions can't be valuable employees, but rather that it can keep them from functioning at their best.
- **Poor mental health makes people miss work.** You might have heard the term “mental health day” as a synonym for blowing off work without much notice. But that's not what most mental health days actually are; experts estimate that 200 million workdays are lost each year because of depression.⁴ Depending on the state you're in and your company policy, you might already include mental health in your leave policy; New York, for example, protects mental health days.⁵ But regardless of what your policy is, a mental health day amounts to time that your employees aren't at work—an absence that can be prevented for some, with the proper care.
- **Even when people who are experiencing mental health issues show up, they may be less productive.** One in three employees say that their mental health harmed their productivity in the past year, according to the Aflac WorkForces Report.⁶ Other research shows that across the board, people are performing below their full capacity because of mental health, resulting in a 28% loss of productivity across organizations.⁷ That productivity loss adds up: The World Health Organization estimates that \$1 trillion is lost annually due to the toll of depression and anxiety alone.⁸

- **So businesses try to support their employees—but employees might not feel the impact.** You're probably not shocked to hear that Americans' mental health has been suffering, and neither are your peers. But business leaders on the whole seem to overestimate the impact that their mental health support has on their employees. Nearly two-thirds of employers say that they support their employees' mental health well, but only 51% of employees agree.⁹ And when employees don't feel supported, they walk: 50% of employees say that they have left roles at previous jobs due to mental health reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily.¹⁰
- **The good news: When employers do invest wisely in mental health, it pays off.** If you're able to close the gap between what you're offering and what employees value in mental health support, you're helping your bottom line as much as you're helping your employees. While measuring dollar-for-dollar ROI on health and wellness can be difficult, the WHO estimates that for every dollar invested into better mental health treatment, there's a \$4 return in better health and productivity.⁸

You've had to make difficult choices for your business—including some that might pit the financial security of your workforce against the financial security of your business. But mental health care doesn't need to be one of those choices. Investing in your employees' mental and emotional well-being is a true win-win.

Learn more about protecting your employees' well-being—and your financial health. Contact your Aflac benefits advisor or visit [Aflac.com/business](https://www.aflac.com/business).

¹ Aflac. "Aflac WorkForces Report: Workplace Benefits Trends Executive Summary." Published 2020. [Accessed 10.21.2021](#).

² WebMD. "Symptoms of Depression." Published 9.17.2021. [Accessed 10.21.2021](#).

³ Johns Hopkins Medicine. "Dysthymia." [Accessed 10.21.2021](#).

⁴ Forbes. "Mental Health In The Workplace: The High Cost Of Depression." Published 1.20.2021. [Accessed 10.21.2021](#).

⁵ New York State. "New York Paid Sick Leave." [Accessed 10.21.2021](#).

⁶ Aflac. "2021–2022 Aflac WorkForces Report: Workplace Benefits Trends Executive Summary." Published 2021. [Accessed 12.9.2021](#).

⁷ Mind Share Partners. "2021 Mental Health at Work Report." Published 2021.

⁸ World Health Organization. "Mental Health and Substances Use." [Accessed 10.25.2021](#).

⁹ McKinsey. "National surveys reveal disconnect between employees and employers around mental health need." Published 4.21.2021. [Accessed 10.25.2021](#).

¹⁰ Mind Share Partners. "2021 Mental Health at Work Report." Published 2021.

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Aflac WWHQ | 1932 Wynnton Road | Columbus, GA 31999