



WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

Mental health refers to cognitive, behavioral and emotional well-being. It is all about how people think, feel and behave. Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities.

Mental health issues have a significant impact on the health and well-being of U.S. workers and their families. In a given year:

- ▶ nearly one in five (20 percent) adults experience some form of mental illness
- ▶ one in 12 (8.5 percent) have a diagnosable substance use disorder¹

Awareness of mental health issues is key for understanding how employees can receive the help they need. When an employee fails to recognize the holistic aspects of their health, stress, anxiety and even the day-to-day pressures of life can build into something bigger.

Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of. It is a medical problem, just like heart disease or diabetes.

Mental health issues impact employees in many ways:

- ▶ Decrease in work productive activities (absenteeism, presenteeism)
- ▶ Poor work/home relationships
- ▶ Ineffective ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity both at the job and home
- ▶ Significant changes in thinking, emotion and/or behavior
- ▶ Distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities

An easy way to determine whether you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition is to take a mental health screening. The Mental Health America website, www.mhascreening.org, offers free screenings for depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and other conditions

Primary care clinicians, psychiatrists and other mental health clinicians as well as the Employee Assistance Program can also help employees and families understand mental illnesses and what they can do to control or cope with symptoms in order to improve health, wellness and function.

RESOURCES:

[National Institute on Mental Health](#)
[Information on disorders and treatments](#)
[Clinical Trials](#)

[Mental Health America](#)
[Live Your Life Well](#)
[Online screening for mental disorders](#)

[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
[Find Support](#)
[Living with a Mental Health Condition](#)

[Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance](#)
[Support Groups](#)

1. American Psychiatric Association. Psychiatry.org/patients-families/what-is-mental-illness.