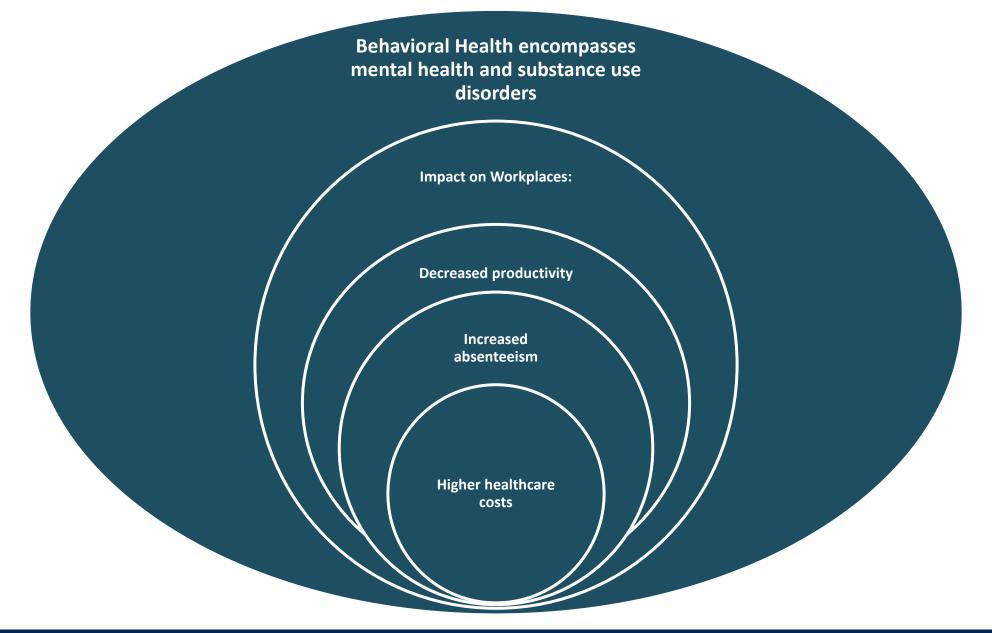# SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF
RURAL HEALTH
Investment. Opportunity. Health.

**Leveraging Telehealth to
Support Employee
Recruitment and Retention**

Jessica Seel, MPH

Addressing Behavioral Health in the Workplace:
Why is this an important part of workplace culture?

According to Kaiser Permanente:

- Mental health conditions can contribute to _62%_ of missed workdays

- Untreated depression costs _$9450_ per employee, per year in absenteeism and lost productivity

- _80%_ of employees who received treatment for a mental health condition report improved job satisfaction

Behavioral Health in SC

As of February 2023, _33.1%_ of SC adults reported symptoms of anxiety and /or depressive disorder

In 2022, over _20%_ of adults with symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder in South Carolina reported needing, but not receiving, mental health counseling or therapy.

Co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders: Among adults aged 18 and older, _7.8%_ experienced both MH and SUD.

As of 2023, _43 out of 46_ counties in South Carolina are designated as Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas.

Data sources: SAHMSA,Kaiser Family Foundation

Barriers to Care: Why should businesses provide behavioral health support?

Barriers to accessing care for mental health and substance use issues include:

- Cost

- Limited accessibility due to work schedule

- Stigma

- Transportation

Supportive work environments can address all of these barriers and more!

What is a Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW)?

An RFW adopts policies and practices aiming to:

Increase job opportunities for individuals in or seeking recovery

Encourage employees with SUD to seek help

Provide access to treatment, recovery support, and peer services

Inform employees of their rights to accommodations and protections

Prevent substance misuse through education and workplace safety

Educate staff at all levels to reduce stigma and promote open dialogue

Clearly communicate recovery-friendly policies and resources to all employees
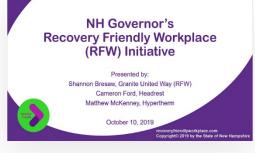
Recovery Friendly Workplace initiatives are currently happening all over the U.S.

Telehealth as a long-term strategy

Not a trend but a long-term solution here to stay

Integral to building a resilient, healthy and high performing workforce

Addresses barriers to accessing healthcare such as transportation, stigma and time away from work

Aligns with overall workforce wellness goals

Reduction of healthcare costs to employers

Sounds great!! Where do I start??

- Develop an internal taskforce to begin the process

- Assess your workforce's behavioral health needs

  o Conduct anonymous surveys on stress levels, job burnout, access to behavioral health services, and awareness and familiarity with telehealth

    - Keep survey short

    - Make it mobile friendly

    - Assure employees it is totally anonymous

    - Be transparent, let your employees know why you are asking this information and let them know your organization values their health

Sounds great!! Where do I start??

- Assess Workplace culture and support systems
  - Do managers feel equipped to talk about behavioral health?
  - Is there a culture of openness and support?
  - Do policies support behavioral health (e.g., flexible scheduling, accommodations)?

- Host employee focus groups
  - Provide a safe, confidential space (virtual or in-person) for employees to voice behavioral health needs and challenges.*
  - *Consider using a neutral third-party facilitator to reduce fear of stigma.

Sounds great!! Where do I start??

- Evaluate existing benefits and gaps
  - Work with HR to look at trends in sick leave and absenteeism
  - EAP usage
  - Short term disability claims
  - Turnover rates
- Pilot a telehealth program
  - Contact Palmetto Care Connections (:
  - Start small and strategic-select a site, department or employee group
  - Set a clear timeline for the pilot
  - Choose a telehealth provider
  - Promote the launch internally
    - Emphasize privacy and ease of use
- Evaluate utilization at the end of the pilot to determine the impact. Be prepared to pivot if needed.

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