



DUPUIS LANGEN
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The benefit brief

The employee solutions newsletter for the clients and friends of Dupuis Langen

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MENTAL HEALTH



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We have updated our website.
Please come take a look!

Thank you for your referrals

Business is great but new clients are always welcome!

If you know of others who may like to receive our newsletter or who would appreciate an audit of their group benefits plan, please let us know!

Words of Wisdom

"Intellectuals solve problems;
geniuses prevent them."
~Albert Einstein

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH

'Mental health' is a term used to describe either a level of cognitive or emotional wellbeing or an absence of a mental disorder. Possible Mental Illnesses include depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, drug use etc.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE WORKPLACE?

According to Watson Wyatt's Staying@Work Canada report, mental health issues are the leading cause of both long- and short-term disability claims (72% and 82%, respectively). "Lost productivity at work due to health-related matters can cost an average Canadian organization up to \$10 million each year. And much of that is attributable to mental health and stress," says Joseph Ricciuti, Canadian health care practice leader. "Unless organizations and society in general start doing a better job addressing the major causes of time away from work, these hidden costs will only get worse."

Mental health issues and stress can also lead to presenteeism (i.e employees on the job but not fully productive for physical or mental reasons) at many organizations. Only around three out of four employees say they have the physical or mental energy to do their jobs most of the time. This means nearly one-quarter of workers are not as productive as they could be.

FACTS

- ✓ When a person experiences a mental health problem and they obtain treatment in the first few months of their illness, early recovery is more likely; early detection and treatment also reduce the likelihood that the mental health problem will become chronic

- ✓ For those who get access to treatment, the employer could save between \$5000 to \$10,000 per employee per year in the cost of prescription drugs, sick leave, and average wage replacement
- ✓ When short-term disability becomes long-term, there is a lesser chance that the person will be able to return to previous levels of proficiency
- ✓ Disability represents anywhere from 4% to 12% of payroll costs in Canada; mental health claims (especially depression) have overtaken cardiovascular disease as the fastest growing category of disability costs in Canada
- ✓ Depression will rank second only to heart disease as the leading cause of disability worldwide by the year 2020

EARLY INTERVENTION

Promoting the mental health and well-being of all employees by:

- ✓ Recognizing that all staff have mental health needs
- ✓ Raising awareness of what people can do to look after their own and others' mental well-being
- ✓ Identifying and addressing the factors that affect mental health in the workplace

Offering assistance, advice and **support**. This should include:

- ✓ Building a working culture in which mental health issues are not taboo
- ✓ Providing support options which are confidential and non-stigmatizing such as the Employee Assistance Program that is included in some Extended Health Care benefits

Group life and health plans * Registered pension plans * Group RSPs * Critical illness plans
Long term disability plans * Integrated benefit solutions * Private Health Services Plans (PHSPs)

DISABILITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE (DMI)

Disability management is an increasingly complex process. When faced with an employee who is unable to perform his duties because of a disability, employers can find it difficult to know what to do and when. The Disability Management Institute (DMI) which specializes in disability prevention and claims management can be of great help when there are potential disability claims.

DMI was created by professionals with more than 100 years of experience in claims management and disability prevention. They offer "one-stop-shopping" for your entire employee absence-related needs. Some of their services:

Early Intervention on Sick Leave, WI and LTD Claims

- ✓ Early contact with employees absent from work due to personal injury or illness
- ✓ Ongoing support and follow up with injured or ill employees
- ✓ Coordination of all benefit claim application processes including assistance to employees and employers
- ✓ Minimize time off work through ongoing support and follow-up with employees

WI and LTD Claims Review and Appeal Processes

- ✓ Pursue fair adjudication during the application process
- ✓ Liaise with the plan carrier, employee and employer during the appeal process
- ✓ Where required by process or by the employer, facilitate claim review processes by coordinating physician involvement, distribution of confidential medical documentation, and review of decisions

WCB Claims Management Services & Appeals

- ✓ Administrative preparation of all injury reports for submission to WCB, and all subsequent correspondence with WCB
- ✓ Relieve employers of the obligation to meet response and appeal deadlines

Soft Tissue Injury Prevention

- ✓ Customized, on-site, soft tissue injury prevention training

Absentee Management and Absence Prevention

- ✓ Assist the employer to effectively manage absenteeism
- ✓ Establish systems for employers to manage absence related to personal injury and illness
- ✓ Provide education workshops and other appropriate resources on health promotion and illness prevention

Return to Work Planning and Workplace Accommodation

- ✓ Design, implement and monitor safe and timely return to work plans
- ✓ Liaise directly with the WCB, third party plan carriers, health care professionals, the employee, the employer and unions on matters pertaining to the development and implementation of return to work plans
- ✓ Analyze and adjust work tasks where an employee's physical capabilities necessitate work modifications

ADMINISTRATION OF BENEFITS – DUTY OF CARE

Employers must realize that they owe a duty of care to their employees in regards to the administration of their benefit packages.

During a recent case in the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench, Grams Estate v. Maple Leaf Metal Industries Ltd., an employee died while at work at the business premises of his employer. His estate sued the employer for negligence in failing to provide insurance coverage pursuant to the employer's benefit plan. The employer argued that the employee had not applied for the insurance in a timely way and that it was the employee's sole decision as to whether or not he wished to be enrolled.

The court held that the employer had a duty of care to the employee which was breached when the information provided when the employee was hired did not provide sufficient details about the coverage available and did not set out the critical timelines for applying for the insurance or the consequences of failing to apply in a timely manner. However the court also noted that the employee was aware of the benefits plan and was therefore also negligent in failing to apply. As a result, the employer was held to be liable for only 50% of the estate's damages.

The case is instructive because it demonstrates that an employer's obligations are not fulfilled merely by advising employees of the existence of benefit plans. The court has held that the employer owes an additional duty to advise employees of details of their benefits and any critical timelines for application.

Benefit Packages must be fully explained to the employees when they are hired and enrolled into the plan. If the employee wishes to waive extended health and dental coverage they can only do so if they have equivalent coverage through a spouse. If they waive all coverage they must complete a waiver of benefits form signed by **both** the employee and their spouse. The waiver form has the employee acknowledge that they understand the benefits that were offered to them but had refused coverage.

ADMINISTRATOR'S CORNER

What to do when an employee is absent and there is a possibility of a disability claim?

Contact our offices immediately and we will explain the steps needed at every stage of the employee's absence. If the absence becomes a disability claim, we will assist with the paperwork and go through the claims process with you. We will follow-up periodically with you and the employee to ensure a seamless flow between the employee's initial absence and a possible long term disability claim.