Conversations with employees on
MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

Guide your employees to the help they need.

THE PROBLEM

Millions of people in the U.S. are affected by mental health and substance use conditions. Due to the pandemic and other factors, these conditions are at an all-time high. Many people aren't getting the help they need. These conditions are the most common reason for work absences due to sick time and long-term disability.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

24% of patients have a primary or secondary behavioral health diagnosis [1]

$16.8 B lost in productivity due to mental illness each year, with more than 200 M+ workdays missed [2]

[1]Blue Cross network administration department
[2]Blue Cross Blue Shield Association: A Closer Look at Behavioral Health

THE SIGNS

THE HELP

Assess your team's well-being

Over the last several years, stressors such as COVID-19, social injustice, elections and work stressors have led to a decline in employee health. Stress can lead to anxiety, depression, diabetes, heart disease, absenteeism, work turnover, substance use disorder and premature death. Signs your employees may exhibit due to stress include:

- Short temper
- Displaying anxiety or fear
- New onset performance issues
- Poor sleep or appetite
- Weight loss or gain
- Lack of interest in activities normally enjoyed
- Disengagement

Take the lead and create a safe space for employees

As an employer, assessing and promoting well-being requires your leaders to be mindful, vulnerable and lead by example. To promote wellness and improve resilience, encourage your employees to practice mindfulness, rest and recover from daily tasks and stressors, and practice self-care.

Rest and Recovery

Research shows employees took off 25% to 30% fewer days in 2020 compared with normal years as the pandemic canceled travel plans and social engagements. Encourage your employees to use their paid days off, and to use them wisely by practicing self-care. Self-care helps create a life that promotes comfort and peace.

Establish work policies and conversations that promote rest and recovery such as:

- Encouraging use of paid time off
- Encouraging people to stand, walk and step away from their workspace
- Not handling email and phone calls after work hours
- Not scheduling meetings too early, too late or during the lunch hour
- Scheduling breaks between meetings

Taking preventive measures as an employer

Taking preventive measures and investing in mental health can affect productivity, company culture and staff turnover. This could include the following:

- Promote awareness from the top down

- Create an accepting culture

- Offer proper support

- Give clear information about support and resources

- Train managers

  - Mental health and substance use disorder training for managers should focus on:
    - An overview of the mental health and substance use conditions that employees are most likely to suffer from
    - Recognizing the symptoms of burnout
    - Recognizing the signs of poor mental health in employees
    - The ability to actively listen and have conversations about mental health and substance use conditions with their team
    - A clear understanding of how mental health impacts performance
    - Having clarity about the role they play in addressing the team's emotional well-being

Employee assistance program, or EAP

Many employers also offer an EAP or other no-cost and confidential short-term counseling, education and support resources for stress, grief, substance use concerns and relationship struggles. Be sure your employees are aware of programs you offer that support their mental well-being.

It starts with you

Encourage employees to create a life outside of work that promotes comfort, happiness and peace such as:

- Spending time outdoors

- Taking up a hobby

- Disconnecting and spending quality time with family and friends

- Being kind to themselves and others

THE RESOURCES

You've taken an important first step by selecting a health plan that includes mental health and substance use disorder benefits. Here are additional resources to help you guide your employees to the help they need:

- Explore the Behavioral Health Toolkit for ready-to-use emails, flyers, posters and more to help engage your employees in available mental health and substance use disorder benefits.

- Visit Behavioral Health Basics for resources and support.

- Visit bcbsmmasterclass.com for upcoming webinars and on-demand classes to help you navigate the complexities of health care.

- Join Blue Cross Virtual Well-Being℠ for weekly webinars that provide insight on creating a culture of well-being in your workplace.
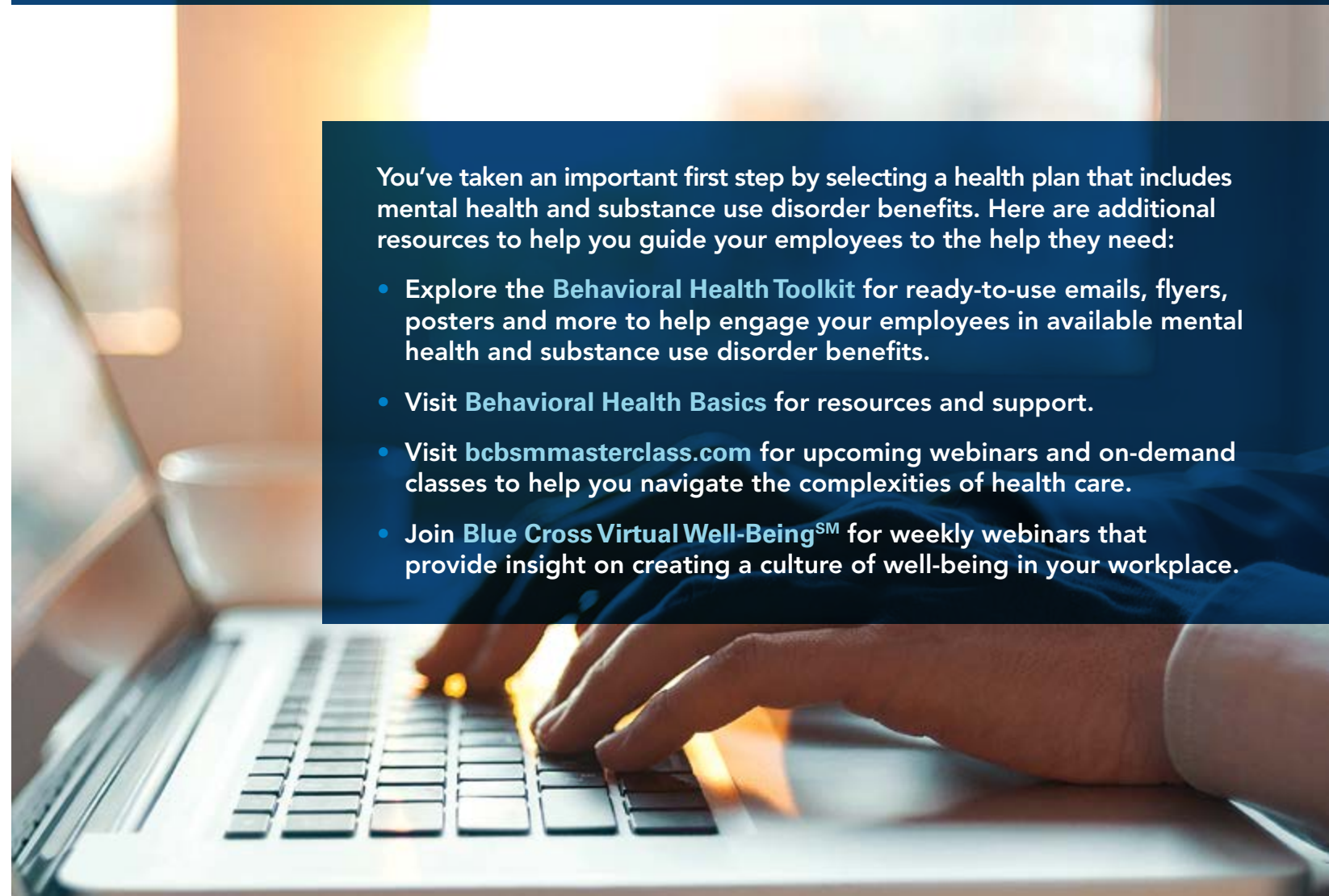
Blue Cross
Blue Shield
Blue Care Network
of Michigan

Contact your Blue Cross agent or account manager if you have questions or concerns.