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# HEADS UP!

HR NEWS YOU NEED TO KNOW



May

Is Mental Health Awareness Month

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## May Is Mental Health Awareness Month

Although we are officially out of the Covid-19 pandemic, mental health which took a front-row seat during the pandemic, continues to be of concern – personally and professionally. We have seen the news clips and read the news articles about suicides, violent crimes, and the birth of many telehealth organizations offering therapeutic services to those in mental and emotional crisis.

Many employers are seeing the effects of mental health issues on the productivity and attendance of their staff. To help mitigate some of these issues, employers are tasking their HR/People Operations teams to develop and implement programs that take a proactive role in promoting mental health awareness and creating supportive workplace environments.

You may be thinking, as a small or medium-sized business, “we cannot afford to create mental health awareness programs” or that “creating mental awareness programs is something that big companies do – they have the budget and people resources to implement these types of programs, benefits, and perks.”

While you may not be able to offer the scale of resources, services, benefits, and perks as larger organizations, there are still ways that you can show your staff that their mental well-being matters, that you support healthy workplace environments, and attract and retain quality talent.



Some inexpensive or no-cost ways to promote positive mental health are through the development and implementation of policies. Creating policies that focus on work-life balance such as flexible work schedules, hybrid work options, personal leaves, increased vacation allowances, and educating employees on mental health leave programs such as Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and California Family Rights Act (CFRA), counseling services through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help employees access the assistance they need for self-care and mental health resources.

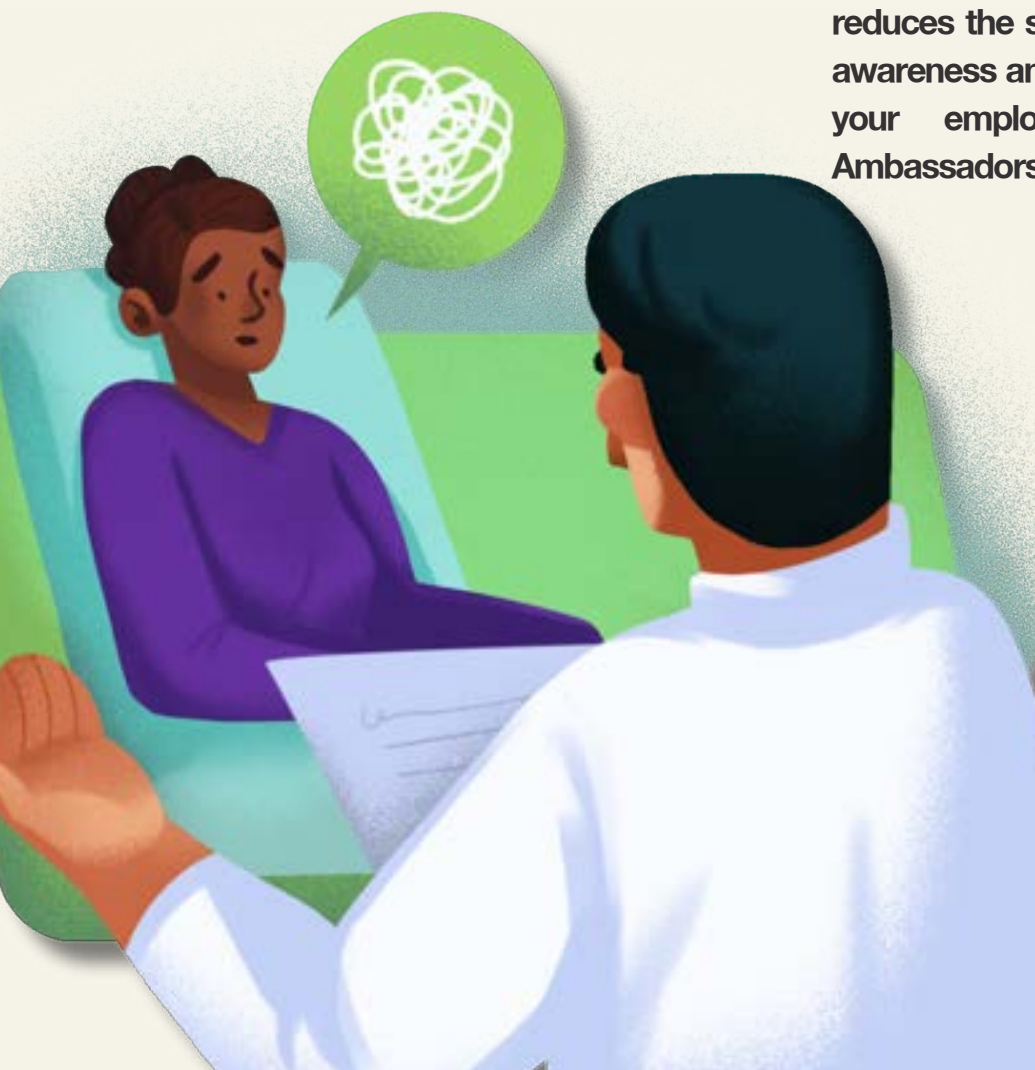
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Additionally, training managers/supervisors with the tools they need to recognize signs of distress (physical and emotional), withdrawal, and subtle changes in demeanor, performance, and engagement are beneficial to addressing issues in the early stages before they become larger and hard to turn around or contain. Training topics can range from stress management, resilience building, effective communication, fostering a mentally healthy work environment, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

While the development, promotion, and implementation of many of the initiatives discussed here lie within the actions of HR, leaders of organizations play a key role in ensuring the adoption of policies, and training programs, in addition to creating an empathetic and mentally healthy work environment. Success in these efforts is a team effort of everyone from the top down in an organization.

If you would like to develop policies, programs, and training that prioritizes and reduces the stigma around mental health awareness and supports the well-being of your employees, contact our HR Ambassadors.



We are happy to assist you with building an environment where employees feel safe, heard, seen, and valued.





## FMLA Regulations

This month the Department of Labor (DOL) released an updated Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) poster that clarifies that:

- Although FMLA is an unpaid leave, employees may choose or be required by their employer to use any employer-provided paid leave (i.e., paid sick leave, vacation, or PTO) during their FMLA leave.
- Notice must be provided to employees requesting FMLA leave that communicates their rights and responsibilities under FMLA and how much of their leave will be protected under FMLA.
- Employees returning from an FMLA leave must be restored to their same or virtually identical job with the same pay,

benefits, and working conditions as before their FMLA leave.

- Certification may be requested for leave due to qualifying exigency\*.

*\*Qualifying exigency refers to an employee, spouse, daughter, or parent who is on covered active duty in the Armed Forces or who has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty.*

Employers with 50+ employees over a 20-workweek period in the current or previous calendar year, must in addition to posting the FMLA regulations poster in a public place within their office or intranet, must also have an FMLA policy in their employee handbook. If you have any questions about how you can ensure you're FMLA compliant (if applicable), contact our HR Ambassadors today! We are happy to assist.