

The issue - Mental Health in workplaces

Mental health, just like physical health, is an important part of work health and safety. Whether we experience this directly or indirectly, chances are that each one of us knows somebody who is experiencing poor mental health. This is especially true in workplaces, where poor mental health is one of the leading causes why many people don't go to work.

In addition to the suffering an individual may experience, there are also huge financial costs for employers. More and more, we are seeing organisations give emphasis to employee wellbeing. Employers are seeking guidance and practical solutions on how they can support staff resilience to improve workplace wellbeing.

A solution - Building resilience in workplace culture

In partnership with Blueberry Institute, University of Melbourne, icare Community Impact and ITW Residential Australia and New Zealand, a 12-month pilot took place to provide an integrated wellbeing and resilience training program that supported individual managers, their work teams and ITW Resi workplaces.

A workplace and team approach was used to develop wellbeing and resilience resources. Launching in November 2016, the wellbeing literacy and resilience skills building program included training workshops, facilitation, support and a toolkit of wellbeing resources for implementation with teams. The development of tools provided managers with the knowledge and skill to contribute to a healthy, safe and productive work culture.

Outcomes - the stats

The pilot produced significant results including:

- 48% reduction in injuries
- staff turnover rates reduced from 7% to 3.1%
- absenteeism rates reduced from 2.35% to 0.87%

What do the results tell us?

The results show positive effects for both the individual and the organisation. Psychological literacy, wellbeing and resilience practices were adopted in the workplace. The culture of the workplace showed big improvements and staff were better off from participating in the program. Work teams showed greater cohesion, more effective communication and reported feeling more supported. By prioritising employee wellbeing, less people were injured at work, more people stayed in their jobs, and less sick days were taken by employees. There were also significant improvements with revenue and profit growth.

Who benefits from workplace resilience programs?

A workplace culture that supports employee wellbeing can be beneficial for all of us. For an individual, they have support to manage their mental health concerns in the workplace in a safe nurtured environment, which could mean more engagement with work and less injuries. For an employer, the results indicate that

not only are employees reporting feeling well and connected; the reduced rates of injury, staff turnover and absenteeism could result in more productivity. Reduced injuries and workers compensation claims also have a significant financial impact for employers and insurers, which lower premiums.

Building resilience into a workplace takes time and commitment from employers. By contributing to development of workplace health promotion resources, organisations like ITW Resi are better enabled to support the wellbeing of their employees. ITW Resi have committed to a second year of the program to continue embedding the positive culture change.

What does this mean for icare?

We are committed to creating societal value by engaging, collaborating with and empowering our community to address social issues, like mental health. This program is one of the many partnerships of icare which aims to create safe and healthy workplaces for employees of NSW.

By engaging proactively with employers, such as ITW Resi, we can identify and address opportunities to mitigate worker injury and create safe work environments, and enable sustained recovery and return to work. We believe this will make a meaningful difference to the people of NSW.