

Focusing on a physical work injury could mean missing a mental health challenge



A comprehensive approach

When an injury occurs workers place trust in their employer to provide reliable adjusters, case managers, and providers to shape their recovery, including the mental health challenges that often go hand-in-hand with a physical injury.



Questions to ask right away

- How does the injury affect the worker's overall wellbeing?
- If unable to work, what effects is the situation causing?
- Is the injury creating problems at home or with family?
- Is the worker experiencing feelings of isolation?



Routinely look for signs of mental health challenges

- Does the worker appear less confident about recovering and getting back to work?
- Is the worker turning to self-destructive behaviors in an attempt to cope?
- Is the worker receptive to self-care and other means of promoting wellness?
- Is the worker taking any medications or having treatment complicating recovery?



Consider proven tools to guide recovery

- Techniques such as active listening and behavioral coaching can facilitate improvement.
- Talk therapy can serve as an appropriate treatment for mental health obstacles.



Match the worker's needs to the treatment

- What type of provider is best suited?
Psychiatrists, psychologists, or professional counselors
- What level of care?
Full or partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient care or counseling, medication management

The need for qualified providers

A robust and diverse network is essential to help patients avoid obstacles to sound mental health

Challenges

- Increasing gap in providers to meet the growing need
- Timely access to available providers
- Difficulty directing the injured person to an appropriate provider

Opportunities

- Telemedicine innovations to combat mental health access issues
- Behavioral health specialty networks to ensure access and case management referrals to the most appropriate behavioral health providers
- Eliminating the stigma with continued education regarding mental health issues and resources

Medication disruption can short-circuit recovery

Being aware of the injured worker's medications, particularly related to mental health needs, is imperative



Medications can face rejection for not being germane to a workplace injury



A subsequent injury could exacerbate an existing mental health issue, triggering a psychiatrist to prescribe additional medications



Continuity of care could be disrupted and a treatment plan compromised



Medications as part of an injury treatment may drive up the likelihood of depression and anxiety

Identifying an injured worker's comprehensive needs is more important than ever



Provider types, treatments, and settings don't exist in a vacuum



Injured workers face added strains during a global pandemic



Compounding stress can impinge on recovery and stir unease about wellbeing



Injured workers require a variety of care options to see their health restored and return to work



Only by considering the whole person can we achieve the best outcomes



Qualified providers are necessary to address mental health complications

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