

Supporting Employee Behavioral Health and Well-Being During the Pandemic

John T. Kelly, MD, PhD, Chief Medical Officer, Pathways



The Company

Pathways is one of the largest behavioral health companies in the United States with over 4,700 employees across multiple markets states. The company provides services in thousands of locations across the country and has been delivering behavioral health services for over 20 years.

The Challenge

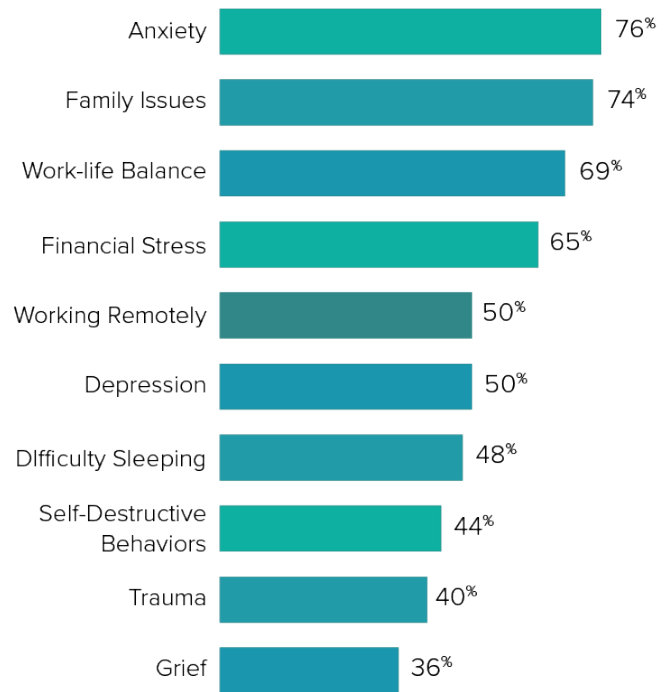
The COVID-19 pandemic was disrupting almost every aspect of employees' lives, including their work, workplaces, families, and communities. Because of the disruptions due to the pandemic, employees were experiencing unprecedented challenges to their behavioral health and well-being, including widespread anxiety, stress, and depression.

To develop effective plans to help employees manage their behavioral health and well-being, Pathways surveyed its employees to identify their behavioral health concerns due to the pandemic. Employee survey results were used to guide the development and presentation of virtual educational courses to provide behavioral health support for employees.

Pathways Employee Survey

Pathways developed a survey to evaluate its employees' behavioral health concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees were invited to complete an anonymous survey to indicate their level of concern about issues which might affect their behavioral health, including: anxiety, family issues, work-life balance, and financial stress. Approximately 72% of Pathways 4,700 employees completed the survey during April, 2020.

Pathways employees who completed the survey identified the behavioral health issues due to the pandemic about which they were extremely, very, or moderately concerned:



Anxiety, family issues, work-life balance, and financial stress were the most frequently mentioned causes for concern among Pathways employees. Other causes for concern among Pathways employees were: working remotely, depression, difficulty sleeping, dangerous and self-destructive behaviors, trauma, and grief.

The Solution

As the survey of Pathways employees demonstrated significant behavioral health concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pathways established a steering committee of behavioral health professionals, human resource leaders, and operations specialists to evaluate the survey results and prepare plans to help employees manage their behavioral health concerns due to the pandemic.

Consistent with the CDC's recommendations on its CDC Worksite Health Scorecard regarding virtual educational programs to help employees manage behavioral health issues, the committee developed plans to provide courses to address the concerns identified in the survey.

Courses were developed and delivered by Pathways behavioral health professionals, presented virtually, scheduled bi-weekly for 30 minutes, available live or recorded, and allowed voluntary attendance. The courses were designed to provide practical behavioral health advice and provide information on how to obtain relevant behavioral health resources.

Pathways Educational Courses

Educational courses were provided to Pathways employees by Pathways behavioral health specialists during May – July, 2020. Educational courses were provided on the following behavioral health topics:

- Coping with anxiety
- Managing life with family members
- Managing financial stress
- Overcoming loneliness and avoiding isolation
- Working remotely successfully and productively
- Responding to dangerous and self-destructive behaviors
- Managing trauma and grief
- Communicating constructively with isolated family members

Results

Employees were invited to complete evaluations after each course. The course evaluations were highly favorable, with **more than 95% of employees indicating they strongly agreed or agreed** in their evaluation of course effectiveness, communication of content, faculty knowledge, and content relevance.

More than 95% of employees favorably rated course effectiveness, communication of content, faculty knowledge, and content relevance.

Employees were also invited to provide individual comments after each of the courses. 44% of the attendees provided individual comments. Typical of the employee comments on the educational courses are the following:

“I really enjoyed the sessions and the effort put into addressing the challenges each of us face. Thank you for doing this! I love learning new things that are directly applicable to my life and my family’s life.”

“The first three sessions have been wonderfully presented. The specialists make it relatable and I love the personal experience touch they give in each one. So far it is like a TV series and you’re on the end of your seat waiting for the next week to see what great, useful information they provide. Please keep up the great work!”

“I am very impressed with the level of care and reassurance you all are providing us. Outstanding presentations! How fortunate we are to have specialists providing such helpful info. I give you all 6 stars out of 5.”

Summary

The Pathways employee survey demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused employees significant challenges to their behavioral health and well-being.

Voluntary employee attendance at the educational courses shows that employees will attend educational courses which are presented by knowledgeable faculty and which provide information employees consider relevant and effective.

The employee evaluations of the educational courses demonstrate that virtual courses can provide effective behavioral health support for employees.

For Additional Information

For further information or to discuss how Pathways at Work can help you support your employees during the pandemic and beyond, visit PathwaysatWork.com.