



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2022

Guest Column:

By Steve SRvers

President & CEO of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce

614-228-4201

Mental Health Awareness is Important Every Month of the Year

As Mental Health Awareness Month draws to a close in May, I want to emphasize the importance of carrying our awareness forward into the other eleven months of the year.

According to Mental Health America, at 23.64 percent, Ohio is the state with the fourth highest percentage of adults experiencing a mental illness in 2022. At 6.09 percent, it has the third highest percentage of adults with serious thoughts of suicide in 2022.

This means that nearly 1 in 4 of your friends, colleagues, family and neighbors are struggling with their mental health. These statistics may be hard to hear, but they're crucial to understanding the severity of this crisis in our state.

Mental health affects every aspect of life, including mood, behavior, relationships, interests and even physical health. So, what can we do to help, specifically as leaders in the workforce? I'd like to provide you with some resources that I've found helpful in both professional and personal contexts.

The Ohio Department of Insurance has released a [Mental Health in the Workplace Employer Toolkit](#) that promotes mental health in the workplace by equipping employers and employees with the proper tools to navigate this fight. It explains mental illness and the stigma that surrounds it, as well as how to combat that stigma. It emphasizes the importance of the words we use and offers some helpful substitutes for avoidable terms. It offers helpful tips on adjusting workplace culture to support employee mental health and details specific legislation and benefit requirements that employers should know.

Along a similar vein, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce website features an [Opioid Toolkit](#), an eight-module course that is intended to provide employers with the proper resources to manage conflicts related to substance use disorders that may arise in the workplace. Substance use disorders are mental disorders, and it is important that we navigate the stigma against them with empathy and care.

On the legislative side, let's discuss mental health insurance parity law. These laws require health plans that provide coverage for mental health and substance use disorders to provide that coverage in a similar manner to any physical health benefits that are covered. In the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Ohio Department of Insurance's joint [2022 Ohio Mental Health Parity Report](#), the departments detail completed and ongoing efforts by the state to support enforcement of these laws, as well as general support toward communications, education and outreach efforts related to mental health awareness.

For child-specific resources, Nationwide Children's Hospital has launched the [On Our Sleeves](#) campaign. The webpage offers help for children and parents who are struggling with mental health. Its goal is to start the important conversations and provide support to a demographic that we often forget when we consider these complex issues.

We are living in a tough time. There is no shame in experiencing mental health struggles, now or ever. Ohio has a lot of great people dedicated to creating resources that we can utilize to help support our employees, friends and families, and we should all take advantage of them when the need arises.

###