

Registered Social Workers



Good Therapy for Business

REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS – GOOD THERAPY FOR BUSINESS

Executive Summary

The burden of mental health problems in Canada is staggering – a conservative estimate places the cost at \$14 billion annually. But dollars are only part of the picture – the human cost is expressed in stress, conflict, increased incidence of anxiety and depression, and a host of other physical illnesses that accompany a breakdown in mental function. In the workplace, mental disorders are primarily measured in terms of lost productivity – high rates of absence, disability, the cost of finding and training replacement labour, and poor quality products and service outputs. The high human and financial cost is why mental health is a topic of increasing interest to many employers and insurers.

Depression and other mental disorders affect up to 3,000,000 Canadians, only a small number of whom are adequately treated. Employers see the costs in increased utilization of drug and disability plans – mental disorders are the most frequent and highest cost illness covered by Long Term Disability plans.

Much of this cost is the result of unmanaged stress driven by workplace trends towards higher workload, fewer workers, more emphasis on technology, and inadequate training and skills development. Research proves organizations play a key, if largely unrecognized, role in creating the conditions for either good or poor health. Knowing this, workplaces need to create a climate, culture and image that attracts, retains, and *sustains* its employees. Imagination, entrepreneurship and relationship management skills are crucial attributes for today's employees, but they cannot blossom in a work environment characterized by stress, conflict, unattainable demands, and inadequate supports and rewards. Employers can take steps to encourage supportive cultures at work as an effective and sustainable solution to stress, depression, and other mental health problems.

Social Workers are a part of this support network, and a key resource in the provision of mental health services. They are regulated professionals in each province of Canada. By virtue of their accessibility in both large and small communities across Canada, they are seeing more and more employees and their families with mental health issues. Employee Assistance Plans (EAPs) have for many years turned to Social Workers to effectively and efficiently resolve these matters. Very often, Social Workers are the *only* professional a person will consult to help them through their issues. Research shows high levels of client satisfaction with Social Workers counselling. Treatment is more effective because Social Workers also bring a unique psycho-social perspective to these issues – dealing not only with the person but the social context in which people live and work. Social Workers also work as part of a mental health team, including physicians, hospitals, and community agencies. Their scope of practice includes work-related problems, alcohol, drug and substance abuse, marital and family issues, and behavioural and emotional disturbances.

Unfortunately, many group insurance plans still do not reimburse Social Worker services, even though social workers are the largest group of practicing counsellors and psychotherapists in North America. However, while virtually all insurers have some clients that do provide coverage for Social Workers, the Income Tax Act does not deem Social Worker counselling to be a medical service even though some provinces regulate them as health professionals. This has created an unnecessary barrier to wider use of Social Worker services, and continued pressure needs to be exerted to bring the interpretation of the Act by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency in line with current treatment standards and practices.

Social Workers are accountable, competent, accessible, and affordable to employers, workers, and their families. They are part of a comprehensive solution for employers and insurers to address mental health issues in the workplace.

While workplaces should continue to offer today's mental health programs, employers and unions must also invest in longer-term solutions that improve the fundamental work environment. Social Workers can assist individuals in managing their stress, their work and family environments, and be part of a team that assists organizations to effectively manage the drivers of so many avoidable illnesses and injuries.

Introduction

One of today's biggest business issues, in good times or bad, is to retain the best employees, and keep them fully productive. Keeping them healthy – physically and mentally – is not only good news for employees, but for employers too. Caring organizations help attract and retain loyal employees...and thereby create their own bottom-line success too.

In today's complex, stressful, and safety-conscious world, employers need to provide widened access to mental health services in order to keep their employees healthy, focused, secure, and productive. In addition to existing approaches, such as Employee Assistance Plans, payment for psychologist services, and stress management programs, employers and unions **must** consider reimbursing mental health services provided by Registered Social Workers (RSWs), through their employee benefits plan.

RSWs bring to their clients a unique focus on the social context of stress and conflict. The workplace is a complex social system of relationships, power, control and rewards. Essentially, unless the organizational climate is recognized as a key factor in creating a healthy workplace, interventions such as individual counselling or specific programs, will not work at optimal levels because the underlying causes of stress and ill health remain.

Appropriate professional treatment by Registered Social Workers brings improved health to the employee, by helping him or her understand and manage the personal and social elements of their environment. The organization benefits because employees are better able to concentrate, work more efficiently and effectively and produce higher quality work. As well, there is less conflict and distraction. RSWs also provide cost-effective treatment, and are professionals governed by regulatory bodies in all Canadian provinces.

This paper will examine two major issues – mental health in the workplace, and the role of Registered Social Workers in helping employers manage the health and productivity of their workplace. It provides answers to the following questions:

1. Is mental health a significant problem?
2. Is there a need to change how employers approach mental health?
3. Why should business care about the mental health of its employees?
4. How are Registered Social Workers qualified to provide counselling and therapy?
5. Can Social Workers and Employee Assistance Plans (EAPs) affect health and productivity?
6. How much will coverage cost?

The national coalition of provincial and territorial social worker associations would be very pleased to receive your comments and questions on the issues raised in this paper. Please contact the Executive Director, shown in Appendix B:

KEY QUESTIONS

Question 1: Is mental health a significant problem?

A 2001 Health Canada report described mental health as a \$14 billion health issue in Canada, before including the cost of absence, company long-term disability plans, or untreated illness.¹

Business must address mental health services issues in its own backyard. For example, the most common form of mental illness, depression, affects up to 3,000,000 Canadians. Of these, only 25% are diagnosed, and 6% (180,000) are properly treated.² The highest prevalence is between ages 20 and 24, but depression affects over 5% of Canadians until about age 45.³

It is also important to know the cost of doing nothing to address mental health issues in the workplace. Employers spend more than they think on health, once benefits, Workers' Compensation, absence and occupational health and safety are included. The numbers on mental health and employee benefits are very large:

- Mental health is the largest and fastest growing cause of Long Term Disability. Indirect costs, such as absence, disability, productivity, may be up to 7 times greater than the direct costs of care like drugs and therapy.⁴ In the United States the average length of disability was 40 days for major depression, versus 29 days for non-mental health reasons.
- The second highest cost in drug plans, accounting for 9-10% of claims⁵, is for mental health products. A recent Canadian study showed claimants using anti-depressants had the largest share of drug costs - 23% of the total spent!
- A large part of the increases in Employee Assistance Plan utilization.

According to the Canadian Community Health Survey: Mental health and Well-Being⁶ in 2002:

- One out of every 10 Canadians (about 2.6 million) report symptoms consistent with mental health problems or use of alcohol or illicit drug abuse.
- Only 37% of survey respondents reported using some type of health care or community resources for these problems. Young adults between 15 and 24 were the least likely to seek help.
- Despite under utilization of resources, over 82% of those who had sought help reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the treatments and services.

In February 2004, Ipsos-Reid and Warren Shepell conducted a survey of participants at a Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario (HRPAO) conference. Results of the survey indicated that respondents identified the top two contributors to absenteeism and/or health costs in the workplace as depression/anxiety/other mental health disorder (66%) and stress (60%).⁷

¹ Stephens T, Joubert, N (2001). The Economic Burden of Mental Health Problems in Canada. *Chronic Diseases in Canada* 22(1).

² Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction & Mental Health. See also www.cmha.ab.ca, viewed June 2005.

³ Health Canada, *Health Reports* 11(3), 1999.

⁴ Coombs et al, 1998. P. 100.

⁵ Source: Figures supplied by a major insurer, from a study by a large pharmacy benefit manager. The insurer wished to remain anonymous.

⁶ Statistics Canada, 2002. *Canadian Community Mental Health Survey: Mental Health and Well-Being*.

⁷ Ipsos-Reid/Warren Shepell Survey, February 2004. *Contributors to Workplace Absenteeism and Healthcare Benefits Costs*.

Furthermore, a June 2005 survey of 114 Canadian CEOs found that:

- *Stress is increasing* – 75% (3 of 4) CEOs agree that today’s employees face a greater health risk from mental health conditions such as stress and burn-out than they did five years ago.
- *Stress impacts on poor health* – 78% (8 in 10) CEOs said they were very concerned or somewhat concerned about the impact of poor health on their workforce.
- *Employers need to offer help* – 60% of both CEOs and employees (622 were surveyed) agreed that EAPs helped manage stress, burnout and other physical and mental health issues.⁸

The World Health Organization reports that 5 of the 10 leading causes of disability are related to mental disorders. By 2020 it predicts that depression will be the second cause of disability after heart disease.

The need for mental health services will increase with stress from continued restructuring in business and the economy. This needs to be managed, not ignored. Supporting cost-effective access to mental health care allows employers to protect and retain valuable “knowledge workers”, encourage innovation, reduce conflict, and improve productivity.

Question 2: Is there a need to change how employers approach mental health?

Today’s work environment presents many challenges for employees, and their families. Research has identified many workplace stressors that have more impact on our health than the health system does. Among them:

- Excessive workload demands
- Poor job fit or design
- Autonomy, control, and decision latitude
- Role conflict and ambiguity
- Organizational - management style; culture
- Positional - satisfaction and rewards
- Environmental - noise, air quality, danger
- Relationships – managers, peers, direct reports.
- Security – Perceived threat of harassment; the ‘safety factor’.

The findings of the Canadian Community Health Survey-Mental Health and Well-Being (2002) which collected data from 37,000 3 respondents between the ages of 15 and 64 is revealing. This survey found that 4% of those interviewed reported experiencing symptoms or feelings associated with major depression with the past year as compared to symptoms for diabetes (5%) for heart disease (5%) and for thyroid disorder (6%). About 21% also reported that they felt they needed help for these problems but did not receive it during the 12 months prior to the interview.

Another issue affecting many Canadians is access to traditional health professionals on a convenient and timely basis. Reimbursing RSW services allows employees and family members

⁸ Ipsos-Reid Survey, June 2005. Productivity Through Health: FGIworld CEO Study on Health and Productivity in Canadian Industry.

to obtain mental health services in communities underserved by other mental health professionals. A 2001 Health Canada study noted 71% of individuals seeing Social Workers for mental health problems were not seeing a physician.⁹ Canadians trust RSWs to deliver the support services they need, in a professional and timely basis.

Moreover, health care is not integrated between the Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) and the group Extended Health Plan (EHC). When EAP benefits cease, many of those receiving treatment drop it, stop it, or stall progress until a replacement professional is found. While an EAP provides sufficient benefits for many conditions, there are more serious situations that require more intensive or extended therapy. In these situations, the cost sometimes represents a significant barrier on the person's way to improved health. This situation, like many forms of health care, is an opportunity for employers to invest in the health and productivity of their employees. Good health is not simply a cost to be minimized at every turn.

A note of caution: Some employer plan designs restrict access by requiring a physician referral or supervision. While coordinating treatment with a physician may be appropriate from time to time, RSWs are aware of the need (and are legally bound) to refer their clients to other health professionals when warranted. Problems arise when these professionals are not available in all parts of Canada, and when too many restrictions to access discourage or delay appropriate care and simply add administrative cost to the plan.

Employees value health benefits plans. A 2004 survey of Canadian workers across the country found that 75% of respondents asked to choose between having extra money per year (\$2K, \$5K, or \$8K) or keeping their workplace health benefit plan, choose the latter. Overall findings revealed that a majority of plan holders found all components of the plan important. However, since 1999, the degree to which they felt these plans met their needs fell from 73% to 58%.¹⁰

⁹ Stephens and Joubert, *ibid.*

¹⁰ 7th Annual Ispos-Reid/Aventis Healthcare Survey, May 2004.

Question 3: Why should business care about the mental health of its employees?

Business must be concerned about keeping healthy, satisfied employees, regardless of the economic cycle. When times are good, employers struggle to attract and retain talent in short supply. When the cycle slows, the emphasis is on keeping mission-critical talent who will perform key services, and then form the foundation of the company when times improve. Complicating this is the fact that many organizations will soon be approaching the much smaller 'baby bust' generation to replace retiring baby boomers,

The Costs of Unresolved Personal Problems

Compared with average employees, employees experiencing personal problems have:

- More lateness and higher absenteeism;
- More personal accidents on and off the worksite;
- More accidents causing damage to equipment;
- Greater number of sick days and greater use of medical services;
- Greater use of health benefits;
- More grievances filed;
- More conflict with co-workers and disciplinary actions initiated against them;
- More morale problems;
- Lower productivity and poorer workmanship.

Source: R. Csiernik, Ph.D, www.ceapa.com.

the first of whom turned age 55 in 2001. Attracting and retaining key employees will only get more difficult.

Gary Hamel, a well-known management expert with experience around the world, wrote in the Ivey Business Journal (see July-August 2001), how corporations have six kinds of corporate capital, ranging from traditional forms like financial, structural, and intellectual capital, to *Transformational*. This latter class of capital involves these essential and irreplaceable human skills:

- Imagination
- Entrepreneurship
- Relationship

Employees who are under stress are not functioning at peak levels and cannot contribute as much in these three key areas. While managers may expect problems at lower levels of the organization, stress-related problems appear at all levels. There are several tell-tale signs. With too much work, and not enough time to fully consider the issues of the day, we tend to apply old habits and previous biases in a rote effort to solve today's problems. We fixate on a single, standard approach to a problem. We are tempted to adopt a short-term perspective. We tend to consult and listen less to others. While these steps are expedient, they are hardly the best path forward.

When these situations exist for extended periods, without adequate relief, expressions of conflict often arise. These include:

- Threatening behaviour;
- Emotional or verbal abuse and harassment;
- Bullying, assault, domestic violence, road/air rage;
- Suicide;
- Depression;
- Recklessness; and,
- Abuse of alcohol and drugs.¹¹

RSWs routinely help their clients manage all these issues.

The Institute for Work and Health, a leading Canadian research organization affiliated with three Ontario universities and the provincial Workplace Safety and Insurance Board identified the most important factors affecting employee health and well-being:

- Technological change
- Organizational and management practices
- Job structure and design
- Individual characteristics and behaviour.

Under the Radar

There are many intangible but too-common workplace issues that may also be improved by RSW counseling and therapy, such as:

- Inappropriate and extended use of manager's time;
- Poor morale and increased turnover;
- Labour relations - more and longer grievance and arbitration hearings;
- Poor quality products and customer services (e.g., defects, waste re-work), often leading to higher overtime costs;
- Damage to the organizations' reputation and image;
- Poor concentration and decision-making;
- Unsafe job practices leading to injuries; and,
- Fraud, theft and embezzlement.

Source: R. Csiernik, Ph.D, 1995.

Three of the four are organizationally driven. There is a large body of convincing evidence that what determines employee health is in fact, "*the hurried and worried organization*". When organizations cause health effects, there is a moral argument around fair steps to mitigate personal and organizational damage. Access to health plans, such as drugs and counselling, as well as vacation, time off, and other supports are crucial to a person's recovery and ongoing wellness.

The good news is that there is evidence of financial rewards accruing to organizations that invest in their employees. The Bank of Montreal (see Maria Gonzalez writing in the Ivey Business Journal, July/August 1999) undertook research that statistically correlated productivity, profitability, customer loyalty, and employee retention outcomes to a "healthy organizational climate".

A Model of Mental Health Care

Health Canada has developed the following "Best Practices Model" for the workplace to prevent the harmful consequences of stress:¹²



¹¹ Shain, M., Health Canada, et al (2000). Best Advice on Stress Risk Management in the Workplace. P. 17.

¹² Shain, M, Health Canada, et al (2000). Best Practices in Stress Risk Management in the Workplace. P. 20.



PRODUCTIVITY / COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE / LOWER COSTS

The latter three boxes are where employers need to enhance support services for their employees. Again, counseling with qualified RSWs on matters of stress and healthy choices represents a tangible step forward towards healthy employees.

In summary, solid research demonstrates health may not be determined by the medical system, but by *many* environmental factors including employment, workplace policies and programs, and most importantly, by the degree and quality of social support at home and at work.

Question 4: How are Registered Social Workers qualified to provide counselling and therapy?

Social Workers in private practice, or working through an EAP or other contracting agency on a full- or part-time basis, are those most likely to work with employees. (Others work for governments and social services agencies.) Generally, Social Workers have a Masters degree in Social Work (MSW), and are registered with their provincial governing body. As such, they are accountable to the public for their practice: for certainty, look for the Registered Social Worker (RSW) designation.

Social Workers receive unique training to bridge psychological and social perspectives. This often means less reliance on medications as the sole treatment modality, or faster resolution when medications are combined with effective counselling. The end-point is fast and safe return to work.

RSWs are already assisting employees in need, and working as part of a team of allied professionals providing workplace-related services. In an as-yet incomplete study¹³ of 154 organizations with different Employee Assistance Plans (EAPs), RSWs are the most prominent professional, used alone or as part of a team in half the plans. (By comparison, psychologists were used 37% of the time.)

RSWs specialize in resolving interpersonal relationship problems at work that affect team and organizational performance, and contribute significantly to absence, productivity and disability costs. They receive specific training in team dynamics and conflict management. Social Workers offer employers and employees counselling related to drug and alcohol dependency; stress; conflict resolution; family issues, especially child- and elder-care.

¹³ The Canadian EAP Database Project. Principle researcher is Rick Csiernik, Ph.D.

Generally, the purpose of counselling and therapy is to:

- Ease the problems that brought people to treatment;
- Help them to function better with others at work, and cope with stress; and,
- Enhance personal growth (confidence, self-esteem, enjoyment).

Key treatment and prevention services will focus on:

- Work-related problems (e.g. stress, burnout, conflict, career reorientation)
- Mood, anxiety, and adaptation disorders (e.g. depression, stress, life events).

Scope of Practice

RSWs can assist employers in dealing with these problems, either through referral from an EAP provider, or through direct access by individuals.

- Work-related problems
 - Sick-leave, short-term and long-term disability
 - Recurrent absence
 - Turnover
 - Reduced productivity (“working wounded”)
 - Accidents, errors, re-work
 - Job fit, job design
 - Employee satisfaction
 - Conflict, relationships
- Alcohol, Drug, other substance abuse
- Marital and family issues
 - Child and elder care
 - Financial Counseling
- Behavioural and emotional disturbances
 - Sadness, personal loss
 - Stress, Anxiety, Depressed state

Question 5: Can Social Workers and Employee Assistance Plans (EAPs) affect health and productivity?

There is no research that focuses strictly on how Social Workers impact health and productivity. However, we can understand their effect indirectly by examining evaluation studies on EAPs. Most EAPs use RSWs, most of the time. Although research has frequently been anecdotal or produced by organizations with a vested interest in positive results, there is a reasonable body of independent, published cost-benefit studies, needs assessments, and evaluations that indicate EAPs work. “Marked improvement” in health and productivity is achieved by 50% of EAP users; 40% were somewhat improved. Problem resolution rates may be as high as 90%.¹⁴ Utilization rates of EAP services vary by employer, industry, plan type, and worksite, but average 5-7%.¹⁵

¹⁴ Csiernik, RP (1998). A Profile of Canadian Employee Assistance Programs. *Employee Assistance Research Supplement* 2(1): 1-8

¹⁵ Ibid.

Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is a type of outcome evaluation that compares the money spent on providing services (inputs) with the financial value of changes resulting from those services (outputs). EAPs have reported savings of \$2 or \$3 for every dollar invested. Since organizations and the way they are managed have a significant effect on the people who work there, companies need to invest in management approaches and supporting services that help prevent problems, or return employees to optimal functioning as early as possible.

Therapy Works - The Consumer Reports Survey

In 1995, Consumer Reports published a mental health treatment survey completed by 4,000 of its readers. The responses demonstrated people were helped by their therapy: 44% whose self-reported mental state was “very poor” at the start of therapy said they “felt good”, and treatment “made things a lot better” for 54% following treatment. Another 43% who started out “fairly poor” also improved significantly.

In terms of type of treatment, people were just as satisfied and reported similar progress whether they saw a Social Worker, Psychologist, or Psychiatrist. Interestingly, these patients reported psychotherapy to be just as successful as psychotherapy combined with anti-depressant medication. Other information, relevant to care for mental health:

- Most people received therapy for a short time, 4-8 sessions. Therapy may be abandoned for three major reasons: (i) the patient had been helped, or (ii) s/he felt unimproved, or (iii) coverage had ended and costs became overwhelming.
- Longer treatment generally lead to greater improvement. Insurance coverage restrictions reduced, with statistical significance, the degree of improvement.

Research conducted by Family Service Canada (March 2005) on the outcomes of an evaluation program involving 600 clients, demonstrates the positive impact of counselling services. The percentage of clients who at intake identified areas of concern and strength were compared with the percentage of clients who identified concerns and strengths after they receive services from their member agencies across the country. The majority (86.5%) said that their ability to deal with situations improved. (FSC agencies provide a wide range of counselling services to individuals and families related to supporting, assisting and strengthening people in their daily life, sense of well-being and in their relationships). *Replaces - A study at St Joseph's Health Centre in London ON showed many measures of work performance were improved by counselling. Overall performance, improved co-worker relations, productivity, decreased stress, and improved concentration were all positively affected outcomes.*¹⁶

The issue is not which mental health profession to reimburse (i.e. RSW vs Psychologist), but to make a timely and appropriate referral to a competent and qualified professional, based on the employee's need. RSWs are much less expensive than psychologists, and are equally well qualified to treat many of the same issues and disorders.

Why use an EAP?

The popularity of Employee Assistance Plans (EAPs) attests to the essential role RSWs play in helping employees and their families cope with the pressures and challenges of today's work and

¹⁶ Csiernik R, Atkinson B, et al (2001). An Examination of a Combined Internal-External Employee Assistance Program: The St. Joseph's Health Centre Employee Counselling Service. *Employee Assistance Quarterly* 16(3): 37-48.

home environments. In virtually every industry, protecting "intellectual capital" is essential to business success.

Rapid increases in EAP utilization indicate many stressful issues occur among working-age Canadians which significantly affect their work performance, and impair business performance. As governments have reduced support for social services, business must consider filling the gaps if the cost of care interferes with access to treatment, affects business success, and is too expensive for their employees to bear alone. RSWs need to be part of the organization's "treatment plan".

By providing assistance, management attempts to produce a more efficient, safe and cost effective work force.¹⁷ Since most Canadian EAP providers predominantly use Social Workers to deliver assistance services, it is clear these professionals play a very significant role in assuring Canadian employers keep their employees healthy, focused and productive.

Question 6: How much will coverage cost?

In the short term, reimbursement is essentially cost-neutral for employers: while more plan members will receive appropriate professional care, RSWs are accessible across the country and fees are affordable. Reimbursing RSW services will not significantly increase costs, and is likely to decrease service costs on a unit basis, since competition from RSWs will encourage substitution for more expensive providers. RSWs will no longer need to bill under a psychologists' registration, and will self-bill at lower rates. In general terms, over the long run, organizations should expect a \$2 or \$3 return for each dollar invested in mental health support services.

In short, reimbursing social work services in employee benefits plans is cost effective!

¹⁷ Csiernik, R (undated). Canadian Employee Assistance Program Database, viewed online at www.ceapa.com/open.htm, September 2001.

Viewpoint

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Healthy minds, healthy workplace

Expanding the role of the registered social worker can improve organizational health.

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Mental health is gaining attention on the corporate agenda. We are learning that healthy minds are crucial to organizational productivity and success. Initiatives such as employee assistance plans (EAPs), coverage for psychologists and periodic stress management seminars all help combat an issue that costs Canadians over \$14 billion annually. But more needs to be done to address key health problems that result from conditions in the workplace that are often born there too. Employers need to improve access to mental health services.

As part of an integrated set of health initiatives linked to the overall human resources strategy, group health plans should cover social worker services. These professionals can add an important element of much-needed preventative and primary care. Social workers are trained to assist their clients at an individual, group or organizational level to resolve problems related to the environment in which people work and live.

This focus on the social context of stress and conflict is an important advantage that social workers bring to their clients. The workplace is a complex social system of relationships, power, control and rewards. There is compelling research, and plenty of anecdotal evidence, that spiralling demands and low control create a toxic cocktail of stress in the workplace. This type of toxic environment typically doubles, even triples, an organization's health problems. Unless we can change the organizational climate, we can't expect interventions aimed at the individual, such as psychological counselling or specific programs, to work at optimal levels because we haven't addressed the underlying cause of stress and ill health. We are merely treating the symptoms.

Social workers are regulated professionals in all provinces, and as such now carry the registered social worker (RSW) designation. Most group health insurers will reimburse RSW services on request, although these individuals are not technically considered to be health professionals under the Income Tax Act. Virtually all large plan sponsors cover social workers indirectly through their EAP, which often employ RSWs as counsellors. EAP providers find these professionals to be effective as well as inexpensive relative to other health professionals such as psychologists.

Employers typically resist adding expenditures to their benefits plans unless the end result is added value through reduced medium- and long-term costs. We know investments in prevention make sense. The Income Tax Act, or its regulations, should be changed to explicitly recognize social workers. Employers also need to broaden their perspective on how these professionals can reduce health problems and expenses in the workplace. Let's clear the path for more mental health services that help both employees and organizations function effectively in today's stressful work environment.

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