

CURRENTS

A publication of Riverbend Community Mental Health, Inc.

SPRING 2019

Mental health and the workplace

Helping employers understand, encourage awareness, and take action



Jaime Corwin, Riverbend's Director of Human Resources, believes that employers play a vital role in creating an understanding and supportive workplace.



CURRENTS

SPRING 2019

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effort to increase behavioral health literacy and normalize
the behavioral health conversation. Please register as
a supporter of our work at riverbendcmhc.org, and sign
up to receive our monthly electronic newsletter and other
updates in your mailbox, newsfeed, etc.

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Founded in 1963, Riverbend Community Mental Health is a private, nonprofit
organization providing specialized behavioral health services in central New Hampshire.
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Giving Day is May 15. Your donation can help
send a kid to camp this summer.

Employers can do so much

I was once asked to speak at a conference of employers and I was identified by the moderator as “the Mental Illness person.” The panel began and I was peppered with questions that went something like this: “Could you teach us to identify people who are mentally ill so we can filter them out before we hire them?”

As if people who struggle with mental illness have a large bubble over their heads.

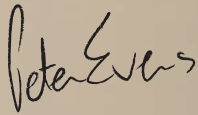
At that point it became evident that what I *needed* to say would be different than what I had *prepared* to say. The session became a conversation about what mental health is about, and that the people who have mental illness are actually you and me. People with mental illness are already in the workplace, earning money, looking after their kids, and pursuing hobbies. They are loving and living right alongside of us.

As is true for almost all human beings, work and employment are important to people who struggle with this disease. Work provides purpose; it pays the bills; and it creates agency, fellowship, and a sense of common goals.

However there is a problem. According to the [National Business Group on Health](#), 85% of mental illness in the workplace is undiagnosed and untreated. As a consequence, over 217 million workdays are lost each year, representing a lost productivity cost of over \$100 billion.

Employers can do so much to create more welcoming and accepting workplaces. One of the first steps is to demonstrate leadership about having the behavioral health conversation.

Your example can be a significant step forward in creating a culture of acceptance, and can help to reduce the huge human and economic costs of ignoring these issues.



Peter Evers, Chief Executive Officer

On a last note, I am so proud that Riverbend is helping to create a full month of celebration in May — which is mental health awareness month. Please review the calendar on the back cover and [online](#), and plan to join us for some of these amazing events!



Mental Health and the Workplace

Helping employers understand behavioral health issues, encourage awareness, and take positive action to help employees thrive



To reduce stress, clear the mind, and move the body, some Riverbend employees enjoy bi-weekly yoga classes, available at all locations through video conferencing.

The mental health crisis is real. Rising rates of depression, suicide, and addiction are having a devastating impact on families and communities everywhere. Everyone has been touched by these challenges in recent years — including employers.

Employers of all sizes — and across all industries — are becoming increasingly concerned about the behavioral health of their employees. Depression alone is estimated to cost the US economy **\$210 billion annually**, with 50 percent of that cost shouldered by employers. These costs are probably underestimated, because roughly **four in 10 adults** with behavioral health disorders do not seek treatment.

Poor mental health and substance misuse exact a high toll on the health and well-being of all employees, and negatively impact productivity. The costs of depression and other mental health disorders are also underestimated because the indirect costs — such as work absenteeism and poor performance — are actually much higher than the direct costs associated with medical care.

Also, because depression often occurs with other expensive chronic conditions — such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease — the economic burden for employers is amplified.

An important setting

Nationally, there are approximately 157 million US adults employed, and the average American worker spends **more time working** (over eight hours daily) than in any other activity apart from sleeping. With roughly **one in five** American adults reporting a behavioral health challenge each year, the workplace is an important setting to address these issues.

Anxiety disorders are the most prevalent mental health disorders in the US adult population. Rates are highest among women and among people aged 30 to 44. Substance use disorders are the next most common. These rates are highest among men and people aged 18 to 29. Impulse control disorders are the third-most common disorders with rates highest among men aged 18 to 29. Finally, mood disorders, which include Major Depressive Disorder, are most common among women and people between 18 and 29 years of age.

The 2017 national survey by the American Psychological Association reported the workplace as the third leading cause of stress (61%), closely behind both money (62%) and the future of our nation (63%).

Work conditions that contribute to stress have been estimated to account for 120,000 annual deaths, leading to annual health care costs of approximately \$190 billion.

Employers must lead

Evidence-based mental health promotion and prevention programs are sound investments. Research tells us that education and prevention programs can mitigate rates at which individuals develop symptoms and mental health disorders. There is also strong evidence that mental health education and promotion lowers the use of health care services, and is linked to reduced morbidity and mortality.

Evidence also shows that the overall cost of doing nothing is much higher than investing in education and awareness.

One of the most important things that employers can do (see box) is to normalize the conversation about behavioral health issues. "Leadership is essential, and one of the best ways to lead is by example," said Jaime Corwin, Riverbend's Director of Human Resources. "All managers need to openly support behavioral health, talk about it in personal terms, and allow that to become part of the company's culture."

From a human resource perspective, Corwin explained, employers need to start thinking about handling ADA [**Americans with Disabilities Act**] and FMLA [**Family Medical Leave Act**] requests that pertain to mental health or substance misuse conditions in the same way as they do a request pertaining to a maternity leave or knee replacement.

"We need to work on reducing the fear factor around mental health topics," Corwin said, "and getting informed by taking the Mental Health First Aid course (see page 8) is a great first step."

The impact

A recent study of chronic illnesses and their impact on workplace productivity and workplace accidents found that the **leading cause** of lost work hours, measured through absenteeism and **presenteeism** (see page 7), was depression.

"All employers are experiencing the impact of depression, for example, or substance misuse, on their workforce," said Sheryl Putney, Riverbend's Vice President of Quality Assurance. Putney is also a **Mental Health First Aid** (see page 7) trainer, as well as being actively involved in Riverbend's own internal wellness activities.

"That's the reality today. It's how we respond to that reality that can make all the difference."

As a Mental Health First Aid trainer, Putney has worked with a wide range of individuals and groups over the past two years. She has a good sense for the stigma about mental illness that remains in our community. She also believes that getting beyond that barrier really doesn't take that much enlightenment for most people.

Continued on page 6



Leadership is essential, and one of the best ways to lead is by example.

— Jaime Corwin

Five Things Employers Can Do



Leadership: One of the most effective strategies for normalizing the mental health conversation in the workplace is for leaders to openly support the issue, and demonstrate this awareness in all professional and personal interactions.



Publicize Benefits: Promote the usage of benefits that foster all dimensions of health. Publicize the mental health coverage included in your medical benefit plan. Consider increasing or supplementing that coverage.



Train Managers: Equip managers with the skills they need to confidently offer support and make referrals. **Mental Health First Aid** training is an excellent place to start.



Encourage Self-Care: Let employees know it's okay to use time off as a way to manage stress. Make mental health days as normal as taking time off for a dental appointment.



Be Flexible: What works at one company may be enough, but another company may require a different approach. It is helpful to be open and flexible with how you and your company support these issues.

"There's still a lot of knee-jerk reluctance to talking about mental health issues at all," Putney said, when reflecting her experiences as a trainer. "But when we create a safe place — and are open to learning some facts and developing some new skills — the stigma melts away, and we're less afraid. That's just how it works."



Presenteeism is a workplace situation in which an employee is present for duty but is not fully capable of performing workplace tasks due to an illness or other condition. Employees who are not fully functional at work can experience productivity losses of 30 percent or more. Unlike absenteeism, presenteeism may be hard to recognize.

Work-Life balance and EAPs

Many businesses and organizations today are taking a holistic approach to employee health and wellness, and implementing different strategies to help employees manage work-life balance — and all the stresses that can get churned up in maintaining that balance.

"It's important for employers to support the personal aspect of employees' lives," said Jaime Corwin. "That support is what helps employees to be focused and successful at work."

One kind of support that many businesses provide is the **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**, which is designed to help employees address personal issues and concerns.

"The EAP is a completely separate, completely confidential resource for employees to use when they need assistance with life issues that may come up," explained Corwin. "If you're worrying about childcare, or an elderly parent alone at home, or a financial or legal problem — whatever it is, it's impacting your life so it's impacting your work. The EAP is a 24/7 place for an employee to call and find assistance."

Corwin said that it's important to continually educate employees about the EAP, and actively promote its use. "Employees can forget that it's there — and what it's for — until they need it."

Based on several studies conducted between 2005 and 2016, employee assistance programs (EAPs) appear to be effective at improving a variety of outcomes, including presenteeism, absenteeism, and overall well-being. In addition, EAPs appear to be very cost effective, with one study reporting a return on investment of between \$5.17 and \$6.47 for every dollar spent.

Creating wellness in the workplace

Another way for employers to support employees in maintaining work-life balance — and reducing stress — is to actively create opportunities to take a break, move around, interact socially with colleagues, and just do something different for a few minutes.

Employers can help employees to build wellness into their daily routine.

At Riverbend, the Wellness Committee includes representatives from every location and service area. This group of 15 people meets regularly to discuss different types of wellness activities, what works and what doesn't, and how to replicate successful activities in different places, with different groups of people.

"Riverbend is a large organization, with 402 employees working in 22 different programs and service areas, and based in 21 different locations — plus a number of schools," Corwin said. "Administratively, the Wellness Committee helps to support and publicize many different types of activities that are available to everyone throughout the organization, as well as some that are specific to a location or group of employees."

"Gathering for a healthy food break of some kind is generally quite popular," Corwin said, "These kinds of gatherings can be very important for employees who work in locations that are separate from their colleagues for much of the day." Corwin also mentioned that at some locations, groups of employees go walking every day and keep track of their "steps" as a friendly competition (with prizes!).

A review of the Riverbend Wellness Calendar reveals a "Moments of Mindfulness Challenge" coming up in June, a Zentangle workshop in August, and several healthy potluck snack breaks in between.

It's important for employers to support the personal aspect of employees' lives. That support helps employees to be focused and successful at work.

— Jaime Corwin





"Employees today tend to have a more evolved concept of wellness – and work-life balance – than employees did 20 years ago," Corwin observed. "There is definitely a demographic shift taking place, and all employers should be taking note."

The City of Concord is raising awareness

"Mental health awareness is important for any employer, no matter the size of the company," said Sarah Gagnon, Riverbend's Vice President of Clinical Operations. Gagnon is leading "Mental Health 101," a series of presentations and workshops that Riverbend is conducting with City of Concord employees each quarter.

"We're doing some anti-stigma activities and learning how to identify and understand behavioral health issues and talk openly about them," Gagnon said. "We're also working on recognizing mental health as part of overall wellness; that it's about being your best self."

A resource in a crisis, etc.

"In a crisis – and a crisis can be anything – we want employers to contact us," Sheryl Putney said, when asked about other ways Riverbend can help the business community respond to behavioral health challenges.

"There is stress on the staff when a colleague dies, particularly if it's a sudden death or suicide," Putney said. "This is an example of a very good reason to call Riverbend. We can help employers manage events like this in a positive and helpful way, and hopefully avoid problems down the road for everyone."

Putney explained that a crisis certainly wasn't the only time employers should be calling Riverbend. "We want employers to contact us when they have questions or are concerned about anything," Putney said.

If you have any questions or concerns about behavioral health and wellness in the workplace, feel free to [contact us](#).

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**MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID**

Make your world a better place in 2019

TAKE THE COURSE Mental Health First Aid is an 8-hour course that teaches you how to help someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The training helps you identify, understand and respond to signs of addictions and mental illnesses.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE Mental Health First Aid is intended for all the people and organizations that make up the fabric of a community. It's for everyone! Certification meets CEU requirements.

WHO ATTENDS People who regularly interact with a lot of people – such as police officers and human resource professionals, primary care providers, school and college leadership, faith communities, chambers of commerce staff, professional associations, hospitals, nursing homes, rotary clubs, parent organizations, friends and family of individuals with behavioral health challenges, or anyone interested in learning more about mental illness and addiction.

UPCOMING TRAINING

Fridays – April 26 & May 3, 2019 • 8:00 AM to 12:00
Riverbend - Concord
10 West Street

Tuesdays – May 7 & 14, 2019 • 8:00 AM to 12:00
Center for Health Promotion - Concord
49 South Main Street, Suite 201

SIGN UP NOW Register online at riverbendcmhc.org or email mhfa@riverbendcmhc.org.

LEARN MORE For more information about the training see mentalhealthfirstaid.org

Everything is medically important.

Riverbend's Chief Medical Officer is a strong advocate for Integrated Health

"When I was in medical school, I wasn't prepared for the huge impact my psychiatric rotation would have on me," said Jeff Fetter, MD, when describing his journey to his current position as Chief Medical Officer (CMO) at Riverbend. "This experience — treating people with severe mental illness (SMI) — fascinated me, and changed my entire professional trajectory."

For his postdoctoral training at **Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center**, Fetter decided to do double residencies in Internal Medicine and Psychiatry. "When I made those decisions, I didn't really know exactly what I was going to be doing when I was finished," he said, laughing. "What guided my training then, and continues to inform my work today, was mostly about understanding the whole body when treating both medical and psychiatric issues."

After completing his double residency in 2006, Fetter became an Attending Physician at New Hampshire Hospital, where he worked until 2010.

"One of the things I grappled with as Attending Physician at NH Hospital was the fact that pretty much everybody we worked with had some significant medical issues too, or were well on the road to developing them," Fetter said. "We know from decades of research that this population [individuals living with SMI] is at high risk for a range of chronic medical conditions. The question is: how do we best treat diabetes complications when the client is living with schizophrenia?"



The best treatment plans are developed by a team that includes everyone involved in a client's care. This leads to better overall health outcomes.

— Jeffrey Fetter, MD
Chief Medical Officer

Integrated Health

When treating individuals living with SMI, Fetter explained, it's important to establish strong, interdisciplinary treatment teams that work collaboratively to address all aspects of the client's health. "Patients need everyone involved in their care to work as an actual team — communicating, challenging assumptions, catching mistakes, making sure no patients and no details fall through the cracks," he said.

One of the significant changes in psychiatric treatment in recent decades has been the movement away from the traditional biomedical model based on independent physicians and consultants just providing the care they learned in medical school. Now we are moving toward a more integrated model, based on teams and allowing for inclusion of other modalities of care.

For example, today, it is not unusual for a psychiatrist to prescribe mindfulness meditation or to advise a patient to work with a peer support specialist — modalities psychiatrists do not themselves provide directly, but coordinate as part of a team. We are getting to a point where specialists in physical and psychiatric illness work as part of a team in the same way.

"People with serious mental illnesses face a greater risk of developing a range of chronic physical conditions when compared to the general population, impacting almost every biological system in the body," Fetter said.

There is ample evidence showing that mental health disorders — most often depression — are strongly associated with the risk, occurrence, management, progression, and outcome of several serious chronic diseases and health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart disease, and cancer.

Research tells us that this association appears to be caused by mental health disorders that precede chronic disease. But research also tells us that chronic disease can intensify the symptoms of mental health disorders — in effect creating a cycle of poor health. This pattern diminishes a person's ability to participate in the treatment of both their mental health disorder and chronic medical condition.

"By bringing medical care, psychiatric care, addiction treatment, and community support services together as a team" Fetter said, "Riverbend has made a high level of comprehensive, integrated care a reality for people living with severe mental illness."

The Riverbend facility at 10 West Street, where Fetter is based, houses the [Community Support Program](#) and the [Integrated Center for Health](#), which includes a full-service primary care clinic, a host of wellness programs, and a full-service pharmacy. This new in-house pharmacy provided by [Genoa Healthcare](#) promises to make a big difference in medication compliance.



People with serious mental illnesses face a greater risk of developing a range of chronic physical conditions when compared to the general population, impacting almost every biological system in the body.

— Jeffrey Fetter, MD
Chief Medical Officer

"Medication management is often challenging for a person living with mental illness," Fetter explained. There are several reasons for noncompliance. For some people, it is the trial and error approach to finding the right medication and dose; for others it might be the side effects — such as weight gain, or cost, that leads to noncompliance.

"For some of my clients, the errand itself can be a challenge," Fetter said. "But now I can talk with a client here in my office, type out a prescription, and they can pick it up at the Pharmacy window in the lobby on the way out the door. The Pharmacy is too new to have definitive numbers, but I am confident its presence will greatly improve compliance with all the medications a client is taking for their medical and psychiatric conditions."

There are currently 1,300 adults enrolled in the Community Support Program, where they receive case management, psychiatric care, and supported employment services. Almost 500 of these clients are also now receiving medical care and participating in a variety of wellness programs at the Integrated Center for Health.

Continued on page 10

"Many of my clients have complex health care needs," Fetter said. "If a patient needs to lose weight, change their diet, and take medication to address dangerous blood-pressure or cholesterol numbers, for example, helping someone with SMI to do all that requires input and support from several people."

Since Fetter assumed the position of CMO last fall, he has been focused on building strong internal teams that meet regularly to discuss each client, evaluate progress, and develop treatment plans together.

"Everything is medically important when it comes to the treatment of severe mental illness," he said. "And the best treatment plans are developed by a team that includes everyone involved in a client's care. This also leads to better overall outcomes."

Looking ahead

When asked what he saw on the horizon – both for the field of psychiatry and for his practice and leadership role at Riverbend, Fetter first mentioned the ever-evolving field of **telehealth** and telemedicine, where providers interact with each other and clients through videoconferencing, the internet, store-and-forward imaging, and other forms of electronic information and telecommunications technologies.

"The whole field is moving in this direction, and when fully developed it will enable us to bring real-time services to a lot more people," he said. "It's also, in some cases, a much more cost-effective and efficient use of resources – and younger generations are increasingly amenable to its use, sometimes even preferring it."

Fetter also talked about his interest in **Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation** (TMS) therapy, and the evolving research and technology showing its effectiveness in treating drug-resistant depressive disorders. "Emerging TMS therapies are noninvasive outpatient services that are easy and convenient for clients," he said, "and I think the science looks very promising."

Another extremely important project that is unfolding right now is Riverbend's Behavioral Health Crisis Treatment Center – opening its doors later this spring in downtown Concord.

"What we're creating at 40 Pleasant Street is an accessible and welcoming place for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis or seeking addiction treatment to find help," Fetter said. "I know it's going to be a busy place in the months ahead, and that's a good thing!"



Psychiatry and Primary Care

There is almost universal recognition that most people who experience mental health challenges seek help from their primary care doctors first. In addition to the five Riverbend Master's level clinicians now embedded in the largest practices of Concord Hospital Medical Group, there are also two psychiatric providers available for consultation with physicians at these practices.

Psychiatric consultation with PCPs is an important aspect of the team-based approach to care. Providers tell us that they feel a lot more comfortable treating mental illness in a primary care environment when they know they have the support of specialists available at any time.

In a psychiatric emergency, contact the **Behavioral Health Crisis Treatment Center** at 1-844-7-Help4U (1-844-743-5748).



Other things of note...



The mission of This Is My Brave, Inc. is to end the stigma surrounding mental health issues by sharing personal stories of individuals living successful, full lives despite mental illness through poetry, essay and original music, on stage in front of a live audience, through storytelling.

Thursday, May 23 – 7pm
Concord High School

Sponsored by:

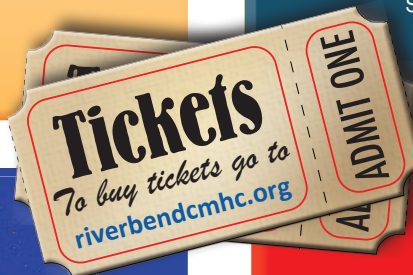


Guardian of the Golden Gate

Sergeant Kevin Briggs is a former California Highway Patrol officer who convinced hundreds of people who were contemplating suicide by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge into coming back over the rail and giving life another chance.

Thursday, May 9 – 7pm
Concord Auditorium

Sponsored by:



Riverbend Reads

Dinner and Book Discussion with Author
Thursday, May 30 – 5:30pm
Hotel Concord

In recent years we've seen an increasing number of memoirs from transgender individuals and from parents forging uncharted waters in order to help their transgender children live happy, healthy lives in a society that still largely defines gender by what's in your pants.

Me2/ Music for Mental Health

Me2/ ("me, too") is the world's only classical music organization created for individuals with mental illnesses and the people who support them. Me2/ serves as a model organization where people with and without mental illnesses work together in an environment where acceptance is an expectation, patience is encouraged, and supporting each other is a priority.

Sunday, May 19 – 4pm
Concord High School





















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MAY 2019 Mental Health Awareness Month

#MayAndEveryDay

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		 1 State House Launch	 2 Closed Event For Clergy	 3	4	
	5 	6	 7  Singing to Connect Soul & Spirit	8  Motherhood & Mental Health	9 Guardian of the Golden Gate 	10
	12	13	14 Express Yourself! Musical Tools for Emotional Communication 	15 Giving Day! "It's Criminal"  Children's Mental Health	16	17
	19 	20	21 Calming the Body to Clear the Mind 	22  LGBTQIA+ & Mental Health	23 	24
	26	27 "The Welcome" 	28 The Brain's Pathways: Musical Tools for Mental Health 	29  PTSD & Trauma Informed Care	30 	31
					 Visit your local farmer's market!	

Visit riverbendcmhc.org for more information!