

# Boost Employee Mental Health — Boost the Bottom Line!

*A healthy workplace is critical to good employee performance. With depression on the rise, employers are investing more in staff well-being, lest they pay the much higher price of ignoring it.*

The numbers don't lie:

- Mental illnesses cost the Canadian economy \$33 billion a year in lost production, and an estimated 1.4 million working Canadians suffer from depression<sup>1</sup>.
- An estimated 5% of Canadian employees suffer from depression at any given time<sup>2</sup>.
- Nearly 3 million Canadians will experience depression at one point in their lives, most often during their working years between the ages of 24 and 44<sup>3</sup>.



An organization is not powerless in the face of these trends. Occupational therapists can help employers combat depression by establishing an environment that provides the **daily essentials of workplace mental health**<sup>4</sup>:

## Education...

An occupational therapist can educate employees at all organizational levels, from front-line staff to upper management, about depression and stress to

- increase early identification;
- dispel myths and stereotypes about mental illness;
- promote a culture where employees feel comfortable discussing mental health.

## Job Matching...

An occupational therapist can create job profiles to

- identify potential gaps between workers' present abilities and their duties, and then devise corrective programs as required;

- ensure employee skills and interests correspond with their jobs, thereby improving performance levels and reducing absenteeism, turnover and training costs.

## Ongoing Support...

An occupational therapist will work with managers and employees to

- implement return-to-work plans and disability management programs for staff dealing with mental health issues, and provide counseling in this regard;
- negotiate accommodations and recommend work modifications for those dealing with mental illness;
- help them establish a healthy, personally meaningful work-life balance through examining occupational demands both in and out of the workplace.

## A Positive Work Culture...

An occupational therapist will consult with an organization to create a work environment

- that minimizes undue stress;
- that values diversity and is respectful, communicative and flexible;
- where employees feel a sense of ownership, belonging and support.

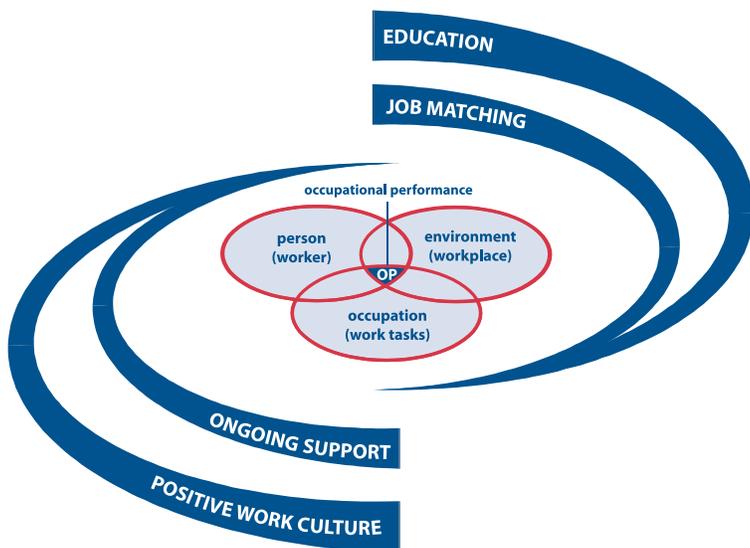
<sup>1</sup>Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health, 2004.

<sup>2,3</sup>Canadian Mental Health Association, *Depression in the Workplace*, 1996.

<sup>4</sup>Based on a literature review reported in Cockburn, L., Kirsh, B., Krupa, T. & Gewurtz, R. (2004). Mental health and mental illness in the workplace: Occupational therapy solutions for complex problems. *Occupational Therapy Now*, 6(5), 7-14.

# Daily Essentials of Workplace Mental Health

(as recommended by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists)



To excel, people need to be well suited to their job activities and their environments, so an occupational therapist will assess workers and how they perform tasks within their surroundings. The therapist may then suggest changes — at both individual and organizational levels — to make the best use of people’s abilities and to create an environment that promotes optimal performance.

## \$\$\$ How much does occupational therapy cost?

Occupational therapists in private practices offer competitive rates for their services. Funding sources for private services include

- extended healthcare insurance plans
- Workers Compensation (for work-related illnesses or injuries)
- insurance programs (for those on long-term disability income)
- Veterans Affairs Canada (for Canadian armed forces veterans)
- auto insurance plans (for illnesses or injuries from motor vehicle accidents)

Occupational therapy services are a small investment compared to costs that would be incurred down the road

if services were not provided. An occupational therapist can prevent thousands of dollars in lost organizational productivity by implementing proactive workplace mental health programs or by addressing existing mental health issues early on. Occupational therapy also enables people who have taken time off from their jobs to make a smooth, effective transition back to work and to remain there in the long term.

Occupational therapy services can range from \$60-\$100 an hour. Rates vary widely depending upon geographic location, service type, and the extent of a health-care plan’s coverage.

Occupational therapy is a tax-deductible medical expense in Canada.

### To locate an occupational therapist:

- Visit [www.otworks.ca](http://www.otworks.ca) and use “OT Finder” to search by location, service type or other criteria.
- Consult your organization’s employee assistance program coordinator or disability management program administrator.