



Cost to Business of Not Treating Mental Illness and Addiction

Not treating mental illness and addiction costs money and lives.

- According to Helen Darling, president of the National Business Group on Health, “Mental health and substance abuse disorders currently cost U.S. employers billions of dollars annually in lost worker productivity.”¹ The National Business Group on Health recently recommended equalizing mental health and addiction benefits with other medical benefits.²



Leading cause of disability.

- Mental illness and substance disorders account for the two leading causes of disability in the U.S., nearly 37 percent of all disability. Growing evidence indicates that limiting mental health and substance disorder benefits increases the overall cost of healthcare.
- More than half of U.S. adults have a mental or physical condition that influences their ability to work or carry out usual activities.³

Reduced productivity.

- In 1999, the U.S. Surgeon General reported that the indirect costs of mental illness imposed an estimated \$79 billion loss on the U.S. economy in 1990, or more than \$123 billion today.⁴
- More than 1.3 billion days are lost each year due to mental disorders, roughly half the number of days (2.4 billion) associated with all chronic physical conditions combined, including cancer, heart attacks, ulcers and vision loss⁵. Individuals with chronic conditions took an average of 32 sick days a year,⁶ costing employers billions of dollars annually.⁷

Workers' compensation claims.

- Workers with substance abuse disorders are 3.5 times more likely to experience a costly accident in the workplace and five times more likely to file for workers' compensation.

¹ L. Carlson Shepard, *Employee Benefit News*, February 2006.

² Finch RA, Phillips K. Center for Prevention and Health Services. *An Employer's Guide to Behavioral Health Services: A Roadmap and Recommendations for Evaluating, Designing, and Implementing Behavioral Health Services*. Washington, DC: National Business Group on Health; 2005. Available at http://www.businessgrouphealth.org/pdfs/fullreport_behavioralhealthservices.pdf

³ K. Merikangas, R. Kessler, et al. *The Impact of Comorbidity of Mental and Physical Conditions on Role Disability in the US Adult Household Population*. Archives of General Psychiatry. October 2007.

⁴ *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Found at: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/chapter6/sec2.html>

⁵ Merikangas, R.

⁶ Merikangas, R.

⁷ National Business Group on Health, 2005.