

**For Information Contact:**

Beth Casteel, 703-907-8640

press@psych.org

Jaime Valora, 703-907-8562

jvalora@psych.org**For Immediate Release:**

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Employees Report Mixed Feelings about Seeking Health Care Treatment

ARLINGTON, Va. (Jan. 25, 2010) – More than 40 percent of employees identified their employers as supportive or extremely supportive in seeking care for health issues, according to a survey by the American Psychiatric Association (APA).

The national survey conducted online by Harris Interactive also showed that barriers still exist for those employees who said their workplace is unsupportive of employees seeking treatment, especially for mental health treatment. Loss of status at work and concerns about confidentiality were identified more often as barriers to seeking treatment for mental health issues than for other illnesses.

Of these employees, 76 percent thought their status would be impacted for seeking treatment for drug addiction, 73 percent for alcoholism and 62* percent for depression compared to 55* percent and 54* percent who indicated status as a barrier for diabetes and heart disease treatment.

“It is important to support an environment that encourages employees taking care of their physical and mental health,” said Alan Axelson, M.D., chair of the APA’s Partnership for Workplace Mental Health Advisory Council. “Research supports the fact that when people receive needed care, they are healthier and more productive – and employers realize the return on their health care investment.”

The [Partnership for Workplace Mental Health](#) offers the following tips for employers:

- 1) Lead by example. Supervisors and managers play a crucial role in creating a healthy environment by taking care of themselves. Set the tone and take care of your own health.
- 2) Promote prevention, early intervention and wellness programs. Encourage regular preventive health screenings, conduct health fairs, provide healthy meals and snacks at meetings, encourage exercise and promote work/life balance.
- 3) Discourage people from working while ill. Employees that need to take off time due to an illness should know that their employer wants them back – safely, healthy and productive.
- 4) Promote the investment you are already making. Remind employees of the health benefits and programs available to them. Make sure employees know how to access care, including programs like Employee Assistance Programs.
- 5) Reassure employees about confidentiality – this is especially important for mental health treatment. Remind employees about the ways that their privacy is protected when they utilize services, including Employee Assistance Programs.

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

The Partnership for Workplace Mental Health advances effective employer approaches to mental health by combining the knowledge and experience of the American Psychiatric Association and its employer partners. Learn more at www.workplacementalhealth.org

The national online survey was conducted within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of The American Psychiatric Association from August 12-14, 2009 among 2,004 U.S. adults age 18 or older, 1,129 of whom were employed full- or part-time. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available.

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*Note: these results were pulled from a small base size.