

Addressing the Mental Health Crisis in the Great Lakes Bay Region

HOSTED BY THE GREAT LAKES BAY REGION
MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP



Achieving Mental Wellness...Making a Difference in the Workplace

In November of last year, J.W. Fisher, president of Fisher Contracting Company based in Midland, Michigan, attended a workshop entitled, “Addressing the Mental Health Crisis in the Great Lakes Bay Region,” which was hosted by the Great Lakes Bay Region Mental Health Partnership. His primary reason for attending was to support a friend who was involved in organizing the event.

However, after just a few short hours, J.W. was shifting into action. “Mental illness is a serious problem for individuals, their families, our workplaces and our communities,” he said. “I started thinking about how we might be able to have a positive impact – starting with Fisher Contracting.” He made a commitment to address challenges associated with mental health at work.

Working with a team of people who had also attended the workshop, the group developed a program that addressed stigma, provided education and resources, raised awareness and expanded availability of mental health services through the company’s EAP (Employee Assistance Program). The mental health program was presented to Fisher Contracting employees in late April and was very well received by those who attended.

During the program, J.W. shared compelling statistics, and also talked about the benefits that were available to employees and their family members. He had mental health care providers on site to describe their services. Two highly regarded employees also shared their struggles with mental health, so people could see that mental health challenges can hit any of us at any time. They stressed how important it is to get help and not try to conquer mental illness on your own.

There was discussion about the stigma surrounding mental illness and the need to get past that. “People don’t have any problem talking about health concerns like back problems or the flu,” said J.W. “But no one wants to admit that they have a mental health challenge. We simply must change this.”

Following the session, a number of employees reached out for help. “This was extremely gratifying for me,” said J.W. “Our mission is to help people live safe and healthy lives – physically and mentally. I’m committed to making a difference.”

What are the next steps for Fisher Contracting? The company is incorporating mental wellness education in their ongoing employee Safety Program and will deliver information at New Hire Orientation and in self-guided training modules throughout the year. Supervisors and safety techs will be trained to recognize signs of mental health issues. And, the company will make valid mental health screening tools available for use by employees and their families.

“This is a start,” added J.W. “We will continually monitor and improve our offerings to assure that we are doing all we can to support mental wellness in our employee family. My hope is to collaborate with other companies so they may implement similar mental health initiatives to help their employees and broaden the impact.”

The Great Lakes Bay Region Mental Health Partnership plans to expand this initiative to other employers by year-end.