

PRINT-OSF SilverCloud offered as powerful resource for employers and employees

As the pandemic wears on and employers attempt to forge ahead in this new environment, mental health concerns in the work force are becoming more commonplace.

Peoria, Illinois-based OSF HealthCare is making sure employers are aware of a free, 24-7 support resource that can help them and their workers better manage stress, anxiety and depression.

A recent virtually-held OSF HealthCare Healthy Workplace event focused on mental health, knowing what drives stress, and strategies for helping manage struggles. Dominique Dietz, LCSW and manager of Behavioral Health for OSF HealthCare led the Healthy Workplace conversation. She says [OSF SilverCloud](#), a digital therapeutic and support platform, can help employers and workers deal with new dynamics have contributed to increasing symptoms of sleep issues, irritability, and other indicators of distress.

Dietz shared that for example, many daycare options closed or haven't been able to accept as many children due to staffing shortages, and that has added stress for employees who are being asked to return to their workplace.

"We've been working remote at home and they're balancing watching their kids and now we're like, 'Hey we have to return to the office.' Navigating those hard conversations, navigating being flexible and things like that, has really added to employee stress as well as leadership stress."

The Healthy Workplace program is designed to help prepare small, medium and large employers and social service agencies to be more responsive to employees experiencing increased stress in all aspects of their lives, which in turn, can impact their job performance.

"When we're stressed, when our employees are stressed, maybe they're not feeling as motivated, maybe they're not as friendly, maybe they're not as thorough in documentation or paperwork because they're feeling so overwhelmed when they're handling double or even triple the amount of clients or patients and so we're going to see it on the other side of things."

Dietz says it is important for employers to acknowledge the change that's occurring in their employees' personal lives. Supervisors can support their staff by having open conversations, being transparent and flexible. Being responsive is critically important because more people are struggling, yet with fewer mental health providers to offer treatment.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) says more than half the people with mental illness in the U.S. did not receive any treatment last year. NAMI estimates more than 4.8 million people in Illinois live in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals. That number is 4.2 million in Michigan, where OSF HealthCare also operates a hospital and medical clinics.

To help off-set the shortage, Dietz wants employers and individuals to know OSF SilverCloud can improve mental health and self-management of moderate stress, anxiety and depression. The free platform can be accessed by computer, tablet or smartphone and has a specific module to help with stress.

“It can help with work-life balance, problem-solving, communication, helpful thinking, self-esteem and resilience.”

SilverCloud modules offer mindfulness exercises, interactive journaling, and mood or lifestyle charting. The platform is backed by behavioral health managers who can intervene and interact with users when necessary.

Dietz says it can also be used as a bridge to therapy because wait times for therapy appointments can be between four to six weeks. Some therapists also use OSF SilverCloud as a tool for their patients.

“Therapists are utilizing SilverCloud in conjunction with their therapy – as their (patients’) homework and exercises to do in between their therapy sessions, as well as when individuals are ending therapy. Being able to have them sign up for SilverCloud and have that additional support by a coach for an additional 8 to 12 weeks as well.”

Dietz says the engaging activities can help individuals understand what is contributing to their mental load – all the stuff that consumes their thoughts, which can lead to anxiety, stress and can be a source of anger and resentment. Those lingering emotions can sap your energy and take away from quality of life.

SilverCloud has added a new program was developed specifically around COVID-19 stressors called, “Challenging Times.” It’s for anyone having trouble managing their feelings connected to the pandemic.

You can sign-up for Silver Cloud on the [OSF website](#). That will also give access to the app which can be downloaded on your phone or tablet.