

# WORKFORCE MENTAL HEALTH

## OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE THE BUSINESS CLIMATE

According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, about 1 in 4 adults experience a mental disorder each year. In Kentucky, where the population is among the unhealthiest in the U.S., approximately 746,000 adults face mental health conditions, as reported by the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Furthermore, a 2019 report from the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions estimates that mental health and substance use disorders cost employers nearly \$225.8 billion annually. Alarmingly, suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death for those aged 18-34 and the fourth for those 35-44 in Kentucky. These mental health challenges significantly affect the business community by reducing workforce participation and driving up productivity and healthcare costs.

## APPROACH TO TACKLE THE ISSUE

The NKY Chamber supports improved and ongoing collaborative efforts among local, state, and federal elected officials, public health officials, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and employers to ensure that resources are available to address the growing need for mental and behavioral health, addiction, and other health conditions by:

- Creating Workplace Wellness Program Incentives
- Integrating Mental and Primary Care Health Services
- Addressing the Provider Shortage
- Removing barriers to licensed and certified mental health professionals that prevent them from working in Kentucky
- Ensure adequate Medicaid reimbursement rates and remove unnecessary bureaucracy impacting mental health services

## WHY DOES IT MATTER TO MY BUSINESS

- Poor mental health among our population harms the workforce participation rate.
- Hampers employers' ability to hire and retain a healthy and productive workforce.
- Increases employers' health care and lost productivity costs.

## WHAT WE ARE ASKING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL TO DO

- Encourage and incentivize private and public wellness programs to emphasize prevention and prompt workers to improve their mental health.
- Support increased allocation of resources for mental health treatment, research, and programs that provide treatment alternatives to incarceration for those suffering from substance abuse disorders and mental disorders.
- Address the mental health care provider shortage by funding the creation of mental health professional scholarships, new residency programs, apprenticeship programs, and on-the-job training programs.
- Support measures to allow some mental health care services, such as telehealth services, to be exempt from high deductible health plan rules, thus mitigating some portion of the costs of such services for Kentuckians.
- Remove barriers to licensed and certified mental health professionals from working in Kentucky.
- Ensure adequate Medicaid reimbursement rates and other funding for mental health treatments for Kentuckians.