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‘Everybody needs somebody to talk to’: RESCON panel talks mental health tools

Grant Cameron December 5, 2025



There are plenty of tools and treatment options available to help workers in the construction industry who need assistance with mental health and addiction problems, but sometimes they don't know support is available or are reluctant to ask for aid out of fear it might affect their job.

That was one of the messages conveyed by speakers and panellists at a recent webinar on mental health and addictions in the industry hosted by the Residential Construction Council of Ontario.



Sandra Correia

“Sometimes, I see that they’re afraid, they’re afraid how asking for help is going to impact their job,” explains Sandra Correia, director of health management services at BPA Financial Group.

“They’re worried that if they admit they’re struggling they may not have a job to go back to.

“They’re afraid how they’re going to be perceived on the jobsite. We see a lot of that. For some of them, it’s also that culture of toughness, right? They feel like they’re expected to push through. They’re expected to ignore their emotional struggles. And they’re just afraid of being seen as weak.”

The panel featured leaders in occupational and mental health and addiction, and others involved in providing services and helping companies manage benefit plans.

Correia explained while there are often plans available, many employees aren’t up to speed.

“A lot of them don’t know what type of benefit plan they have and what’s available. They don’t realize that they have access to confidential mental health services. Some of them may be newcomers to Canada, and don’t speak English, so it’s hard for them to know and understand what they have.”

Sarah Beaudoin, co-ordinator of program and staff development at De Novo Treatment Centre in Huntsville, said workers often have no idea how to seek help through their benefit plans or employee assistance programs (EAPs).

“They’ve talked about the fact that it feels like a hurdle, and they just don’t know what’s available to them,” she said.

Beyond that, there is also still a stigma attached to mental health troubles, she noted.



Koren Waines

Koren Waines, manager of the mental health and well-being department at Medcor Canada, said workers are often aware they need help but don't know the ins and outs of their company EAPs.

Medcor developed a virtual mental health support plan after COVID-19 to offer its employees a safe place to share their stresses but quickly realized there was a real need for the service elsewhere. Since then, the free service has been rolled out to many of the clients Medcor deals with.

"We saw right away that utilization took off and we realized that we were onto something. Not everyone needs an evaluation and diagnosis for, or treatment for mental illness. Everybody needs somebody to talk to, who listens to what they are comfortable in sharing at that time."



Kathy Martin

Kathy Martin, co-ordinator, research, stakeholder and public relations, mental health, at the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA), said while there are supports available to facilitate conversations about mental health and addictions, talking doesn't get the job done.

“What we need to start looking at is putting in some plans. We need to do some active measuring within our workplaces to see what’s really going on.”

The IHSA is now equipping its leadership with skills aimed at tackling the stigma and measuring the problem in a workplace and supporting those who come forward.

The IHSA has spent the better part of five years developing tools and resources to help workers with mental health issues and opioid-related problems, said Martin. The agency website has a toolkit for workers, employers and supporters and free resources and information.



Carmine Tiano

Carmine Tiano, director of occupational services at the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, told the webinar mental health challenges have always been an issue but COVID-19 really opened people’s eyes to non-traditional health issues.

With government workers also more openly sharing their mental health experience, it is helping to reduce the stigma, he said, and, as a result, creating a more open workplace culture.



Allyson Lee

Allyson Lee, an employment lawyer at Sherrard Kuzz LLP, said government has increased penalties for employers who fail to protect workers, but the downside is the changes have caused employers to jump the gun and infringe on the privacy of workers by insisting on drug testing.

However, in a hearing earlier this year an employee was awarded \$2,000 in damages after being ordered to undergo drug and alcohol testing after an incident in July in which the worker rolled his ankle while walking on a gravel pathway at the LNG Canada project in Kitimat, B.C

The employer's action was deemed a violation of the worker's right to privacy and bodily integrity.

"You cannot get to that point where you're just requiring all of your employees to drug test and to alcohol test, because it's increasing the stigmatization," said Lee.