

ROUNDTABLE

HELP AVAILABLE FOR EMPLOYERS TACKLING MENTAL HEALTH

By Lysa Taylor-Kinch

The *Canadian HR Reporter* roundtable on workplace mental health raised some excellent themes in mental health that resonated particularly for Sun Life Financial.

Firstly, it highlighted that we should not think about mental health in black and white terms of someone being “mentally healthy” or “mentally well.” As with physical health, there is a wide range of states in between. Taking a wider view and looking at a person’s mental and physical health across a whole continuum is critical for mental health promotion and living and working with mental health conditions.

Secondly, it is key to have the right resources applied at the right time to provide support where it is needed. In our workplaces, this is an accountability residing at all levels in the organization. A champion is needed; senior management needs to buy-in; front line managers need to have information and support when they are dealing with challenging situations; and all individuals need to take an active role to build resilience.

Thirdly, many organizations are not ready at this point. Most



understand the need to support and train their front-line managers enabling them to better equip and support employees. However, the road can seem long, the costs high and the map hard to read. Meanwhile, the number of individuals away from work on disability for mental health reasons continues to increase and for many organizations, mental health represents the most frequent cause of disability. The costs associated with not supporting the ever growing population of individuals coming forward while at work expressing a need for help can’t be ignored. Organizations who are ready to tackle this issue are looking to partners to help them reach their goals.

Because Sun Life sees mental and physical health on a continuum with a need for resources at all stages, we take an active role as an insurer to work with our clients on physical and psychological health. When integrated together we can help improve the chances of increasing the overall health of the organization and the employees who contribute to the success of the business.

Lysa Taylor-Kinch is Director, Market Development, Group Benefits at Sun Life Financial.

