Australian Government

WORK AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PAID WORK?

Mental health conditions affect one in five people in any given year. Almost half the population experiences a mental health condition at some point during their lifetime.

Paid work can be good for your mental health. Even people with mental health problems, that are often attributed to work, can benefit from an early return to work.

Paid work can provide many benefits to your mental health:

- increased sense of purpose and control over your life
- increased self esteem and confidence
- meeting new people
- having money to make choices
- developing skills and career opportunities
- making a difference in the community.

The longer you are out of paid work, the harder it is to return to work and the less likely you are to return. Long term sickness related absence or unemployment is harmful for physical and mental health and wellbeing. This can contribute to a sense of social isolation.

WHERE DO I START?

Ask your general practitioner about the value of work for your recovery or the ongoing management of your condition. Your general practitioner can help you make a plan for returning to work including helping you to access support services and, if you give permission, discussing your needs with your employer.

Support services are there to help you. Call a JobAccess adviser on **1800 464 800** or visit **jobaccess.gov.au** for advice and assistance on how you can access free government services specially designed for people with disability, including mental health conditions.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN RETURNING TO WORK

Consider the work conditions to which you are returning. In some cases the work itself may have contributed to your health condition. A review of work conditions is crucial to reduce the possibility of relapse.

Graduated return to work allows a gradual build up to your job role. It can take into account your hours and job responsibilities.

Disclosure of your mental health condition to people at work is a personal choice. You are not legally obliged to disclose your condition unless it is likely to affect your performance, your ability to meet the requirements of the job or your ability to work safely. People you disclose your condition to are legally obliged to keep the information confidential, unless you give written permission for them to share the information.

Workplace adjustments can be made to support you at work. These could include:

- flexible conditions—flexible start times, part-time options and rest breaks
- higher levels of supervision and support—such as a mentor or a buddy
- role modification—to reduce stress and to accommodate any limitations
- training and assistance for employers and all employees on supportive workplaces
- physical modifications—such as partitioning or office lighting
- adaptive devices—such as electronic and graphic organisers.

Disability™ Employment Services

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Stress is something that you can balance or reduce at work by doing things like:

- maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- taking regular breaks
- asking for regular performance feedback
- learning stress reduction techniques
- ensuring that intense tasks are completed at peak concentration periods
- having someone to talk to, like a friend, family member or a counsellor.

If the stress becomes overwhelming it is important to address it early.

Check your leave arrangements including your employer's policies on flexible work conditions such as sick leave and leave without pay.

Side effects of medication could impact on your productivity at work and may need to be monitored. For example, some medications may cause drowsiness in the morning so a late start time may help.

Employee assistance programs are available to help. Many employers have programs to provide counselling for employees on a confidential basis.

FREE GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

A range of help is available to support you to take up, or return to work:

Disability Employment Services provide flexible, tailored assistance for all eligible job seekers with disability, including people with mental health conditions, to help them find and keep a job. They can provide flexible ongoing support for people with mental health conditions who have been placed in work but need additional support.

Employment Assistance Fund provides people with mental health conditions and their employers with easier access to resources to assist with finding and maintaining employment. This can include workplace modifications.

Job in Jeopardy assistance provides support for employees who are at risk of losing their job because of their disability, illness or injury. It is available through Disability Employment Services.

JobAccess is a free confidential service providing advice and workplace solutions for people with mental health conditions and their employers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT

- Disability Employment Services
- Employment Assistance Fund
- Job in Jeopardy assistance

call a JobAccess Adviser on **1800 464 800** (free call*) or visit **jobaccess.gov.au**

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

beyondblue

1300 22 4636
www.beyondblue.org.au

Australian Psychological Society

1800 333 497* Australia wide
(03) 8662 3300 Melbourne
www.psychology.org.au

SANE Australia

1800 18 SANE (7263)*
www.sane.org

* Call charges apply for calls to '1800' numbers from mobile phones.