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**True Wellness Includes Financial Wellbeing, Too**

By Michelle Clark, Senior Vice President, Health & Performance, HUB International

When we think about corporate wellness programs, we often think of fitness trackers, discounted gym memberships, or an on-site masseuse once a month. What we don't always think about is that financial wellbeing impacts physical, mental and emotional health. And that can be a big problem. The fact is, employees are stressed about money. It's a deepening trend, and there's no single cause for the pressure. A few sobering stats:

- It affects every generation – 53 percent of all workers<sup>1</sup>, in fact, from Millennials through Baby Boomers.
- It's an equal opportunity burden – 14 percent of those with the lowest degree of financial wellness have household incomes surpassing \$100,000.<sup>2</sup>
- It's more pressing than you might think – nearly half of all adults say they could not pay for a \$400 emergency expense without borrowing or selling something.

And, yes, their stress is also yours, as it affects their job [performance](#). As much as 16 percent of employees spend 20 or more working hours each month worrying about their finances. On average, people spend 13 hours distracted by their money problems<sup>3</sup>. Ultimately, that costs you, their employer, thanks to more absences and lower [employee engagement](#).

Perhaps more distressing is the growing link between financial pressure and physical health. It's reported that 42 percent of employees are both physically unhealthy and financially stressed<sup>4</sup>. The manifestations of that combination are creating a vicious, compounding cycle of negative impact across a broad swath of your business.

On the employee side, it shows itself in such coping mechanisms as poor food choices and self-medication with drugs and/or alcohol. Sleep issues can contribute to on-the-job fatigue, and employees may find their memory and ability to concentrate are affected, causing distractions from the tasks at hand. Unhealthy weight swings in either direction are common, and so is high blood pressure.

Directly correlated to financial stress, employers may see greater numbers of payday advance requests. More incidents of workplace accidents and theft may be occurring. Absenteeism or extreme tardiness can escalate. It's not uncommon for workers feeling financial pressure to abuse overtime to bring in more money, which exacerbates their physical and mental health issues. The result is a rise in medical claims that reflect these issues, as prescriptions increase for medications like muscle relaxants or opioids, anti-depressants or sleeping pills – all of which ultimately affect an organization's need to manage benefit costs.

There's a lot on the line when your employees are under financial pressure. The strong link between their wellbeing and the organization's makes your financial health initiatives some of the best

investments you can make.

In order to combat the issue, employers need to demonstrate they care about the problem and provide support, starting with regular communications around the connections between employees' financial health and overall wellbeing and employee benefits. Providing access to financial tools and resources, as well as **voluntary benefits**, such as student loan refinancing options, credit and debt management services and non-retirement savings vehicles are just a few of the immediate next steps for an organization to take for improving employees' financial health, which in turn, helps us all sleep better at night.

1. <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/private-company-services/library/financial-well-being-retirement-survey.html>
2. <https://www.mercer.com/content/dam/mercer/attachments/global/inside-employees-minds/gl-2017-inside-employees-minds-financial-wellness.pdf>
3. <https://www.mercer.com/content/dam/mercer/attachments/global/inside-employees-minds/gl-2017-inside-employees-minds-financial-wellness.pdf>
4. <https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en/insights/2017/11/2017-global-benefits-attitudes-survey>

***For questions and additional information, please contact your HUB Advisor.***

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