

Public encouraged to build mental health-friendly work environment in support of World Mental Health Day 2024

The Department of Health (DH) today (October 10) supports World Mental Health Day 2024 and encourages members of the public to collaboratively create a mental health-friendly work environment inclusive of and accepting persons in mental recovery.

The World Federation for Mental Health has designated October 10 annually as World Mental Health Day to raise global awareness and mobilise efforts in support of mental health. World Mental Health Day 2024, with the theme "It is time to Prioritise Mental Health in the Workplace", encourages employers and employees to champion mental health in the workplace. Sixty per cent of the global population is in employment and employees spend 60 per cent of their time in the workplace. Mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, are pervasive in workplaces globally, impacting productivity, attendance, and overall performance of employees.

Good mental health means not only the absence of mental disorders, but also the ability to cope with normal stressors in life, realise one's potential, and contribute to society. A mental health-friendly work environment can benefit both employers and employees in many ways, including enhanced talent attraction and retention for employers, elevated work performance and productivity for employees, as well as increased public recognition and support for the company or organisation.

Employers and employees can collaboratively create a mental health-friendly workplace environment through different measures, including adjusting office hours and encouraging staff to seek early professional help if needed. Enterprises or organisations should firmly avoid discriminatory and labelling practices. After appropriate treatment, persons in mental recovery can also perform well in workplace, co-operate with colleagues and contribute to the team. The Government encourages private, public, educational and non-governmental organisations to sign the Mental Health Workplace Charter organised jointly by the Department of Health, the Labour Department and the Occupational Safety and Health Council to promote mental health in the workplace in order to improve the general mental health of employees in their workplace as well as the organisation's productivity.

Employees experiencing mental distress from depression or anxiety should seek early assistance. They can call the Government-fully-funded, one-stop Mental Health Support Hotline 18111 to obtain immediate emotional and mental health support as well as appropriate referral depending on the individual's need. Separately, the Government launched the Healthy Mind Pilot Project at three District Health Centre (DHC)/District Health Centre Expresses in August

this year to offer free initial mental health assessments to members of the public on a trial basis at the community level. Members preliminarily assessed to have mild symptoms of depression or anxiety will be referred to non-governmental organisations for further assessment and follow-up, so that they can receive appropriate support at an early stage. For details, please refer to the website of DHC (www.dhc.gov.hk/en/mental_health).

The Advisory Committee on Mental Health and the DH have jointly implemented a mental health promotion and public education initiative "Shall We Talk", with an aim to step up public awareness of mental well-being. The "Shall We Talk" initiative provides mental health-related information through an array of channels, such as a one-stop dedicated website, social media pages and campaigns, TV and radio programmes, as well as various offline events. Apart from providing the public with information on mental health and advice on dealing with mental distress, the one-stop website also compiles a series of mental health hotlines and support services to enable those in need to seek help. For more information on mental health, please visit www.shallwetalk.hk.