



CSBT Newsletter | Fall 2020

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Triumph During Crisis

These sure are weird times.

This last week I attended my first ever “virtual” conference presented by a significant provincial association, the Community Living Ontario (CLO) conference. The event was well attended by delegates from all over Ontario; participants included associations members, family members, support staff, administrators, advocates, and many sponsors. Us at CSBT feel proud and privileged to support the work the CLO is carrying out.

CSBT was grateful to be the title sponsor. It is our chance to “give back” while being part of all the crucial endeavors these diverse folks accomplish.

Now, let’s be clear, no one wants to have to gather this way. We would prefer to get together, greet each other in person, learn from one another, and celebrate both the learning and accomplishments that happens to support folks. But it cannot be right now.

So, what did CLO do? They pulled off a fabulous event. They brought together all those people. They created a space where, despite the crisis, folks could meet, learn from each other, celebrate their relationships along with their growth, and be challenged to continue the journey. It was a wonderful and inspiring time for all involved.

Why am I telling you all this? I believe this is our shared story. Across Canada, we are acknowledging we’re in this together. In community social services, which includes the Board of Trustees of CSBT, we’ve always found a way to triumph during adversity, and amid crisis. It is not always easy. Occasionally, we have to step back and find another way, like meeting through technology. But find a way we must, and we do.

I want to commend all the people who, in the end, are CSBT. This includes over 1,000 agencies across Canada, all their employees (over 32,000), their family members, and the 1,000's who use the support and services provided. I talk to leaders of agencies across the country. I hear the same story over and over.

The story, at times, is very tough right now. People are frightened, we don't have all the resources needed, we worry about how to keep everyone safe. But through it all, in the face of the crisis, the work goes on. Employees step up, people get the support they need, and live the lives they choose.

Despite it all, the story I hear and experience, is one of triumph amid crisis. Thank you for all you do and all you are. Canada is better because you are here.

And finally, don't forget that CSBT is there for you, along with our administrator GroupHEALTH Benefits Solutions, to offer support to all those employees who make it happen. The tools are in the benefits package to help them deal with stress and to be "healthy employees at work" - bringing triumph out of the crisis.

In the meantime, stay safe.

Paul Wheeler, Chair, CSBT Board of Trustees

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Welcoming our Newest CSBT Board Member

We are pleased to introduce our newest CSBT Board of Trustee member, Sue Talmey.

Sue has been Director of Finance and Administration at Durham Association for Family Resources and Support in Oshawa, Ontario since 2001. Sue leads a team of accounting and administrative personnel, managing the finances for twenty-one not for profit, charity organizations. This team is recognized as providing a high level of service to organizations at a not for profit rate. They work in partnership with their clients as part of the staff team, embracing the mission, vision and values of each organization.

Sue's goal as a CSBT Board Member is to focus on delivering leading edge employee benefit solutions to organizations in the social service sector, so that organizations can provide employees with the best possible benefits at the most competitive cost.

Wellness is MORE than Physical

CSBT members know that wellness is everywhere.

Most know they need to support employees in physical and mental health (even though they may not act on it). **But what about financial health?**

A recent learning for our CSBT Board members is that a decline in financial health can be extremely stressful and can directly affect mental health. There can be significant consequences from lower engagement at work to increased use of sick time and even increased disability claims.

The key to changing this scenario is turning the financial health approach from passive to active. Good financial health rarely happens on its own. The good news is that there are evidence-based strategies that organizations can put in place to help improve the financial health—and the overall mental health and resilience—of their employees.

Research shows that of employees in Canada:

- 30% feel insecure about their financial health;
- 45% experience uncomfortable levels of stress related to finances;
- 32% feel excessive stress in maintaining a budget;
- 67.8% say they'd like assistance with financial health added to their benefits program; and
- There is a direct correlation between increased financial stress and anti-depressant use.

In a recent survey by the American Psychological Association, financial strain topped the charts as the number one stress concern of employees. It was much more significant than either workplace or relationship stress. And, even more concerningly, it's clear that financial health, mental health, and physical health are all interconnected.

Recent studies make it clear that employees are looking for help. They say they are looking for financial health benefits. They want an increase in financial self-control and an increase in financial self-efficacy.

Employers who support their employees achieve greater financial health experience, a more engaged workforce, lower costs for sick time and disability claims, and overall lower benefits costs.

There are things you can do.

They start with the passive supports that are already in place as part of your CSBT Benefits program. These include:

- If you have Extended Health coverage with CSBT, then your employees already have access to tools and counselling support around financial health. There are tools and support available to them through the LifeWorks (our employee and family assistance plan provider).
- If your coverage includes paramedicals, then employees also have access to psychological counseling to address this issue.

Many employees never think about these tools that are there for them. Do you promote the use of these strategies? Do you make sure employees know what you've put in place for their benefit and teach them how to access them?

There are strategies an employer can use to be more proactive in supporting employees to achieve increased levels of financial health.

1. **Start with a need assessment.** Don't assume what employees want. In your annual employee survey, ask members about their desire for this type of support. Speak to key employee leaders. Find out what existing programs are being used and how helpful people judge them to be.
2. **Once you have evidence, target your intervention.** Demographics play a key

role in determining who wants/needs what kinds of support. E.g. someone nearing retirement likely has significantly different issues than a person beginning their career, starting a family, etc. Proposed interventions need to differ based on these realities.

3. **With your employees, begin to strategize.** A good approach will include both financial communication and structural programs. For many, it will begin with basic financial literacy for a foundation. But, for most, literacy alone won't motivate change.
4. **Begin to develop a program that targets the specific needs/desires you've discovered.** There might be: structured programs in the workplace (i.e., lunch and learn with financial experts, etc.); a "save for tomorrow" program that is supported by the employer; and, in some cases, personal one-to-one support may be necessary.
5. **Put measures in place to support employees in this area** , and then seek to improve your approach based on employee feedback.

Acting on employee financial health can improve mental health and resilience. Being proactive will be better for employees, better for the organization, and better for the people, your workplace seeks to support. Paying attention to all areas of employee health leads to "Healthy Employees at Work."

That's what we all want and what your consumers rely on.

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