

# 2007 Behavioral Health Awards

## *for Employer Implementation and Best Practices*

November 2007



*The National Business Group on Health is the national voice of large employers dedicated to finding innovative and forward-thinking solutions to the nation's most important health care issues. Our 288 members are among the nation's most innovative health care purchasers and include 63 of the 2007 Fortune 100. They provide health coverage for more than 50 million U.S. workers, retirees and their dependents.*



### **Kathryn Power, CMHS Director, Commends Private Sector for Addressing Nation's Mental Health Challenges**

In October, the public and private sectors joined together in recognizing five companies and National Business Group on Health members that are finding better ways to address the behavioral health needs of their employees.

The occasion was the 2007 Behavioral Health Awards for Employer Implementation and Best

Practices, co-sponsored by the National Business Group on Health and the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), an agency within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Business Group was fortunate to have Kathryn Power, the widely admired director of CMHS, speak to a gathering of business and government leaders. Power, herself a great leader and visionary, praised the awarded companies "that recognize both the importance and the economic value of proactively addressing the mental health of their employees and their families."

In her remarks, the CMHS director stressed the need for ongoing collaboration between both private and public sectors in redefining how mental illness is perceived and how it should be treated. "We recognize that working with organizations such as the National Business Group on Health and its member companies," said Power, "provides us with a way to leverage our resources to support our mutual goals of having a healthy and productive workforce, successful and stable families, and intervening early as mental health issues emerge."

Power cited the partnership between the National Business Group on Health and SAMHSA that has existed since 2004 when the federal agency funded a Business Group-sponsored meeting of benefits experts who were charged with reviewing private sector behavioral health services. The result was the publication of *An Employer's Guide to Behavioral Health Services*, which “serves as a roadmap for evaluating, designing and implementing affordable and effective behavioral health care services.” She said the guide recommends a more cohesive, and thus more effective, approach to providing behavioral health services. In addition, she praised the guide for crediting the public sector's use of evidence-based care, which Power believes should be replicated in the private sector.

*“The bottom line is that treatment for mental illnesses works and people do recover. Successful treatment returns people to work and also reduces costs for other medical conditions.”*

—Kathryn Power

Member companies in the National Business Group on Health and some employers in other parts of the world have changed their attitudes about benefits in recent years, according to Power. This, in turn, has paved the way for a new perspective on mental health issues. “Enlightened employers now are looking at the employee benefits function not as a cost center,” she said, “but as a catalyzing force for promoting human and intellectual capital. These transformational leaders are realizing that protecting and promoting their employees' mental health status is an investment.”

In a climate in which health care costs have skyrocketed in recent years, Power argued that “enlightened employers and health management companies have recognized three key truths about mental health.”

- **FIRST TRUTH:** Mental illnesses are common in society and in the workforce.

“Of the 20.2 million adults who abuse or are dependent on alcohol or drugs, 15.5 million (76.7%) are employed.”

“According to the 2006 *National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, 6.6% of full-time employed adults and 7.6% of part-time employed adults experienced a mental illness in the past year.”

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- **SECOND TRUTH:** Addressing the needs of one's employees is good for the individual and good for the bottom-line.

"Mental illness and substance use disorders, as a group, are considered to be one of the 15 most expensive health conditions in the United States."

"It's estimated that depression alone costs the United States up to 44 billion dollars annually."

"Mental illnesses cause more days of work loss and work impairment than many other chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma and arthritis."

- **THIRD TRUTH:** There currently exists a large gap between what needs to be done and what is being done.

"In spite of the fact that a range of effective treatments exist for most mental illnesses, *less than half* of those individuals in need of mental health services get treatment.

"We estimate that two-thirds of children and adolescents who need mental health services do not receive them."

"The National Institute of Mental Health reports in their survey that people who do seek treatment typically do so after a *decade or more* of delays, during which time they are likely to develop additional problems."

*"What specifically can we do today? We can commit to opening more jobs to people that might have behavioral health issues. We can volunteer to serve as mentors. We can respect the mind/body inseparability and reflect it in our practice."*

—Kathryn Power

Power singled out the companies that received the awards as good examples of how to approach employee behavioral health needs. "We at the Center for Mental Health Services believe that it makes good policy sense to address mental health needs comprehensively and at the earliest possible time," she said. "We recognize that such a policy makes good financial sense as well."

Power pointed to the importance of prevention in behavioral health, using the metaphor of individuals falling into a dangerous river. “Clearly, our goal should be to balance use of resources between services to rescue drowning individuals (the downstream approach) and those services that try to keep people from falling into the river in the first place (the upstream approach).”

Saying that “the treatment a person receives is often *inadequate*,” and that public health resources are limited, Power said evidence-based care should be the underpinning of all behavioral health services. “We can’t pay for all of the services,” she said, “but by encouraging (and, where we have the appropriate authority, requiring) the use of effective practices, we provide critical leadership to the field.”

Finally, the CMHS director called on individuals to rethink and transform their attitudes about mental health issues. “*In doing so, we can provide a model for our employees and for other business leaders, and help advance a wholesale transformation of our behavioral health care system that will change the face of care for generations to come,*” said Power.

## *EMPLOYER IMPLEMENTATION AWARDS*

### **Aetna**

*Behavioral Healthcare Services in the General Medical Setting*

### **Cisco Systems**

*Specialty Services for the Seriously Mentally Ill*

### **Delta Air Lines, Inc.**

*Employee Assistance Programs*

### **Pitney Bowes, Inc.**

*Disability Management for Behavioral Health Disorders*

## *BEST-PRACTICE AWARDS*

### **Cisco Systems**

*Early Intervention*

### **GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)**

*Healthy Work Environment*



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