

## MENTAL HEALTH LEADING CAUSE OF DISABILITY

Did you know that mental health disorders are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and Canada for ages 15-44, or that talk therapy has been empirically-validated to treat mental health disorders? *For attorneys, who are in such regular contact with people experiencing stress, it may not be surprising to hear that just over 25% of adults and 20% of children have mental health issues each year.* An estimated 26.2% of Americans ages 18 and older - about one in four adults - have a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. More than 14 million children and adolescents in the U.S., or 1 in 5, have a diagnosable mental health disorder that requires intervention or monitoring and interferes with daily functioning.

Approximately 26.6 million American adults have a mood disorder. Depression accounts for about 18.8 million and Bipolar disorder accounts for about 5.7 million. Approximately 2.2 million American adults have OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder). Approximately 7.7 million American adults have PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). The list goes on. What these numbers show is that dealing with a mental health issue at some point in childhood or adulthood is a normal occurrence. It is important to get effective treatment.

### **TALK THERAPY – An Empirically-Validated Form of Treatment**

Numerous studies have been conducted to determine if psychotherapy and/or psychiatric medication are effective at alleviating mental health conditions. A combination of talk therapy and drugs work best, OR, for those whose treatment consisted of only talk therapy, they did as well if they had 13 or more visits with the therapist. Treatment from primary care doctors (MDs) was effective for people with mild problems, but less so for people with more severe ones, who did better with psychologists. Treatment by psychologists yielded significantly better results for people who started out in poor shape.

Various states of stress, sadness, fear, moodiness, anxiety, inattention, etc., etc., are commonly experienced. But while common, they can be very painful and interfere with our ability to get things done or our ability to get through the day emotionally. Professionals who work in the legal arena regularly come in contact with those who are highly stressed and experiencing mental health concerns. Take a minute to let them know what they are going through is normal, and that a few therapy sessions truly can improve things. Refer them to a trusted psychology practice; if ability to pay is an issue some clinicians take pro bono or sliding scale cases, plus there are community clinics. There is no need for people to suffer.