

# VIEDA WEDNESDAY WEBINARS



## STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES DURING THE PANDEMIC

**Moderator:** Shanell Petersen, USVIEDA Managing  
Director, Marketing and Vision 2040

April 14, 2021  
10:00am-11:00am AST  
[www.usvieda.org/webinars](http://www.usvieda.org/webinars)



# VIDEA WEDNESDAY WEBINARS

## Main Speaker



**Shammi Carr**

DRCVI Advocate





# Stress, Mental Health and COVID-19

Shammi Carr, Advocate  
Disability Rights Center of  
the Virgin Islands  
April 2021

# Objectives:



- Knowing how to identify employees who might be dealing with stress and other issues related to the pandemic
- How does the Americans with Disabilities Act apply to employees who are dealing with mental health, substance abuse and more
- Resources for your business as well as for your employees

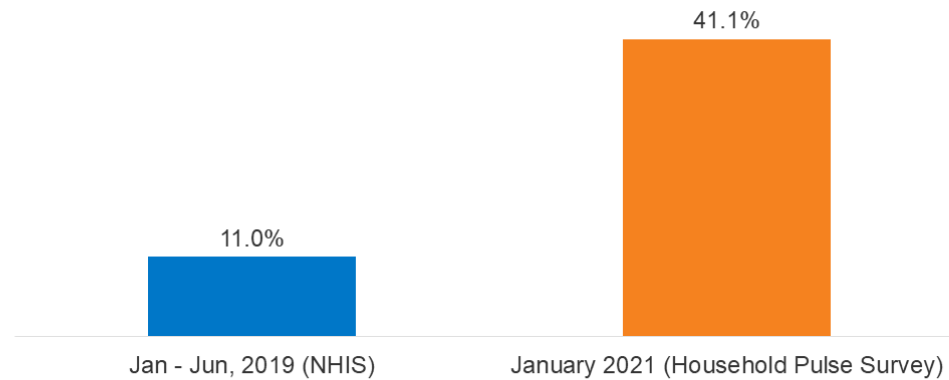
# General Issues with Stress and the Pandemic



- Anxiety
- Worry of Illness
- Depression
- Isolation

Figure 1

Average Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety Disorder and/or Depressive Disorder, January-June 2019 vs. January 2021



NOTES: Percentages are based on responses to the GAD-2 and PHQ-2 scales. Pulse findings (shown here for January 6 – 18, 2021) have been stable overall since data collection began in April 2020.

SOURCE: NHIS Early Release Program and U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey. For more detail on methods, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/ERmentalhealth-508.pdf>

# Reasons that employees are feeling more “STRESSED”



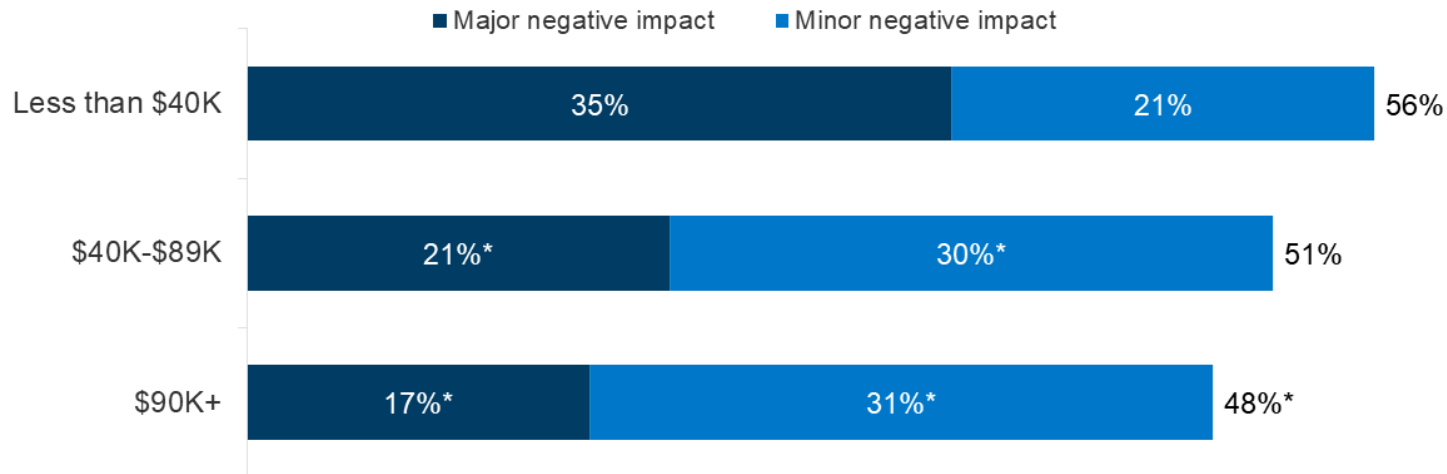
- Business transition/telework
- Family/Home life
- Becoming ill
- Vaccine hesitance
- Income change
- Other

# Income, Stress and the Pandemic



Figure 5

Percent of Adults Who Say Worry or Stress Related to the Coronavirus Has Had a Negative Impact on Their Mental Health, by Household Income



NOTES: \*Indicates a statistically significant difference between those earning less than \$40K at the  $p < 0.05$  level.  
SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Poll (conducted November 30 – December 8, 2020).

# Identifying stress with your employees:



- Less concentration
- Lower productivity
- Excessive absence
- “Mondayitis” of “Fridayitis”
- Inconsistent behavior
- Substance abuse



# Substance Abuse and the Pandemic



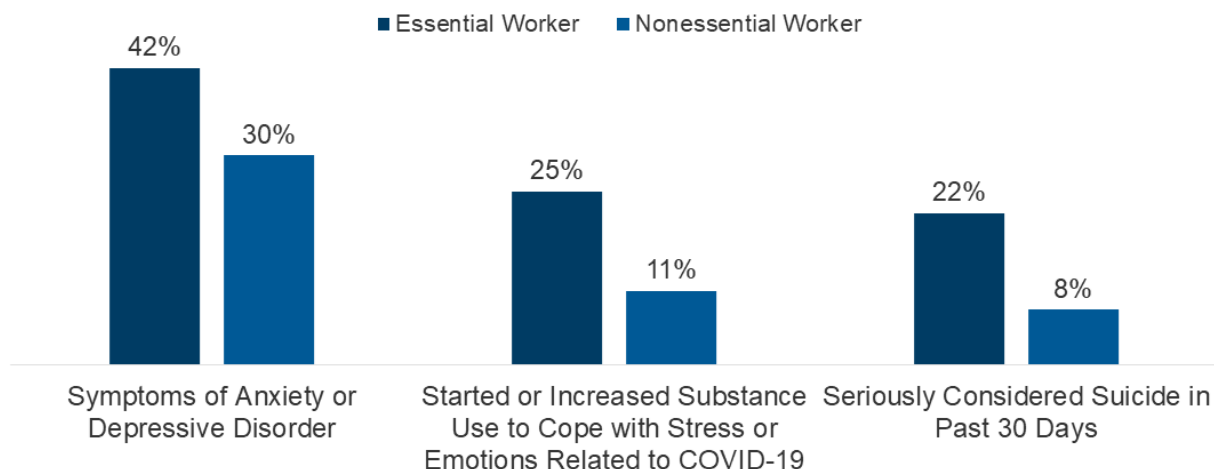
- 30%+ increase in alcohol and substance abuse (APA 3, 2021) during the pandemic
- More dangerous because people are alone, might need assistance
- Decrease immunity, more prone to illness
- Social drinking such as happy hours obsolete therefore increasing isolation which can lead to more habit forming behavior

# Mental health, substance abuse and the pandemic



Figure 8

Among Essential and Nonessential Workers, Share of Adults Reporting Mental Distress and Substance Use, June 2020



NOTES: Data is among adults ages 18 and above. Essential worker status was self-reported.

SOURCE: Czeisler MĚ, Lane RI, Petrosky E, et al. Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2020;69:1049–1057. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6932a1>



# Americans with Disabilities Act

- Broad application for people with disabilities
- Mental Health and its application
- Substance abuse and its application
- Temporary vs. Permanent

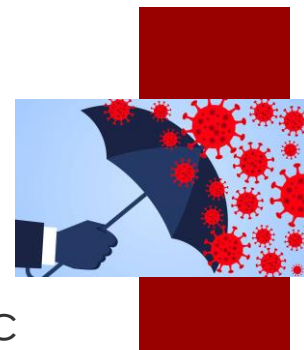


# ADA Definitions



- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, a record of an impairment, by association
- No exhaustive list of disabilities, self-attesting definition
- Mental Health common disabilities include depression, anxiety, PTSD, Bi-polar, OCD and more
- Substance abuse disorder:
  - illegal drug use is not protected but people who are recovered are
  - alcohol is qualified if the person is not using or in the process of rehabilitation

# Mental Health vs. Stress



- Permanent and ongoing
- Diagnosis (DSM V)
- ADA covered
- Temporary and/or sporadic
- Usually not diagnosable per the DSM V
- Usually not ADA covered



# Polling Question



Do you have an EAP type of program for your employees?

Yes

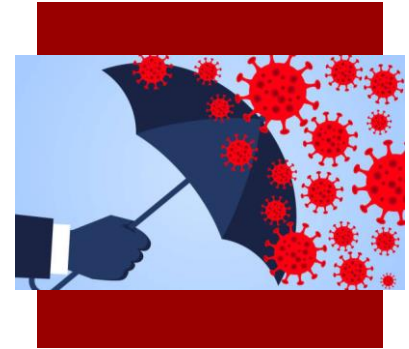
No



# Supports by Employers

- EAP support services (telehealth), flexible time/schedule
- Provide information to employees about community resources (including on-line such as support groups)
- Get creative with online platforms (Zoom, TEAMS) for social activities and engagement
- Try do to a nutrition program or have one available for staff to talk to
- Reduce stress and anxiety by keeping your staff up to date on COVID-19 including vaccination(provide incentives if applicable)

# Reducing the stress of RTW during the pandemic



- Have a clear policy and practice about returning to work including vaccination
- Consistency is very important so try to establish a routine, even if it's still a blended workplace
- Provide employees with opportunities to socialize and connect with their colleagues (virtual or onsite)
- Re-enforce the ADA policy and how to initiate Reasonable Accommodation



# Resources



- Center on Disease Control: Coping for Stress with Workers

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/mental-health-non-healthcare.html>

- Mayo Clinic: COVID – 19 and Mental Health

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/mental-health-covid-19/art-20482731>

- Job Accommodation Network: COVID-19 Resource page

<https://askjan.org/topics/COVID-19.cfm>

- EEOC: What Should you Know about COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehab Act and Other EEO Laws

<https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>

# Disability Rights Center of the VI



- DRCVI is part of a national network called Protection and Advocacy, mission is to ensure the just treatment of people with disabilities
- Provides advocacy, information and referrals, guidance, legal advocacy, training
- Affiliate of the Northeast ADA Center at Cornell University that provides technical assistance and training regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act that includes physical and programmatic access
- STT/STJ – 340-776-4303      STX - 340-772-1200
- Email: [info@drcvi.org](mailto:info@drcvi.org)



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**Thank  
you!**



USVI BUSINESS HUB

POWERED BY STARTUP SPACE

**STRESS AND  
MENTAL HEALTH  
ISSUES DURING  
THE PANDEMIC**

Upcoming Wednesday Webinars: Visit [www.usvieda.org/webinars](http://www.usvieda.org/webinars)

**April 21, 2021 at 10AM** – SBA Funding Program Updates with Wayne Huddleston, Senior Area Manager, U.S. Virgin Islands, PR and USVI District, Small Business Administration

**April 28, 2021 at 10AM** – AT&T Transition to Liberty Q&A with Liberty CEO, Mr. Naji Khoury

