

CASE STUDIES & RESEARCH



Healthcare Worker Returns to Work More Confident with a Digital Solution

With Starling Minds, frontline healthcare workers, particularly in remote communities were able to overcome their personal and professional hurdles due to their mental and physical health struggles.

The Background

Healthcare workers are struggling with their mental health without even realizing it. In North America, one in three physicians screen positive for depression and two in five are burned out. For nurses, one in seven screen positive for PTSD, and two in five are burned out and report patient mistakes. Healthcare workers in remote communities face particular challenges due to lack of resources and mental health professionals available. Although healthcare workers are naturally resilient, many lack the tools and strategies they need to manage their mental health. For those who are aware, they often believe they can manage it without additional support.

Despite society's openness to talk about mental health, healthcare workers see getting help as weak. They fear it may derail their careers, reputation at work, and how their manager and colleagues view them. Of the total healthcare workers on long-term disability, 30% – 40% have a

mental health diagnosis. Worse off, despite healthcare workers having generous EAPs, the programs are severely under-utilized and stigmatized. For those who are getting treatment, they are often limited by the sessions available, timing, out-of-pocket costs, therapists accepting new patients, and access due to remoteness. The mental health system is also confusing for people to know where to go to for help. As a result, there have significant barriers to overcome mental health struggles for healthcare workers: social stigma, accessibility, fear of job loss, financial costs, long wait times, and standardization of care.

The Challenge

For the past 2 years, Mary's mental health has been on the decline. As a registered nurse for over 5 years, she's had to deal with a lot of violence and abuse at work. She's well respected at work, but finds herself making small mistakes with patients. She thought she was overly tired and didn't think much about it, however she kept making mistakes. She started doubting her abilities to perform her job, which became a huge stressor in her life. Her colleagues started noticing and would often tell her she looked tired and overworked.

To make matters worse, her son also had a lot of health problems. With her tendency to ruminate on negative thoughts, her confidence plummeted. She thought she was addressing her mental health adequately, therefore didn't feel the need to seek treatment. However, after a series of professional and personal setbacks, she went on leave and was referred to Starling Minds' Return-to-Health program by her disability case manager. When she started Starling, her work function was at "zero", and her depression and anxiety scores were within the clinically unhealthy range.

The Solution

Mary's disability case manager recommended Starling Minds' Return-to-Health program due to its education-based modules and online community. After 2 months of using the program, Mary realized the Starling program her disability manager recommended was working for her. She started to feel a lot better about herself and gained a better understanding of mental health. She realized how her tendency to ruminate on negative thoughts affected her moods and ability to focus at work. She developed the ability to identify her personal stressors, why she ruminates on negative thoughts, and how best to balance them. With her ability to set and obtain more realistic goals, her confidence has also increased. By the end of the program, she was able to return to work with more confidence and resilience to perform her job tasks.

Starling's Return-to-Health program includes:

- A Guide to a personalized return-to-health plan that helped Mary assess her work readiness, manage conversations with managers and colleagues, and manage anticipated stressors
- Interactive videos that teach evidence-based strategies for building mental resilience
- Case study examples that show how others have returned to work using CBT
- Assessments and metrics for Mary to reflect on when evaluating her own progress
- A confidential, community of peers on leave to help with social isolation and stigma around mental illness
- A toolbox with scientifically-proven strategies readily available for Mary whenever she needs it

The Results

Within two months, Mary was feeling more like herself, and reported the following results:

50%

Improvement in Ability to Manage Emotional Distress

21 – 30%

Increase in Confidence to Return to Work

75%

Improvement in Work Functionality

“Starling has provided me with direction and tools to help myself get better. Thought balancing really seems to help reframe my negative thoughts. I need to remind myself of my current level when setting my goals so that they are realistic and achievable.” — Mary, Return-to-Health Program User

ABOUT STARLING MINDS

Starling Minds™ is a leading digital mental health platform that empowers organizations to cost-effectively support the wellbeing of their most important asset – their workforce. By using

personalized and digitally-delivered Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) available on-demand,
Starling helps to overcome barriers that prevent most people from seeking mental health support
– cost, access, and stigma.