

----- White Paper -----

# Employee Wellness

## **Mental Health and Workplace Chaplaincy**

**"Building Employee Resilience"**

A Collaboration of Contributors



**Assimilation and Constructs**

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## Overview

The reader will be exposed to the supporting statistical data of the increasing mental health crisis in the US workplace among employees.

**Direct, negative results of this epidemic characterized by isolation, depression, and suicidal tendencies affecting the performance metrics of companies will be highlighted** as employees are the primary drivers of innovation, creativity, customer service, and all of the major product or service deliverables.

Current employee support mechanisms will be previewed with their attributes and deficiencies noted. **The construct of front-line chaplaincy will be introduced as a proven—but not yet saturated—solution if interjected properly into today's workplace flow and processes.** The assimilation of chaplain care into the workplace environment along with methods and best practices will be discussed. Resultant stories will be galvanized by **demonstrable ROI** as supporting evidence as to why this strategic initiative, if adopted by companies and supported by company leadership, will be a **measurable, tangible, and primary catalyst for mitigating declining mental health in today's employee population.**










# Current State of Employee Mental Health

Besides the COVID-19 pandemic, deteriorating **mental health** is another increasing epidemic of massive proportions

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in June 2020, adults 18 and older reported:

-  **40.9%**  
mental/behavioral health issues
-  **30.9%**  
anxiety or depression
-  **26.3%**  
trauma and stress
-  **13.3%**  
started/increased substance abuse
-  **10.7%**  
considered suicide

## Loneliness, depression, anxiety, panic, worry, and stress are devastating our nation.

The suicide ideation numbers reported were **double** from the previous summer.

Suicidal ideation was more prevalent among males than females.

The **youngest respondents** (ages 18-24) reported the highest percentage of adverse mental or behavioral health symptoms (74.9%).



## Mental Health - Loneliness, Depression, Anxiety

“During my years caring for patients, the most common pathology I saw was not heart disease or diabetes; it was loneliness.”

Dr Vivek H Murthy  
19th Surgeon General of the US



According to Dr. Murthy, loneliness and weak social connections have the same effect on health as **smoking fifteen cigarettes a day**.

**Depression** and **anxiety** are also common. According to **Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)** research, between 22 and 35 percent of US employees experienced symptoms of **depression** as they live through COVID. Work-related concerns have left more than 40 percent of employees feeling **hopeless, burned out, or exhausted** as they grapple with their altered lives.

# Mental Health - Anxiety, PTSD



**Shahidrah Cowgill**, licensed professional counselor-supervisor and EMDR therapist, states, "70 percent of adults in the US report exposure to one lifetime traumatic event. Approximately, 3.5 percent of US adults are currently living with **PTSD**. The American Psychiatric Association predicts one in 11 will be diagnosed with PTSD in their lifetimes."

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In response to elevated stress levels caused by COVID, some states have initiated helplines like Indiana's Family and Social Services Administration. "**Anxiety** regarding **financial stress, grief** and **loss** over **bereavement** and the loss of normal routines along with the **unknowns** regarding the pandemic is 'overwhelming,'" the agency said.

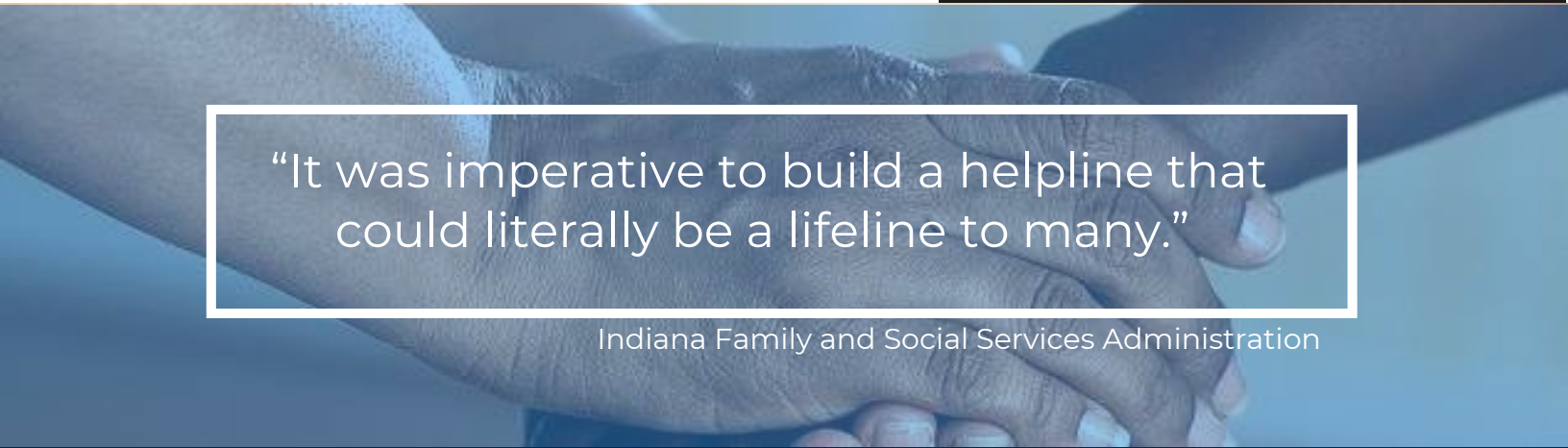
There has already been an upswing in numbers of referrals to counselors being given by physicians.

**Employees are NOT receiving the help they need.** More than 1/3 of the 1,000 people surveyed by SHRM said they hadn't done anything to cope with their negative feelings. Only 7% had contacted a mental health professional.

*"If this whole COVID thing continues, there will be a tsunami of anxiety and depression in the following months."*

Prominent Dallas primary care physician

**If loneliness, depression, anxiety, PTSD, panic, or victim mentality are being experienced by today's workforce, how does it affect business?**



"It was imperative to build a helpline that could literally be a lifeline to many."

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration



"Human beings are hardwired to need to be around other human beings."

Dr. Stephen Marmer, Psychiatrist

Confidential Discussions on **Anxiety and Fear** between Marketplace Chaplains and employees through mid-2020 have already surpassed all of 2019 numbers:







## Workplace Implications of Mental Health Issues

### Poor mental health significantly impacts business outcomes

Chronic **loneliness** and **stress** affect employees by decreasing:

- engagement
- productivity
- creativity
- brain function
- decision making
- reasoning
- retention

Even CEOs report feeling lonely. It is lonely at the top. Harvard Business Review's research showed that half of CEOs report feelings of loneliness and isolation with 61 percent of that group believing it hinders their performance.

"At work, loneliness reduces task performance, limits creativity, and impairs other aspects of executive function such as reasoning and decision making."

**Dr. Vivek H. Murthy**  
19th Surgeon General of the US





According to the National Institute of Mental Health, the leading cause of **absenteeism** in the United States is **depression**.

Absenteeism costs US companies billions of dollars each year in lost productivity, wages, poor quality of goods/services and excess management time.

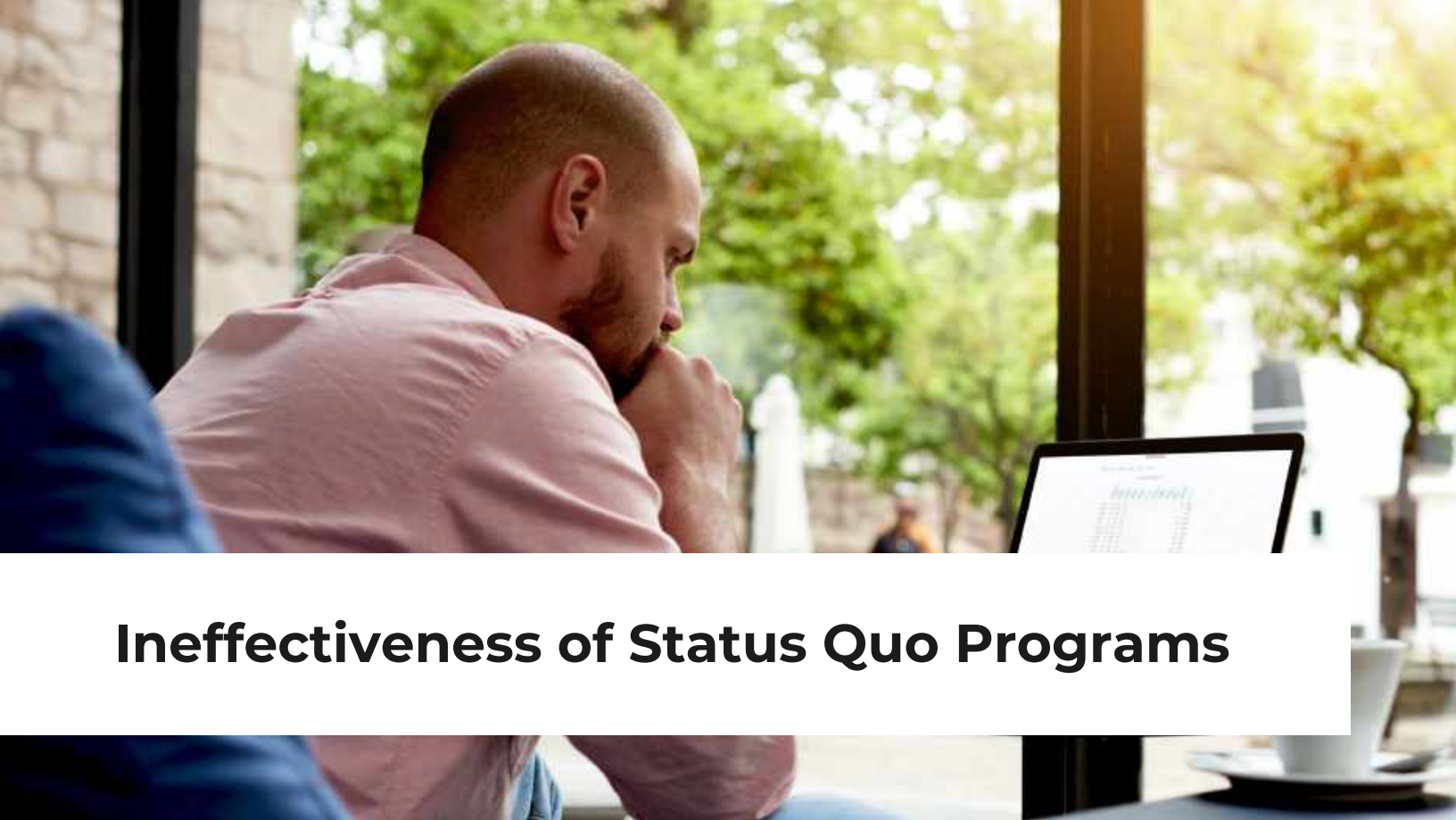
**Productivity losses from absenteeism cost employers \$225.8 billion or \$1,685 per employee per year. (CDC)**

**"Absenteeism** refers to the habitual non-presence of an employee at his or her job. Habitual non-presence extends beyond what is deemed to be within an acceptable realm of days away from the office for legitimate causes such as scheduled vacations, occasional illness, and family emergencies."

Will Kenton, "Absenteeism"  
Investopedia

#### **Additional Losses:**

- Turnover
- Presenteeism
- Theft



# Ineffectiveness of Status Quo Programs

## Employee assistance programs (EAPs)

Employee assistance programs (EAPs) offered by large and small companies alike show **utilization** rates as **less than 7%**.

While EAPs are potentially a great service, usage is low due to:

- Stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues
- Confidentiality concerns
- Inadequate explanation of the service to employees

EAPs are also **reactive** rather than **proactive**. Employees who could have staved off larger issues may have tumbled into a downward spiral by the time they get around to reaching out for help.

EAPs are **reactive**  
rather than **proactive**.

# Professional therapy counselors

Professional therapy counselors can be effective. However, this regimen **needs about six sessions** for trust to be developed with a new patient. It takes a big commitment of time and resources to pursue counseling.

Therapy is most effective when the person is engaged and committed to working through the process and doing the homework suggested. Not everyone can afford weeks and weeks of one-on-one therapy, either financially or as a time investment.

The largest obstacle for this resource is employees' reluctance to even contact a therapist to begin seeking help.

## Barriers to pursuing care:

- I don't trust mental health professionals
- I don't know where to get help
- I don't have adequate transportation
- Mental health care costs too much money
- It would be too embarrassing
- Co-workers might have less confidence in me
- My leadership might treat me differently
- My leaders would blame me for the problem
- I would be seen as weak

**Chaplain Peter Devenish-Meares**  
**Australian Army**







## Creative employee benefits

Many employers are trying to help employees by offering wellness programs, yoga, flexible schedules, mediation instruction, financial planning, lawyers, scholarships, telemedicine, cognitive behavioral therapy, party and vacation planning.

Just as companies utilize a plethora of employee benefits to attract and retain top talent, so should a truly holistic approach be taken for improved mental health. There is not a one-size-fits-all magic bullet for the mental health problem.

As good physical health requires attention to diet, sleep, and exercise, good mental health needs a multi-faceted approach as well.



## Proven Solution: Workplace Chaplaincy

### Chaplains are involved in many areas of life

#### Chaplains traditionally have served:

- Hospitals
- Police/Fire Stations
- Sports Teams
- US Congress
- US Military
- Prisons
- Universities
- Nursing Homes

Besides these institutions, a record number of companies—large and small, public and private—are turning to the **tried and true approach of chaplains to provide care for their own employees.**

Some companies have had chaplains for a substantial length of time:

- R.J. Reynolds since 1949
- UAW since mid-1980s
- Tyson Foods since 2000

**Workplace chaplaincy is growing as company leaders realize their employees need care they cannot provide.**



Employee usage rates of chaplains are typically above 50%.

**“Employers should consider chaplaincy and utilizing chaplains for their versatility, effectiveness, and ability to offer a range of support including spiritual guidance.”**

Shahidrah Cowgill, licensed professional counselor-supervisor and EMDR therapist



Upon hearing about **Chaplain Care Teams**, a prominent Dallas primary care physician declared that there is a **great need** for this type of service. She has seen an **uptick in referrals to mental health counselors**.

“When COVID first started, it was viewed as a ‘staycation’ for many. Eating ice cream, being home. Now it’s taken a toll on physical and mental health. There has been no accountability to doctors. Patients are afraid to come into their doctor’s office. Diabetes is up. Anxiety and depression are setting in with people.”

Workplace chaplaincy and EAPs do not require an either-or decision. In fact, chaplains have bolstered a company’s EAP usage by understanding the particular EAP a company has and referring employees to it when they discover someone needing professional help beyond the scope of the chaplain’s expertise.





# Attributes of Workplace Chaplaincy

## How do chaplains bolster mental health of employees?

Chaplains fit well in the multi-faceted arsenal of combating employee's mental health issues. They are approachable, available, accessible, familiar, and front-line workers.

They help lonely employees feel connected and cared for. They have personal discussions with employees, listening effectively and showing that they care and are available to help them walk through issues.

They have multiple mental health resources they can share with struggling employees immediately through the MyChap App or special topic booklets.

During these times of social isolation and ongoing pandemic stress, feeling connected and supported can help mitigate suicidal thoughts and behavior which are more prevalent during this time.

**"The stigma so often experienced by those seeking help or declaring there is an illness can be lessened by a chaplain's early and ongoing support alongside—and yet never at cross purposes—to the necessary work of mental care providers."**

Chaplain Peter Devenish-Meares

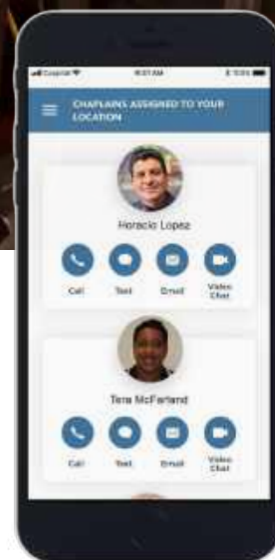
# How do chaplain care teams function?

Chaplains develop personal relationships with the employees they serve by **regular, non-interruptive worksite or virtual visits**, meeting, greeting, and chatting briefly with employees. **Long before an employee may have a need, a relationship is established**, and many times an employee will reach out for advice, help, or care before a problem turns into a crisis event. Because of the personalized and proactive nature of chaplaincy, employees are already familiar with this trusted, confidential, and known resource.

Depending on the size and make up of a company, the team of chaplains will create a **workplace visiting schedule that allows them to touch base with as many employees as possible** throughout a time period. A female chaplain may visit the company on Tuesday mornings and a male chaplain on Friday afternoons, and this routine is consistent every week. The chaplains move through the company greeting employees and having quick conversations without disrupting work. If an employee needs additional time to talk, they will set up a time outside of work or maybe during their break or lunch to continue their discussion.



For remote, over-the-road drivers, off-site or work-from-home employees, chaplains regularly reach out via phone, text, email or video chat. **Every employee has free access to the MyChap App**, making chaplains available 24/7 nationwide.





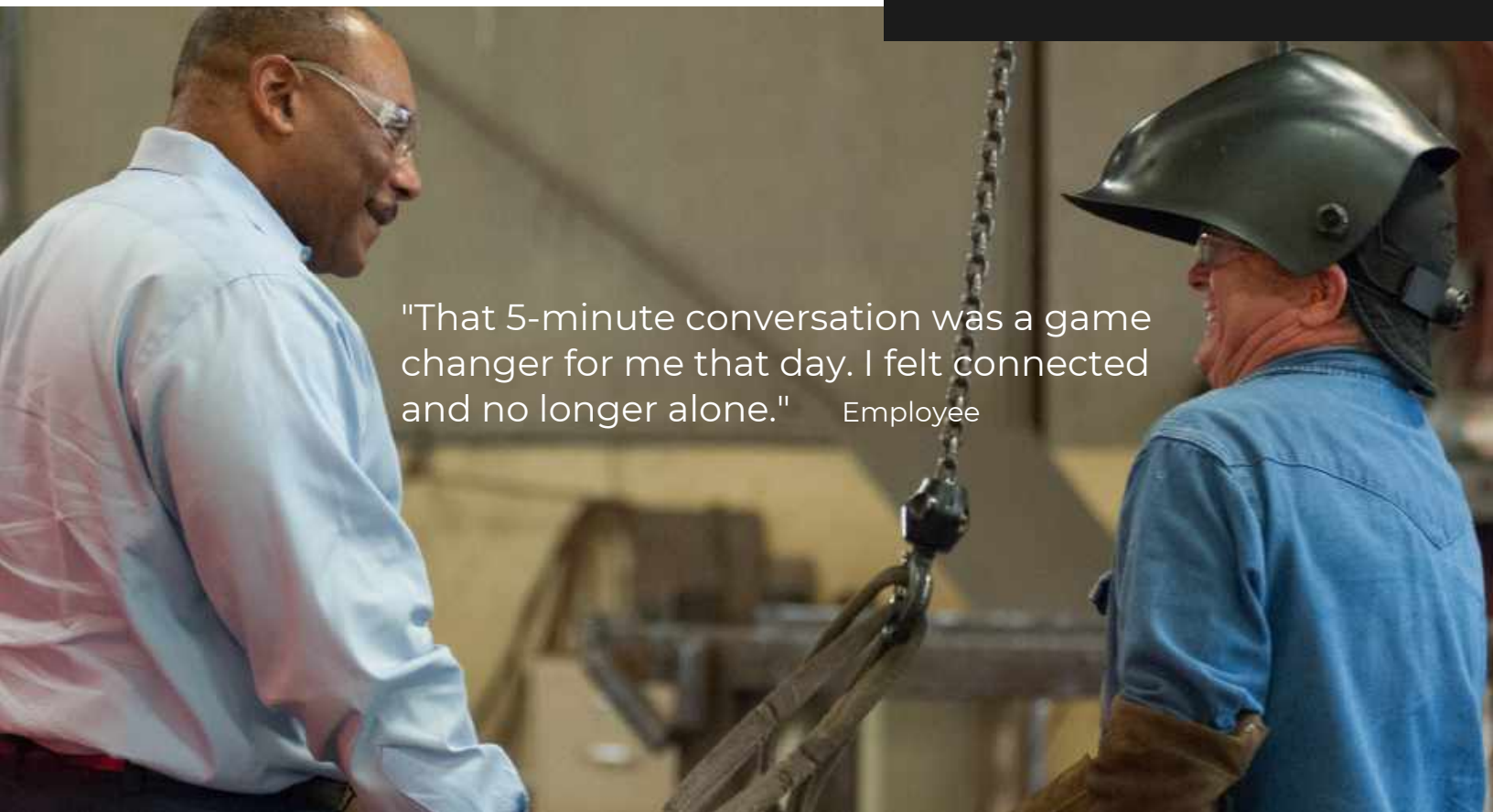
Confidentiality is honored during these times and the chaplains treat all employees and their discussions respectfully. Private information is not shared with company leaders. The chaplains are neutral from company operations and are not employees of the company they serve. Employees need not fear job loss nor having their private conversations reported to HR when choosing to use the service.

**Licensed professional counselor**

**LauraLyn Benoit** stated, "With the pandemic and the current condition our nation is in causing isolation, chaplains are needed now more than ever. If a chaplain cannot be present to employees physically, they can be present with them over the phone. The

chaplain business cards with phone numbers handed out regularly are a lifeline in an emergency."

As both a mental health counselor and a chaplain, Benoit is convinced of the critical role chaplains play in the workplace. Those quick "touch base" conversations in the workplace are often day brighteners for employees and communicate to them that the chaplain is available should a bigger need arise down the road.



"That 5-minute conversation was a game changer for me that day. I felt connected and no longer alone." Employee





# Employee Care Stories

## Suicide Prevention and Support Stories



**“Due to suicide deaths of employees at three company locations over a year and a half,** company upper management, HR, and the lead chaplain organized a plan to provide **Suicide Intervention Training** for all the managers, HR staff, and chaplains for each of the company’s 22 locations. Positive input was received from upper management, company managers, and chaplains alike. They each felt better prepared to recognize the signs of possible suicide ideation and what to do as a result.”



“The employee disclosed having **thoughts of suicide** many times in the past and **attempted** ‘a number of times’ in the last two years. While sharing with me a huge amount of personal discouragement, the **employee indicated this was their first time ever saying anything about this to anyone.** I used suicide-intervention training in the long discussion. The employee said they felt relieved and happy that they had divulged this. Now they have suicidal ideation only rarely and briefly.”



## Help with Depression Stories

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"A young lady thanked me today for time spent in prayer for her husband. The **depression that her husband was sinking into had taken a toll on their marriage** and the life of their young son and the stress was tearing them apart. Her husband is now able to face the situation with renewed strength."



"One team member has been silent over the past two weeks. I called and left a message, and texted a couple times. She texted back this week saying that she was **dealing with depression and is having a hard time**. Work and life feel very heavy for her right now. I prayed for her over text, affirming that these times are tough and she did a GREAT thing in sharing that. **I also sent her the "booklet" from MyChap App on depression.**

## Stress Relief Stories



"An employee shared about her **stress balancing family, work, and taking care of her parents**. I asked if she was taking care of herself and scheduling 'me time.' I shared my personal experience with this issue in the past and how I overcame it. I reminded her of the verse which says God has a plan to prosper not harm us. She was intrigued and I told her where to find the verse. She assured me she is on a path to good health and balance. I encouraged her and said I looked forward to our next visit where I expected she would have done something healthy for herself. She agreed and expressed her gratitude."



"I spoke with an employee who shifted positions and was **stressed about the new workload**. I encouraged her that she would do fine after a period of adjustment. She commented that she **had poor self esteem all her life and felt like people were always judging her performance**. After listening to more of her story, I reminded her about being God's creation. We laughed at a funny saying I shared: "God don't make no junk!" And I offered a devotional and encouraged her to study truth for strength and reminders of who she was."







## Work-Life Balance Stories



"Several employees are **overwhelmed with their workload**. They do not see any relief in the future. I am praying for strength and encouragement for them. They greatly appreciated my time with them as they were able to vent their frustration. Also, they felt encouraged knowing that I'm praying for them during this difficult time."



"This young lady was at work and was trying to have a good face before the people up front. However, inside, she was just struggling. We were out in the open and people were moving all around us. For just a moment, we were far enough away so others couldn't hear. She shared with me her current struggle. We were able to discuss her marriage and she was able to confide in me about her **husband's bipolar issues**. He refuses to get help and he just consumes her time when she's trying to get her work done. He's texting and calling and she's on the verge of tears. It was a unique moment because this woman always puts on a smile when she sees me. But, this time, she was transparent and shared with me her husband's struggle and how it affects her. Today I was able to pray for her and her husband and encourage her before I left."



## Help with Anxiety Stories



"An employee shared the news that his wife will have their baby any moment now. He is excited because this is his first child, but **he is also very nervous** because of the situation about coronavirus and how the hospital will handle this. He said, 'Chaplain, could you pray for us, especially for the baby?' I said, 'Yes!'"



"An employee texted me asking if we could meet outside of work to talk. We met today and she was very grateful that I could take this time to see her and listen to the **concerns that were laying heavy on her heart.** Through the entire visit and conversation, she was in tears. I listened to her, and then encouraged her with some appropriate verses. I prayed for her at the end of our visit and shared some digital resources with her to read. She texted me later saying she was already feeling better and thanked me for listening to her."





# ROI of Chaplain Care Teams

## Company Leaders Say:

"When I implemented the chaplain service, our turnover rate was cut almost in half — way below industry standards."

Dirk Dozier, Taco Bell Franchise Owner

**Absenteeism** costs your company \$789 per employee per year. 78% of absences are due to personal problems equaling a \$615 charge to your bottom line. When a resourceful and caring Chaplain Care Team helps resolve only 10% of those problems, you would save \$61.50 per employee annually.

**"The increased retention of our employees paid for the service itself."**

Jane Brookshire, Former VP of HR  
Pilgrim's Pride





## What is the Potential Return on Investment for a Personal and Proactive Employee Care Service?

**Turnover** costs your bottom line 2.5 times a full-time employee's salary. A productive \$45,000 a year experienced employee leaving your company costs you \$112,500. Department of Labor statistics show that 46% of the **people that leave a company voluntarily do so because they don't feel valued**. Chaplains regularly help dissatisfied employees work through their problems, feel valued, and remain on the job. When a chaplain prevents one manager from leaving, the savings would far exceed any the cost of the service.

"We have been significantly impacted by this pandemic; however, it is our desire to continue the chaplain service for our teammates. Like many companies, we have made significant budget cuts; however, **we feel that the chaplain service is not an area that we should cut—**especially in these times."

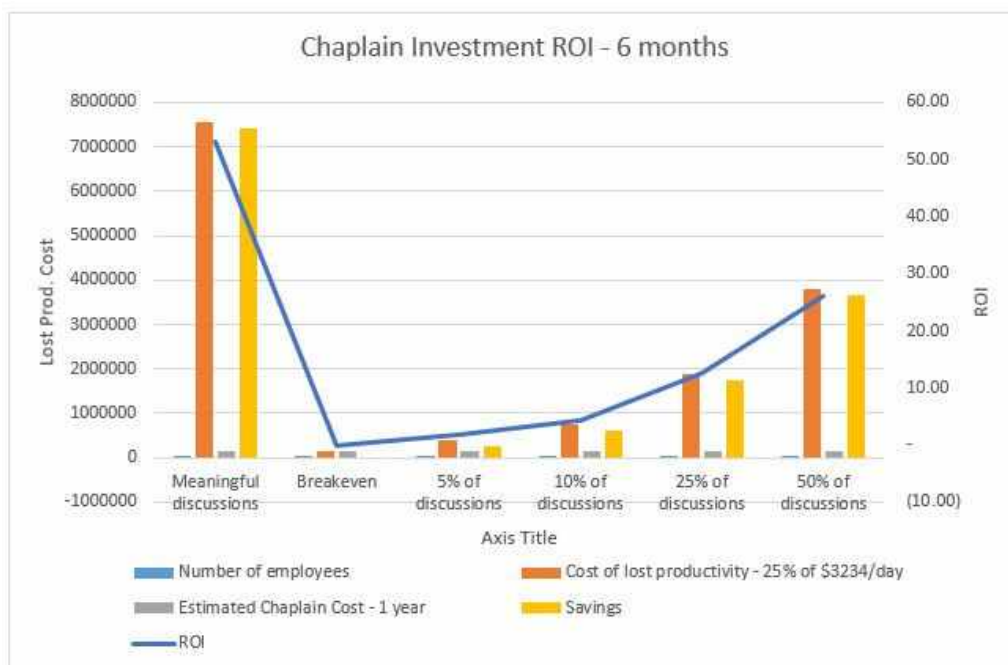
Company Owner

**Fraud** costs your company an average of \$4,500 per employee annually, Journal of Accounting, (time, tools, raw materials, office supplies, long-distance usage, etc.). Behind the personal financial distress motive of fraud is **the existence of an "unshareable need."** Chaplains provide that outlet which allows employees to share their problems confidentially when they are in a bind, as well as provide budgeting principles. When a Chaplain Care Team prevents 1% of in-house fraud, your savings would be \$45 per employee annually.



## ROI cont...

**Presenteeism** (the practice of coming to work despite illness, injury, anxiety, etc., often resulting in reduced productivity) costs businesses ten times more than absenteeism. According to the World Health Organization's Workplace Health and Productivity Study, employees confess to being **unproductive on the job as a result of presenteeism**, 57.5 days per year. This study states that about 25% of the productivity on those days is lost. Using the Wellcast ROI calculator, Personal Assistance Services states resolving presenteeism/absenteeism reflects a total of \$2,505 savings per affected employee over an eight-week period. By comparison, using the assumptions below, this savings in presenteeism resolution to a company per affected employee is \$3,234.





# Lifesaving Care

## Suicide Prevention and Support

According to the CDC, support from family and community or **feeling connected** and having access to in-person or virtual counseling or therapy can help with suicidal thoughts and behavior, particularly during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chaplains are providing real conversations.

- "I am here to listen."
- "I have no agenda."
- "My time is your time."

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**"From 2016 through mid-2020, Marketplace Chaplains have cared for those affected by 438 deaths by suicide and helped prevent 543."**

Jason Brown, CMO  
Marketplace Chaplains

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## Executive Summary

**Stress, anxiety, loneliness, depression, and thoughts of suicide are not newly-realized aspects of human life.** However, in a compressed environment such as the workplace where remote employment has increased with advanced technologies, a gig economy has emerged, a recession has hit, and now a world-wide pandemic has appeared, employees are in a crucible of endless data, information, uncertainty, fatigue, unsure of tomorrow's headlines, with no clear direction forward. Strategic plans which previously contained 1-, 3-, and 5-year components, are now produced and updated with monthly, quarterly, and annual time frames.

Why is this important? Because **most people spend 65-75% of their waking hours at work** or going to and from it. In addition, their work is now altered and permeates home-life, vacations, and any purposed downtime moments where FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) is appeased by a never-ceasing habit of logging onto their device of choice, only to be inundated with more information—most of which no one has any control over—but yet subconsciously affects the mental, emotional, and physiological components of their being. This leads to a never-ending quest to seek refuge and support, only to realize the galvanized social media “friends” are nowhere to be found for true face-to-face, human interaction evoking empathy, a listening non-judgmental ear, compassion, or a safe space where honest expression is permissible.

These factors have produced a wave of HR professionals and company leaders desperately trying to provide something of real value and help to their most valuable asset—their people. With the recent “wholeness and well-being, life balance” initiatives being promoted in today's workplace, **a proven construct used by multiple organizations for hundreds of years is being implemented in record numbers** to fill in the gap of the previously overlooked aspect of a human being's wholeness picture—the emotional, soulful, and spiritual aspects of life.

# Contributors



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**Jason Brown**  
Marketplace Chaplains  
Chief Marketing Officer



Marketplace Chaplains is the world's original, largest, and leading workplace chaplaincy provider with 1,700 chaplains covering 5,000 locations weekly. Since 1984, male, female, and ethnically diverse Chaplain Care Teams have served and provided personalized and proactive care to now over 1 million employees and their families across North America. Small to large, public to private, family-owned and not-for-profit companies employing 3 to 50,000 employees have realized the unique benefits from implementing this strategic initiative to extend, enhance, and broaden the level of care company leaders have for their people.

Some notable companies served by Marketplace Chaplains include:



If interested in having a Chaplain Care Team for your employees or would like to become a Chaplain, contact us at Marketplace Chaplains 800-775-7657 | [www.mchapusa.com](http://www.mchapusa.com)



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