

ADHD in Adulthood: Implications in the Workplace

As evidenced by many studies, there are brain differences in those affected by ADHD that persist with full or partial symptomatology throughout the lifespan and - if left undiagnosed and untreated - put a significant economic burden on the individuals affected, their families and society at large. At the same time, these brain differences bring with them unique strengths and skills that can be of significant benefit in the workplace if recognized and utilized.

Unfortunately, many adults who have ADHD remain undiagnosed and untreated so that in many cases their limitations far outweigh their strengths. On the other hand, if the right interventions are provided, employees with ADHD can be extremely useful in careers that involve sales, innovation, teaching and training, a level of risk-taking, crisis management and in a team, these employees can fulfill the role of an idea generator, showing perseverance and endless energy; this is especially the case in a career about which they are very passionate.

Human rights and the rights of people with disabilities at work should be taken into consideration for adults who have ADHD so that they have equal rights to achieve their full potential. Employers need to develop awareness about ADHD and have appropriate supportive structures in place so that they can recognize why otherwise competent and knowledgeable employees are underperforming and unable to hold their own in the workplace.

Recommendations

Employers should respect the human rights of their employees who have ADHD so that they are given the opportunity to realize their full potential.

In order to do this, they should have at least one person in the company who understands enough about ADHD and comorbidities to be able to recognize the indicators (the characteristics) in employees so that proper interventions can be provided when needed, thereby reducing the economic cost of absenteeism directly or indirectly related to ADHD.

Employers should be aware of the unique strengths and talents that accompany an ADHD diagnosis so they can get the best out of these employees by having them work to their strengths.

Workplace accommodations include access to occupational health services who can conduct appropriate work-place assessments and advise about reasonable adjustments, such as: certain changes to the working environment to limit distractions, flexi-working hours, help with organization and planning and as far as possible, skill applicable placement to enhance productivity and career achievement.

Above all, employers should focus on the strengths of employees with ADHD rather than on their limitations because this will enable them to harness the significant potential of these employees and reap the economic rewards of recognizing and utilizing their unique strengths and talents for the benefit of the company.