

Genentech's Perspective: Transforming the Disability Leave Experience



In June 2021, Lyra Health's Medical Director of Psychiatry, **Smita Das**, MD, PhD, MPH, and Genentech's Lead Strategist for Well-Being, **Deborah Olson**, discussed why it's critical to streamline the disability leave process and provide high-quality care for those who need it most with Lyra's new Clinical Leave Evaluation program. Genentech provided this new benefit to their members starting January 2021.

Here are the key takeaways from the conversation:

5x

likelihood of going on disability leave if struggling with a mental health issue

20M

work days lost per year due to short-term disability leave.

85%

of people suffering with mental health issues do not receive effective care.

1

Mental health disability leave contributes to a lot of missed work days

15 percent of all leave requests at Genentech in 2019 were mental health related, making it the second most common reason for disability leave at the company. On average, employees on mental health leave are out of work for 93 days, versus an average of 62 days for all other leave types.

2

Employees must navigate a difficult system to request leave

The process for applying for leave can be confusing and puts a lot of the onus on the employee in need—often when they're at their most vulnerable. "It may take them months just to reach out for help, and then a few more months to initiate a leave of absence. By that time, basic care can be very, very overwhelming," Olson said.

3

Many physicians are not trained to assist with leave

Genentech saw many employees rely on their primary care physicians for their clinical leave evaluations. These physicians lack the familiarity with mental health and the required leave forms—often delaying leave or compromising employees' compensation while on leave.

4

Employees often don't get the care they need to get better

Employees are not always guaranteed care during their leave. Oftentimes, they have to jump through many hoops to even find accessible care. The lack of a care plan jeopardizes an employee's recovery and ability to return to work healthy.

5

There is greater stigma around mental health leave compared to physical leave

Stigma around mental health and fear of workplace judgment push employees to work past their breaking point. Olson shared, "With an injured back, you don't hesitate to list all your symptoms, and you know what you can't do. With a mental health symptom, there isn't the same level of safety or education, so employees may just resign rather than going through the process to get clinical leave."

6

Employees often struggle in silence, look at your data to see the real story

Olson encouraged benefits leaders to scrutinize their leave data to understand the full picture. She recommends reviewing the number of cases, the average duration of mental health leave claims, and the average time for requests to get approved or denied. Comparing this data to other disability types can illuminate if a certain subpopulation is not receiving the appropriate support, care, and services.

The results:

With Lyra's new Clinical Leave Evaluation program, employees receive a comprehensive 90-minute evaluation from a Lyra provider. In the first few months of partnering with several employers on this program, Lyra is seeing 63 percent of employees on mental health leave return to work in less than eight weeks.

The final word:



Deborah Olson: "If your people are your best asset, why then, when they're struggling the most, would you not have a system in place to help them most effectively?"

Want to learn more?

Watch the [full webinar](#) on-demand.