

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

# NATIONAL PTSD AWARENESS MONTH

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can occur after people experience or witness a life-threatening event, including natural disasters such as fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, serious auto accidents, assault, combat, sexual abuse, or the sudden death of a loved one. People with a history of previous traumatic events or abuse, or who have substance abuse issues, lack of social support, or ongoing stress in their lives may be at higher risk for PTSD.

While it's normal to have stress reactions after a traumatic event, most people recover from their experiences. However, if these reactions go on for weeks and interfere with daily life, people may be diagnosed with PTSD.

There are four types of PTSD symptoms:

- **Reliving the event.** This may take the form of nightmares or flashbacks, when people feel the same fear and distress as when the event took place.
- **Avoiding activities, people, or places that are reminders of the event.** People may find it too difficult to think or talk about the event, and instead bottle up their feelings.
- **Negative changes in beliefs and feelings.** Sometimes these changes cause the person to be easily irritated or angry, or make it difficult for them to trust others and have close relationships.
- **Feeling jumpy or keyed up** resulting in problems concentrating, sleeping, and being easily startled.

People should seek professional help when symptoms last longer than four weeks or cause distress and disrupt their quality of life. The main treatments for people with PTSD are psychotherapy, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), medications, or both. Some people will need to try different treatments to find what works best for them.

