

BRIGHTADVISOR®

# The ROI of Financial Wellness

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How Employee Financial Planning Drives Business Results

# The Business Case for Financial Wellness

Financial stress is not a personal problem that stays at home. It walks through your office doors every morning, sits in on meetings, and quietly erodes the productivity, engagement, and retention that your business depends on. The data is clear: employers who address financial wellness see measurable returns.

72% of employees report experiencing financial stress, making it the number one source of stress in the American workforce, ahead of work, health, and relationships.

Financially stressed employees are 5x more likely to be distracted at work and spend an average of 3+ hours per week dealing with personal financial issues during work hours.

Financial stress costs employers approximately \$500 per employee per year in lost productivity alone, not counting turnover, absenteeism, or healthcare costs.

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## The Hidden Costs of Inaction

When employees struggle financially, the consequences ripple across your organization. These costs rarely appear on a line item but they compound significantly over time.

- Presenteeism: Employees are physically present but mentally distracted by financial worries
- Absenteeism: Stress-related health issues lead to more sick days and unplanned absences
- Turnover: Employees leave for marginal pay increases because they lack a financial plan
- Healthcare claims: Chronic financial stress drives higher rates of anxiety, depression, and cardiovascular issues
- Retirement unreadiness: Employees who cannot retire on time create workforce planning challenges
- 401(k) leakage: Loans and early withdrawals from retirement accounts reduce long-term outcomes

## Measurable Benefits of Financial Wellness Programs

Organizations that invest in employee financial wellness programs consistently report improvements across key workforce metrics. The following table summarizes the outcomes most commonly documented in employer surveys and academic research.

Benefit Area	Typical Improvement	How It Is Measured
Reduced Absenteeism	15-20% fewer unplanned absences	Sick days per employee per year
Increased Retention	25% lower voluntary turnover	Annual turnover rate comparison
Higher Productivity	10-15% improvement in output	Manager assessments and output metrics
401(k) Participation	30-40% increase in enrollment	Plan participation rate before/after
401(k) Contribution Rate	1.5-2.5% higher avg deferral	Average deferral percentage
Lower Healthcare Costs	Reduced stress-related claims	Per-employee healthcare spend trend
Employee Engagement	20-30% improvement in scores	Annual engagement survey results
Recruitment Advantage	Stronger employer brand	Offer acceptance rate and time-to-fill

## What the Research Shows

A 2024 study by the Employee Benefit Research Institute found that employees with access to financial wellness programs were 28% more likely to report high job satisfaction and 33% less likely to be looking for a new job. Financial wellness is not a perk; it is a retention strategy with hard numbers behind it.

Companies with comprehensive financial wellness programs report an average 25% reduction in voluntary turnover. For a 100-employee company with \$60K average salary, that translates to \$150,000-\$300,000 in annual turnover cost savings.

## ROI Calculation Framework

Understanding the financial return requires modeling both the investment and the measurable savings. Below is a framework based on a hypothetical 100-employee company with an average annual salary of \$60,000.

## Investment

Cost Component	Low Estimate	High Estimate	Notes
Financial wellness platform	\$200/employee/yr	\$500/employee/yr	Software, tools, content
One-on-one financial coaching	\$200/employee/yr	\$600/employee/yr	2-4 sessions per year
Group education workshops	\$50/employee/yr	\$200/employee/yr	Quarterly seminars
Program administration	\$50/employee/yr	\$200/employee/yr	Internal coordination
Total Investment	\$500/employee/yr	\$1,500/employee/yr	\$50K-\$150K for 100 employees

## Returns

Return Category	Conservative	Optimistic	Calculation Basis
Reduced turnover savings	\$75,000/yr	\$200,000/yr	5-10 fewer departures at \$15-20K replacement cost
Productivity improvement	\$60,000/yr	\$150,000/yr	10-15% gain on \$600K affected payroll
Lower absenteeism costs	\$15,000/yr	\$40,000/yr	2-3 fewer absent days per affected employee
Reduced healthcare costs	\$10,000/yr	\$30,000/yr	Lower stress-related claims
Total Annual Returns	\$160,000/yr	\$420,000/yr	

Typical ROI: 3:1 to 5:1. For every dollar invested in employee financial wellness, employers can expect \$3 to \$5 in measurable returns through reduced turnover, higher productivity, and lower healthcare costs.

ROI estimates are based on published industry research and averages. Actual results vary based on your workforce demographics, participation rates, existing benefits, and program design.

# Implementation Guide

Launching a financial wellness program does not require a massive budget or a year of planning. Follow these five steps to build a program that delivers results within the first 6-12 months.

1. Assess your workforce needs. Conduct an anonymous financial wellness survey (see our Employee Financial Wellness Survey Template) to understand the specific challenges, stress levels, and interest areas across your team. Data-driven design leads to higher participation.
2. Define your program scope and budget. Start with the highest-impact offerings: one-on-one financial coaching sessions and a core education curriculum covering retirement planning, debt management, and emergency savings. You can expand later based on participation data.
3. Select the right partner. Look for a financial wellness provider that offers fiduciary-level advice, customizable content, both digital and in-person options, and clear reporting on participation and outcomes. Avoid providers who use wellness as a sales funnel for financial products.
4. Launch with leadership support and clear communication. Executive sponsorship is the single strongest predictor of program participation. Have your CEO or leadership team communicate why the company is investing in financial wellness and emphasize confidentiality.
5. Measure, report, and iterate. Track participation rates, survey score changes, 401(k) enrollment and contribution trends, turnover rates, and employee satisfaction. Share results with leadership quarterly and adjust the program based on what the data tells you.

## Quick-Start Timeline

Phase	Timeline	Key Activities
Assessment	Weeks 1-2	Deploy survey, analyze results, identify priorities
Design	Weeks 3-4	Select partner, define offerings, set budget
Launch	Weeks 5-6	Leadership announcement, enrollment, first sessions
Optimize	Months 3-6	Review participation data, adjust offerings, expand
Scale	Months 6-12	

Full program rollout, measure ROI, report to board

BrightWealth® offers turnkey financial wellness programs for employers of all sizes. Our fiduciary advisors provide confidential one-on-one coaching, group workshops, and digital tools that integrate with your existing benefits. Contact us for a complimentary program design consultation.