



Workplace Mental Health: Employee Support Guide





TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	About Us
4	Mental Health Quick Facts
5	Mental Health in the Workplace
6	Reducing Stigma
7	Employee Support
8	Recognizing Burnout
9	Guidance for Reintegration
9	Flexible Work Arrangements
10	Remote Work Options
11	Work-Life Balance
11	Paid Time Off
12	Building Morale
13	Accommodations
14	Consultation
14	Bell Seal



ABOUT US

Mental Health America National

Mental Health America (MHA) - founded in 1909 - is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and promoting the overall mental health of all Americans. Our work is driven by our commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all; early identification and intervention for those at risk; integrated care, services, and supports for those who need it; with recovery as the goal.

Much of our work is guided by the Before Stage 4 (B4Stage4) philosophy - that mental health conditions should be treated long before they reach the most critical points in the disease process. When we think about diseases like cancer or heart disease, we don't wait years to treat them. We start before Stage 4 - we begin with prevention, identify symptoms, and develop a plan of action to reverse and hopefully stop the progression of the disease. Like other diseases, we need to address these symptoms early, identify the underlying disease, and plan an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health.

Mental Health America of Greater Dallas

Mental Health America of Greater Dallas (MHA Dallas) - founded in 1947 - is a local 501c3 affiliate of MHA National. MHA Dallas has helped the Dallas community through improving mental health by focusing on advocacy, education and peer-support for both adolescents and adults.

Advocacy

MHA Dallas is host to the Coalition on Mental Illness (COMI). COMI is comprised of mental health professionals, advocates, elected officials, and other stakeholders who meet monthly to discuss mental health issues and legislative policies. MHA Dallas works with boarding home owners and the city to eradicate abusive boarding homes.

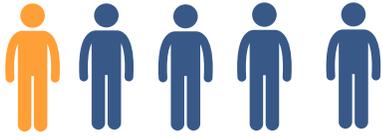
Education

MHA Dallas hosts three programs: WHO (We Help Ourselves), Mind Your Garden, and Mothers & Babies. These programs are focused on anti-victimization, environmental mental health, and prevention of postpartum depression. MHA Dallas also holds three conferences including Adolescent Symposium, Women's Conference, and the Hoarding Conference.

Peer-Support

MHA Dallas provides free, regularly scheduled support groups for individuals struggling with mental illness: Depression Support, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA), Recovery International (RI), Achievement Through The Arts, and more. MHA Dallas also provides mental health first aid training, and online mental health screenings.

MENTAL HEALTH QUICK FACTS



1 in 5 U.S. adults experience a mental health condition each year

- In 2017, among the **46.6 million** adults with mental illness, **57.4%** did not receive mental health services in the past year.
- More than **10 million** adults have an **unmet need** for mental health treatment and that has not declined since 2011.

>10.3 Million

U.S. adults have serious thoughts of suicide.

- In 2013, Individuals Needing Care outnumbered available Mental Health Workers **1,757:1** and that high unmet need continues.
- Women and young adults who became unemployed or income was cut due to the COVID-19 pandemic are more likely to fall into a **high distress** category.
- **Women** across all ages are **more likely** than men to be in the high distress group.

COMBINING MEDICAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES COULD SAVE

**\$37.6-67.8
Billion**

PER YEAR

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE." CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, 10 APR. 2019, WWW.CDC.GOV/WORKPLACEHEALTHPROMOTION/TOOLS-RESOURCES/WORKPLACE-HEALTH/MENTAL-HEALTH/INDEX.HTML.
REINERT, MADDY, ET AL. THE STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN AMERICA 2020. MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA, 2019, PP. 7-50, THE STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN AMERICA 2020.
"PREVENTION OF SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL DISORDERS." SAMHSA.GOV, WWW.SAMHSA.GOV/FIND-HELP/PREVENTION.
MCCANCE-KATZ, ELINORE F. THE NATIONAL SURVEY ON DRUG USE AND HEALTH: 2018. SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, 2018, PP. 2-58, THE NATIONAL SURVEY ON DRUG USE AND HEALTH: 2018.
ALLISON BRADBURY. "SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL ILLNESS PREVENTION." SAMHSA, 30 JAN. 2019, WWW.SAMHSA.GOV/FINDHELP/PREVENTION#.
KEETER, SCOTT. "PEOPLE FINANCIALLY AFFECTED BY CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK ARE EXPERIENCING MORE PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS THAN OTHERS." PEW RESEARCH CENTER, PEW RESEARCH CENTER, 30 MAR. 2020, WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/FACT-TANK/2020/03/30/PEOPLE-FINANCIALLY-AFFECTED-BY-COVID-19-OUTBREAK-ARE-EXPERIENCING-MORE-PSYCHOLOGICAL-DISTRESS-THAN-OTHERS/.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

SUBSTANCE USE & MENTAL ILLNESS COST BUSINESSES

\$113 Billion

ANNUALLY

3rd
Depressions ranks 3rd on workplace problems for employees, following family crisis and stress.



34%

Increase in suicide rates in the workplace from 2000-2016

- **63%** of individuals reported that their workplace stress resulted in a significant impact on their mental and behavioral health.
- More than **77%** of individuals stated that they “Always or Often” spent between 31-40 hours a week distracted at work.

WHAT FACTORS IMPACT EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH?

Workplace Culture

An open and supportive workplace culture that encourages feedback from employees helps decrease work-related stress and enhances employee motivation.

Health Insurance and Other Benefits

For every **\$1** spent on mental health care, a company will receive a **\$4** return on investment.

Wellness Perks and Programs

When more pressing needs that affect well-being are met, incentives focused around physical health and wellness can be better utilized.

Legal Compliance

The foundation of a psychologically safe workplace is inclusion, safety, and support that is communicated to and experienced by all employees.

Executive Leadership

84% of employees expect executive leadership to help shape public conversations on issues ranging from the economy to discrimination.

These statistics are according to studies done by Mental Health America, the CDC, and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

REDUCING STIGMA

Mental illness and mental health are still highly stigmatized, especially in the workplace. One reason employees don't seek help for their mental health concerns is because they fear it will jeopardize their career and reputation. Fortunately, employers can play a role in reducing the stigma of mental health and encouraging employees to seek help when needed.

MHA National and MHA Dallas offer several free resources, including screening tools and public education materials, to help employees better understand mental health and address their own concerns.

How can we reduce the stigma in our workplace?

- Educate managers and staff about mental health by promoting national and local resources, **online screening**, and training. MHA offers an annual Mental Health Month toolkit for the month of May. Companies are welcome to share these materials to promote mental health awareness among employees. Download the latest toolkit **[here](#)**.
- Encourage employees to attend local mental health support groups and connect with individuals in their area who are facing similar concerns. MHA Dallas hosts support groups for depression, anxiety, mood disorders, and more. For more information, please visit our website **[here](#)**.
- Provide Mental Health First Aid training to managers to help them feel better equipped to have a conversation with an employee who is struggling with their mental health.

About Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a course that teaches individuals how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. MHFA gives people the skills they need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis.

- 8-Hour Course
- 3-Year Certification
- Remote Training Option
- Adult and Youth Training
- Research and Evidence-based Program

MHA Dallas offers MHFA training to employers. For more information, please click **[here](#)**.





EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

Is your organization prepared to address the mental health needs of your employees? Along with physical health and safety concerns, many employees are facing stress, anxiety, and other mental health concerns about the impact of the pandemic and work and returning to the workplace.

How can we support employee mental health?

Many people are uncomfortable or unsure on how to have a conversation about mental health in a workplace setting. Nearly all employees have experienced stress or more severe mental health concerns on the job. If you notice that a coworker could use support, here are a few tips on how to begin the conversation with them:

- 1. Educate yourself about general mental health in order to help coworkers.**
You can find this information online at www.mhanational.org.
- 2. Ask appropriate open-ended questions.**
- 3. Actively listen with your complete attention.**
- 4. Resist the urge to think about how you should respond next or offer advice.**
- 5. Recognize their feelings and express your understanding back to them.**
- 6. Relate to your coworker on a personal level.**
- 7. Make sure that you are in a healthy place before offering support to others.**
- 8. Offer MHA's online screenings as a resource.**
- 9. Encourage the employee to use the available resources.**
- 10. If the employee discloses a mental illness, always respect the employee's need for and right to privacy. A person with a mental illness has the same right to be treated with dignity and respect as any other person.**

Remember: No one is expected to be a mental health professional, but everyone can equip themselves with the knowledge on how to best support coworkers and staff. Know when you should reach out to an employee who may be struggling, actively listen with compassion, and direct them to the appropriate resource.

About Online Screening

MHA offers free, anonymous, and confidential online screening tools for depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), alcohol and substance use, and more. After completing their screening, individuals receive immediate results, education, resources, and linkage to affiliates. For more information, please visit screening.mhanational.org.

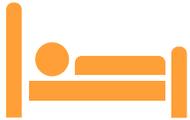
RECOGNIZING BURNOUT

A certain amount of stress is healthy and is intended to help your body react quickly and effectively to a high-pressure situation. However, chronic stress, a state where you're perpetually reacting with the fight or flight response, can pose serious concerns for your physical and mental health and lead to burnout.

What is Burnout?

As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), burnout is a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. Burnout is specific to the workplace.

There are three primary signs of burnout:



Exhaustion

- Restlessness or depleted energy
- Irritability with coworkers or personal relationships



Personal Efficacy

- Lacking confidence in one's ability to succeed
- Doing the bare minimum
- Easily distracted
- Just "going through the motions"



Cynicism

- Withdraw from work activities
- Reduced feelings of empathy and responsibility towards coworkers and work
- Resentment and hatred towards coworkers and work

As a leader or supervisor, discuss strategies on how to mitigate the effects of burnout with your employees. This may include one or more of the following options: taking time off to recover, taking a vacation to recharge, and learning techniques for stress or workload management.

GUIDANCE FOR REINTEGRATION

Large and small employers across all industries quickly adapted to changes brought on by COVID-19.

As an immediate response, many employers transitioned to fully remote or semi-remote work environments, and as state restrictions are lifted, employers and employees alike must face the transition back into the workplace.

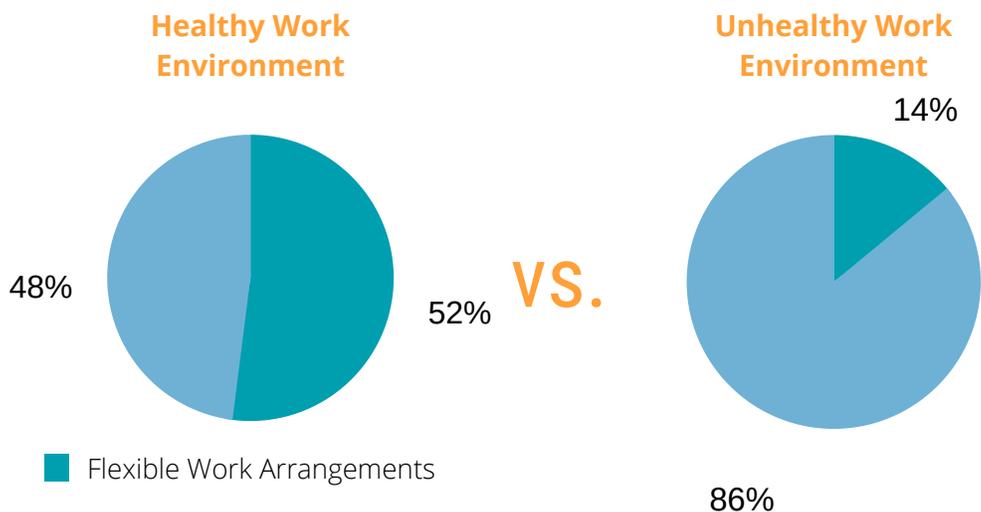
An effective transition plan for workplaces should include guidelines and actions that consider the mental health aspects of returning to work. It is important for employers to understand that the return “back to normal” may not necessarily look like it did before the outbreak of the pandemic.

While remote work is not for everyone, many employees have discovered the benefits of working from home, including increased agency and productivity and reduced stress. In addition, modified schedules have granted employees the freedom to choose when and how they complete their work duties while balancing other responsibilities such as parenting or care-giving. Here are a few ways an organization can transition into the “new normal” with mental health in mind:

Provide Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements are anything outside the standard work schedule (i.e. 9 AM - 5 PM five days a week at the office).

Flexible work arrangements may include earlier or later start/end times, schedules with availability on certain days (e.g. 10 hours a day Monday to Thursday instead of 8 hours a day Monday to Friday), or the ability to work remotely for some or all of the employee’s work week. Remote work is any work that is done off the main site.



Many positions naturally lend themselves to remote and/or flexible work depending on the responsibilities of the position.



REMOTE WORK OPTIONS

Offer Remote Work Alternatives

What can be done for your employees who can't easily work remotely or flexibly? It can be frustrating for employees on the front lines to hear about the flexible work opportunities available to employees at corporate headquarters.

Some jobs—like a retail clerk or a nurse—can't be done from home. Here are some tips on how to implement a fair policy:

- **Provide the right technology for everyone.**
 - Having the technology to support virtual work is essential for all employees who work remotely. This includes teleconference or web meeting capabilities, instant messaging, project management tools, remote access to networks, and more.
- **Have fair rules for who gets opening, closing, and other shifts.**
 - Opening or closing shifts at a restaurant can be desirable or undesirable, depending on how customers interact and how tips are split. Decide how you are going to allocate those shifts. If you use a performance or merit-based system, you may be able to retain quality employees for longer.
- **Consider staggered shifts when possible.**
 - You may notice that you get the most business during a core set of operating hours, like 11 am to 3 pm. If that's the case, not all employees need to start at 9 am; some can take more flexible shifts. If you have two shifts, such as day and night shift, consider adding a floater shift for overlap.
- **Give employees flexibility for mid-day appointments.**
 - This might work well if you have rushes during specific times. Many doctors or therapists are only available for appointments during working hours. You may be able to spare employees for two-hour windows.
- **Rotate holidays and time off fairly.**
 - Don't allow one employee to sign up for the best time off during the summer or during the holidays. Good systems reward longevity and performance but don't make it so the newest employee can't have any holiday at all.
- **Allow employees to telecommute for training, professional development, or administrative tasks.**
 - If your employees have to get certifications or take training courses, or if you budget time for professional development, allow this to be done from remote locations. Don't require that employees who work night shifts to turn around and immediately take a training course during the day.
- **Keep former employees available to cover shifts.**
 - If you keep positive relationships with former employees, you may have a corps of people you can call to cover partial shifts to allow people to work remotely or adjust schedules.



WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Promote Work-Life Balance

Employees face pressures in their jobs on a daily basis, and too much pressure can leave them on the verge of burnout. Immense stress not only affects the employee, but it affects the entire culture of a workplace. When employees are stressed and struggling to balance work and life demands, employers may see reduced productivity and an increase in absenteeism.

Here are a few ways to express that good mental health should be a priority for all employees:

- **Model healthy behaviors.**
 - If leadership makes healthy behaviors a priority, it signals to all employees that it's a priority for the company. If managers take breaks from work to eat lunch or take a short walk, it encourages employees to also take breaks.
- **Share helpful information from the start.**
 - One of the first touch points a company has with each employee is orientation. Educate new employees about company policies and supports that relate to stress management and work-life balance.
- **Keep employees informed of policies.**
 - Make education around stress management and work-life balance an ongoing part of staff communication. Send written or verbal reminders to staff about the resources that support mental health, and encourage employees to use available benefits, such as EAP services or PTO.

Encourage Employees to Use PTO

Employers who offer PTO support the overall mental health of their staff, and employees who use PTO can help reduce burnout and increase productivity and creativity.

Here are a few ways to encourage employees to use their well-deserved PTO:

- **Encourage staff to use a vacation planning tool.**
 - The U.S. Travel Association offers a free, online planning tool that makes it easy. Asking employees to plan ahead encourages them to think about vacations and plan ahead.
- **Openly communicate about PTO.**
 - A memo in your company newsletter or an announcement at staff meetings can help remind your team to use their time off.
- **Lead by example.**
 - By taking time off and encouraging all leaders to do the same, is setting an example of how important PTO is.



BUILDING MORALE

Research on workplace wellness confirms that employers who provide positive recognition and reward contribute to higher levels of employee engagement, quality performance, and workplace stability. However, according to MHA's **Mind the Workplace 2018** report, **75%** of respondents felt that skilled employees were not given proper recognition.

How can we recognize our employees for their efforts?

- **Train managers & team leaders on the importance of recognition.**
 - Only 14% of companies provide resources and tools to managers for recognition, according to TINYpulse.
 - If managers aren't trained on the importance of recognition, they may not recognize talented employees, who might feel resentment toward the company when they are not recognized for their efforts.
 - Encourage managers to give positive feedback as soon as deliverable is met.
- **Add recognition to your staff meetings.**
 - Set aside five minutes for employees to give each other praise.
- **Enlist the help of senior management.**
 - Encourage your C-suite executives to publicly praise and recognize employees for good work.
- **Hold managers and executives accountable.**
 - Include recognition and praise of direct reports in job descriptions for managers.
 - Ask them to provide examples of recognition during the interview.
- **For formal recognition programs, choose criteria.**
 - Tenure shouldn't be the only criteria for employee recognition.
 - Many companies, including Google, even celebrate big failures to encourage employees to think boldly and come up with ideas that may or may not work.
- **Choose an incentive.**
 - What will the recognized employees receive for their work?
 - Examples: Gift Cards, Extra PTO, Cash Bonuses, Premium Parking, Employee of the Month Listing.
- **Establish a time period.**
 - How often do you want to formally recognize employees?
 - Monthly, Quarterly, Annually?
- **Establish a formal process for nominations or consideration.**
 - Who decides which employees are recognized for their efforts?
 - Peers, Managers, Boss?

If your workplace already has a formal recognition program, review the program to make sure it is working for your company. Survey your employees for tips on how to improve your program.



ACCOMMODATIONS

The foundation of a psychologically safe workplace is inclusion, safety, and support that is communicated to and experienced by all employees. Employers should provide employees the knowledge and empowerment to request help when needed and ensure Human Resources and supervisors are equipped to manage these concerns.

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Staff at JAN offers one-on-one guidance on workplace accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related legislation, and self-employment and entrepreneurship options for people with disabilities.

According to JAN, the following is a list of questions to consider when accommodating employees with mental health or substance use disorders:

- What limitations is the employee experiencing?
- How do these limitations affect the employee and the employee's job performance?
- What specific job tasks are problematic as a result of these limitations?
- What accommodations are available to reduce or eliminate these problems? Are all possible resources being used to determine possible accommodations?
- Has the employee been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
- Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the employee to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
- Do supervisors and employees need training?

The following is a list of common accommodations that can help employees manage their mental illness and job responsibilities:

- Flexible Schedule
- Modified Break Schedule
- Rest Area/Private Space
- Support Animal
- Support Person
- Identify and Reduce Triggers

NEXT STEPS

The Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health

To help employees identify mentally healthy workplaces, MHA National created a program to recognize and guide employers who are committed to creating them.

The *Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health* is a certification program created by MHA to evaluate a company's existing policies, practices, and programs in five areas: workplace culture; health insurance and other benefits; wellness perks and programs; legal and ethical compliance; and leadership and community engagement.

The *Bell Seal* recognizes employer advances in workplace mental health by awarding levels of Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. Based on the evaluation results, MHA will provide insight into the areas an employer is doing well and guidance for the areas that need improvement.



By applying for MHA's *Bell Seal*, employers now have the opportunity to learn about, promote and improve upon the overall mental wellness of its workplace - and truly create an environment for its employees that is supportive and psychologically safe.

Apply for your workplace to become Bell Seal certified by completing the [Employer Information Form](#). To learn more, contact Taylor Adams at workplace@mhanational.org or visit mhanational.org/bestemployers.

Consultation with MHA Dallas

- 1. Do you want to invest more in your organization's mental health?**
- 2. Would you like a personalized analysis of your employees' mental health?**

If the answer is yes to the questions above, we would love to connect with you! MHA Dallas has the ability to anonymously screen your employees and give a report back on the state of mental health within your workplace. MHA Dallas will screen and give quarterly status reports to evaluate the changes in workplace climate. MHA Dallas will also provide personalized presentations to meet the needs of your employees, and consult with HR and managers on policies and procedures for mental health.

Flexible Pricing depending on organization size and needs.

To schedule your organization's personal consultation, contact MHA Dallas at mkkohl@mhadallas.org.