

MENTAL HEALTH  
AMERICA'S WORKPLACE  
MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT:



*Walgreens*

# CREATING A CULTURE OF SUPPORT & WELL- BEING



MHANATIONAL.ORG

# FOREWORD

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U.S. workers spend an enormous amount of time on the job, commuting, and thinking about their employment when not at work. It is no wonder that the workplace has a significant impact on our mental health. In fact, 78% of workers in the [Mental Health America 2022 Mind the Workplace](#) report agreed that workplace stress affected their mental health, and 7 in 10 workers found it difficult to concentrate. This stress can negatively affect the personal well-being, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention of workers.

It is time for employers to take a hard look at prioritizing employee mental health.

MHA 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. With the support of Walgreens, MHA has created an easy-to-follow toolkit for all levels of the work environment.

From teaching managers about emotional intelligence to educating your workforce about available resources, to creating a discernably safe and supportive environment for mental well-being – there are ways to support and improve the mental health of your organization's people, no matter if you have 2, 2,000, or 20,000 employees.

In this toolkit, learn how employers and people in leadership can develop or improve upon existing workplace policies that uplift workers, ensure that they are valued and heard, and improve the overall culture of well-being within an organization. Whether this is your first foray into considering mental health in the workplace or it's been part of your playbook for years, you will find resources suited to your specific needs and interests. You will find in each section fact sheets, printable resources, checklists, drop-in articles, and more to help meet your needs. You will learn how to:

- Cultivate supportive people managers;
- Develop an employee-driven mental health strategy;
- Build an impactful mental health employee resource group;
- Provide and educate employees about benefits and resources; and
- Find creative ways to think beyond the norms of basic benefits.

Mental health is health, and all of us – including employees at every level – have mental health. There are many options for employers who intend to create a mentally healthy and positive workplace.

*Individuals concerned about their mental health can take a free and anonymous screen at [mhascreening.org](https://mhascreening.org) to better understand what they are experiencing. These completely confidential screenings will provide individuals with various resources, including guidance on how to talk to someone you trust and how to seek any needed or desired professional support.*

Once you've gone through this toolkit, we invite you to look at MHA's [Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health](#), an annual, national certification program recognizing employers committed to creating mentally healthy workplaces. Please consider applying to be certified.

Together with our partners at Walgreens, we applaud your commitment to creating a mentally healthy and supportive workplace. You are already taking action to improve productivity, efficiency, and retention. More importantly, you are demonstrating to every employee that their well-being matters to you and that you are committed to supporting them.

# FOREWORD

Holly May, EVP and Global CHRO,  
Walgreens Boots Alliance



Walgreens is proud to work with MHA on this important initiative, furthering our longstanding partnership to help meet the growing need for mental health resources and access to care in the communities we serve nationwide.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only exacerbated the U.S. mental health crisis, but it has also forever changed the workplace. As employers, the role we play in supporting the physical and mental health and well-being of our employees has never been more critical.

For leaders, it starts with an unwavering commitment to creating and reinforcing a culture that's defined by authenticity and compassion.

Whether you're managing through your own mental health challenges, supporting someone with theirs – or both – managers need to lead with vulnerability and have access to resources to support themselves and those around them. In addition, employees need to have a trusted relationship with their leaders and know there is a “safe space” for an open dialogue, to ask questions, or to seek help.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution, and the needs of every organization's employee population are different. As part of this collaboration, we look forward to sharing our own journey and providing actionable steps as well as best practices to help more employers foster a healthy and productive workforce.

# PRIORITIZING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Good for Employees & Good for Business



Historically, organizations have addressed mental health and illness in the workplace by **responding to workplace incidents with restrictive policies that often hinder or worsen conditions for employees.** In addition, workplace policies are often crafted to protect the organization, not individuals, from litigation.



Employers that **prioritize mental health can see the positive impact it has on employee retention, engagement, and health care costs.** For every one dollar invested into scaled-up treatment for common mental disorders, there is a four-dollar return on investment in improved health and productivity.<sup>6</sup>

Neither reactive policy nor an organization-first approach completely protects the organization or its workforce for the long term. **MHA aims to shift the paradigm by focusing on workplace policies, practices, and programs rooted in prevention and early intervention and holistically supports workers' mental health and well-being.**

Millennials (35%) and Generation Z (5%) comprise 40% of the U.S. workforce.<sup>7</sup> Research shows that both generations are more accepting and outspoken about mental health and illness in the workplace.<sup>8</sup> **As workforce values shift, employers must adapt to build an engaged workforce and remain competitive in their industry.**

*MHA developed its Workplace Mental Health Toolkit: Creating a Culture of Support and Well-being to help organizations contribute to a mentally healthy workforce by providing leadership, human resources, people managers, and employees with public education and other resources that can be used to improve workplace culture and benefits that support mental health.*

1. Adams, T & Nguyen, T (February 2022). Mind the Workplace 2022 Report: Employer Responsibility to Employer Mental Health. Mental Health America, Alexandria VA.
2. Adams, T, Reinert, M, Fritze, D, & Nguyen, T (March 2021). Mind the Workplace 2021 Report. Mental Health America, Alexandria VA.
3. Ibid.

4. "Mental Illness." National Institute of Mental Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>.
5. "Mental Health in the Workplace." World Health Organization, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/promotion-prevention/mental-health-in-the-workplace>.
6. Ibid.

7. "Generational Differences in the Workplace [Infographic]." Purdue Global, <https://www.purdueglobal.edu/education-partnerships/generational-workforce-differences-infographic/>.
8. Millennials and Generation Z—Making Mental Health at Work - Deloitte. <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/gx-deloitte-2021-mental-health-millennials-white-paper.pdf>.

**4 IN 5**

WORKERS REPORT THAT **WORKPLACE STRESS** AFFECTS THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH **FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COWORKERS.**<sup>1</sup>

**4 IN 5**

WORKERS FEEL **EMOTIONALLY DRAINED** FROM THEIR WORK, AN EARLY **SIGN OF BURNOUT.**<sup>2</sup>

**1 IN 4**

WORKERS ARE EXPERIENCING THE **MORE SEVERE SIGNS OF BURNOUT, INCLUDING REDUCED PERSONAL EFFICACY AND CYNICISM TOWARDS PEERS AND THEIR JOBS.**<sup>3</sup> **CHRONIC WORKPLACE STRESS AND BURNOUT CAN LEAD TO MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IF LEFT UNTREATED.**

**1 IN 5**

WORKERS WILL EXPERIENCE A **MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION** IN A YEAR.<sup>4</sup>

**DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY DISORDERS** COST THE U.S. ECONOMY **\$200 BILLION** IN LOST PRODUCTIVITY ANNUALLY.<sup>5</sup>

# SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

## Cultivate Supportive People Managers

What is a single important action an employer can take to improve employee satisfaction and well-being at work? Invest in developing supportive and emotionally intelligent people managers. Research shows a consistent and strong relationship between managerial styles and employee stress and well-being. However, only 36% of employees feel they can rely on manager support.<sup>1</sup> Employees who do not feel supported by their manager experience increased stress levels and feelings of isolation and job dissatisfaction. Employees also report high rates of absenteeism (33%) and increased mental health concerns (63%).<sup>2</sup> Employers can help promote positive relationships between managers and workers through the following means.

### Encourage fair and effective management practices.

As a first step, employers should establish expectations for how managers check in with employees and foster positive working relationships. Mentally healthy management practices can be integrated into an overall people management strategy, listed in the employee handbook, discussed during management training, and practiced or modeled at all levels of the organization. Managers should consider incorporating the following practices:

- Check in with direct reports regularly on a recurring schedule that works for both parties;
- Evaluate the direct report's workload regularly and assist where possible;
- Set clear and realistic expectations about work responsibilities;
- Be approachable with open-door and flexible policies;
- Understand how employees express signs of acute stress or burnout;
- Provide emotional support to employees;
- Provide employees with autonomy over their work;

- Build trust, respect, and collaboration as part of a manager-employee relationship;
- Ensure that the manager is checking in with themselves and their direct supervisor regularly.

### Provide management training.

Employees who excel in one position may not excel in a managerial position without the proper training and guidance. Effective and supportive people management is a skill set that can be taught through training. Workplaces should invest in management training to ensure employees perform well in their new roles. See the "Mental Health Training Resources" section in the toolkit for suggested training.

### Include shared decision-making in performance evaluations.

Instead of standard performance evaluations, employers can leverage the relationship between a manager and a direct report through shared decision-making or a 360-review process in which multiple stakeholders are providing feedback for improvement. Both the manager and direct report should have the opportunity to give bidirectional feedback and discuss professional goals collaboratively.

### Encourage mentorship.

A mentor should serve as a trusted counselor or guide, provide expertise to less experienced individuals, and build a relationship based on communication. Treating a management position as a mentorship opportunity can help the manager focus on an employee's strengths, build a strong relationship, and help the employee grow professionally. In addition to people managers, board members, members from an alumni association, or peers can also serve as mentors.

### Educate managers about emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to manage your own emotions and understand the emotions of people around you. EQ has five key elements: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. People with high EQ can identify how they are feeling, what those feelings mean, and how those emotions impact their behavior and, in turn, other people. In the workplace, leaders must be self-aware, view things objectively, understand their strengths and weaknesses, be culturally competent and responsive, and act with humility.

**HR, managers, and employees can download the following materials to assist in practicing supportive people management skills:**

- 11 Tips for Talking to an Employee with a Mental Health Concern (Printable Postcard – Side 1)
- Understanding Stress and Burnout (Printable Postcard – Side 2)
- Emotionally Intelligent Manager Do's and Don'ts (Infographic)

### Employer Spotlight: 2021-22 Bell Seal Recipients

EMPLOYER	INDUSTRY	PROGRAM
Faith Technologies Incorporated (FTI)	Construction	FTI's Culture of Care Champions are mental health-trained team members who help communicate and promote FTI's Culture of Care benefits to peers, serve as role models in the workplace, and devote their full attention to peers in need of support.
Health Federation of Philadelphia (HFP)	Public and community health	HFP's Supervisors Learning Collaborative is a peer network of middle managers that provides a forum for self-directed shared learning, peer support, and a "safe space" to share concerns and ideas.
Kearney	Consulting and professional services	Kearney's Mental Health Ambassadors are Mental Health First Aid-certified employees who peers can turn to if they need practical and emotional support at work. Ambassadors also help raise awareness, tackle stigma, encourage more open conversations, and create a sense of community to support mental health.
Kroger	Food Retail	Kroger's Leader Well-being "meeting-in-a-box" experience includes short videos, discussion guides, and probing questions to open up a dialogue on well-being and what actions leaders could take to better foster an environment of support.
Union Bank & Trust	Financial Services	Union Bank & Trust's Emotional Wellness 101 program grew organically from the belief that mental health exists on a spectrum and daily wellness routines benefit from incorporating emotional well-being. The program focuses on setting boundaries, how to be the support instead of the solution for others, and building positive coping mechanisms in daily life.

1. Hellebuyck, Michelle, et al. "Mind the Workplace 2018 Report." Mental Health America, <https://www.mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Mind%20the%20Workplace%20-%20MHA%20Workplace%20Health%20Survey%202017%20FINAL.pdf>.

2. Ibid.

# PRINTABLE MANAGER POSTCARD

## 11 TIPS FOR TALKING TO AN EMPLOYEE WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN

Has an employee ever approached you with a mental health concern? Here are 11 tips to start the conversation.



1. Feel more prepared by educating yourself about mental health concerns at [mhanational.org/MentalHealthInfo](https://mhanational.org/MentalHealthInfo).
2. Ensure you are in a mentally healthy headspace before offering support to others.
3. Ask the employee with a mental health concern appropriate, open-ended questions, such as:
  - “How are you feeling today?”
  - “Why do you think you feel this way?”
  - “How do you feel this might be affecting your work?”
  - “How can I help?”
4. Actively listen with your complete attention on the speaker.
5. Resist thinking about how you should respond next or offer advice or solutions.
6. Validate their experiences and express your understanding back to them.
7. If comfortable and appropriate, relate to them on a personal level and share your own experiences.
8. Refer them to your organization’s resources or online mental health screening at [screening.mhanational.org](https://screening.mhanational.org).
9. Always respect the employee’s need for and right to privacy if they disclose a mental health condition, and be aware of your personal biases against mental health conditions.
10. Know your comfort level when supporting other people. You are not expected to be a mental health professional, but you can still help others by opening the conversation and referring them to the appropriate resources.
11. Educate yourself on the process for asking HR to help with providing accommodations or navigating benefits.

## UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND BURNOUT

A certain amount of stress is healthy and is intended to help your body react quickly and effectively to a high-pressure situation. Employees can learn to manage stress, such as practicing healthy habits and maintaining a healthy life-work balance. However, chronic stress, 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?

The World Health Organization defines burnout as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed and is a condition specific to the workplace.<sup>1</sup> As a people manager, understand, observe, and discuss strategies to reduce burnout risk with your employees. Here are three primary symptoms of burnout to watch for in workers, and potential solutions:

Burnout Symptom	Emotional Exhaustion	Reduced Self-Efficacy	Cynicism
<b>Definition</b>	Feeling emotionally drained, having depleted energy, or feeling restless	Lacking confidence in personal ability to complete tasks or exert control over motivation successfully	Feeling less empathy, more resentful, or even hatred towards work activities or peer interactions
<b>Question(s) to ask yourself or your peer</b>	Am I feeling more irritable toward my peers? Am I frustrated by situations that did not bother me before?	Do I feel like I am performing well? Do I feel like my work meaningfully contributes to my organization? Do I feel like I am stuck in my job?	Do I care less about my efforts? Am I feeling more resentful towards my team or manager?
<b>Potential solution</b>	Take a vacation (or staycation) to rest, recover, and recharge from workplace stressors	Evaluate, adapt, or reduce workload in collaboration with a manager	Consider an adaptation or transition to a new or existing project, team, manager, department, or position

1. “Burn-out an ‘Occupational Phenomenon’: International Classification of Diseases.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>.

# EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT MANAGER DO'S AND DON'TS

High emotional intelligence (EQ), the ability to manage one's emotions and understand the emotions of others, overlaps with strong interpersonal skills, especially in conflict management and communication – crucial skills in the workplace. It's important for people managers to be emotionally self-aware, view conflicts objectively, understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and respond with empathy and humility. Employees who feel understood, appreciated, and valued at work are happier and more productive.<sup>1</sup> Here are several examples of how managers can practice emotionally intelligent interactions with their team.

## SITUATION 1:

A manager and their team are experiencing frequent miscommunications, causing frustration and tension.

**DON'T:** Expect all team members to sync to the manager's communication style or ignore employees' preferences.

**DO:** Learn more about each team member's communication style, from tactical to emotionally driven, to better motivate and support the team.

**EQ-CONSCIOUS CONCLUSION:**  
The manager and team reduce miscommunications and frustration and improve feelings of trust and connection



## SITUATION 2:

The manager feels disappointed about an employee's recent poor performance.

**DON'T:** Scold the employee during a team meeting, adding a personal insult for emphasis.

**DO:** Schedule a one-on-one meeting with the employee to understand their situation better, discuss potential reasons why the employee is performing poorly, and offer support.

**EQ-CONSCIOUS CONCLUSION:**  
The employee feels heard and is willing to improve their performance with the manager's support.



## SITUATION 3:

A high-performing employee needs little instruction to complete high-quality work.

**DON'T:** Ignore the employee's needs to focus on those who need more support.

**DO:** Check in with how the employee feels, ask if they need support, and discuss how they can continue pursuing their personal and professional goals.

**EQ-CONSCIOUS CONCLUSION:**  
The employee feels appreciated, connected, and realigned with their goals.



## SITUATION 4:

An employee asks their manager for more professional and emotional support.

**DON'T:** React defensively, vent your own frustrations, and scold the employee for not saying something sooner.

**DO:** Validate the employee's feelings, discuss how you can support or redistribute the employee's workload, and encourage the employee to take more breaks during the day.

**EQ-CONSCIOUS CONCLUSION:**  
The employee feels supported and more willing to discuss issues with their manager.

## SITUATION 5:

The manager wants to discuss an upcoming project with their employee.

**DON'T:** Ask to speak with the employee at the end of the day with no additional context.

**DO:** Ask the employee to discuss an upcoming project and schedule a meeting time.

**EQ-CONSCIOUS CONCLUSION:**  
The employee feels at ease and better prepared to speak with their manager.



## SITUATION 6:

The manager notices that a new employee is struggling during training.

**DON'T:** Express disappointment and shame them into learning the job responsibilities quicker.

**DO:** Acknowledge that it may take time for the employee to grasp certain job responsibilities, ask for feedback on the training process to discover what gaps exist for the employee, and discuss how you can support those areas

**EQ-CONSCIOUS CONCLUSION:**  
The employee feels motivated, supported, and more comfortable talking to their manager when they need help.

For more information about EQ, visit the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence at [www.ycei.org](http://www.ycei.org)

1. Spatz, Steven. "Why Making Your Employees Feel Valued Is a Good Business Decision." Medium, Mission.org, 17 Aug. 2018, <https://medium.com/the-mission/why-making-your-employees-feel-valued-is-a-good-business-decision-d303a02abbd4>.

# DEVELOP AN EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Workplace culture has a significant impact on employee engagement and well-being. An open workplace culture that fosters feedback-seeking behaviors and promotes managerial support decreases workplace stress and enhances employee motivation. Employees also experience greater job satisfaction and organizational attachment.

Unsupportive workplaces foster psychological distress and contribute to a decline in employee engagement and well-being. People who are most stressed report that they are in organizations where it is safer to remain silent about their stressors. In addition, employees do not feel comfortable providing feedback to improve workplace culture or reporting dishonest or unfair practices to human resources or management.

Fortunately, employers can improve workplace culture by considering employee feedback and changing the policies and practices that impact mental health and well-being. If leadership dedicates the time and resources to accurately measure and assess workplace culture, meaningful and effective change can be made to improve employee engagement and well-being.<sup>1</sup>

Before developing a mental health strategy, employers should consider the following outcomes to create a supportive workplace culture:

1. The employer values, requests, and incorporates employee feedback into proactive policies, practices, and programs.
2. Managers and employees feel comfortable and can make recommendations to improve workplace culture.
3. Managers and employees understand mental health in the context of their work and are aware of and can easily access resources offered by the employer.

**Download the following materials to assess your workforce's needs and develop a responsive mental health strategy:**

- **Workplace Mental Health Survey Items (Fact Sheet)**
- **Example Employee-driven Policy and Program Changes (Fact Sheet)**
- **Develop a Mental Health Strategy with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) in Mind (Fact Sheet)**
- **Mental Health Training Resources (Fact Sheet)**

## Employer Spotlight: 2021-22 Bell Seal Recipients

EMPLOYER	INDUSTRY	PROGRAM
Harris Computer	Technology	To support all aspects of employees' personal, physical, emotional, and financial well-being, Harris created the bi-monthly newsletter, "The Human Resource." The newsletter promotes updates, resources, webinars, podcasts, vendor support, and organization-run "communities" to help educate employees about mental health.
Kearney	Consulting and professional services	Kearney launched a weeklong virtual Global People Care Jam to co-create ideas on building a mentally healthy workplace and fostering a well-being culture. Over 2,000 colleagues from all regions and ranks joined in, collectively submitting more than 300 workplace well-being ideas, which were refined into 10 actionable initiatives currently underway. The Jam highlighted the importance of mental health, and participation confirmed it is a priority for their people.

1. Garman, Susan Sorenson and Keri. "How to Tackle U.S. Employees' Stagnating Engagement." *Gallup.com*, Gallup, 11 May 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/162953/tackle-employees-stagnating-engagement.aspx>.

# WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY ITEMS

Since 2015, Mental Health America (MHA) has conducted ongoing research to understand the positive and negative drivers of employee mental health outcomes. The following survey items had the highest correlations with overall healthy workplace scores. The survey items are categorized by these areas of focus: workplace stress and engagement, mental health and illness, organizational investment, workplace culture, managerial support, and employee empowerment. Survey responses are scored on a 1-6 Likert scale: 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Somewhat Disagree, 4 – Somewhat Agree, 5 – Agree, 6 – Strongly Agree. These survey items are only suggested items and may be redundant or not applicable to your workplace.

## Workplace Stress & Engagement

- Work stress negatively affects my sleep.
- Work stress affects my relationships with friends, family, or coworkers.
- I miss work because of work stress.
- My work stress affects my mental health (e.g., depression or anxiety).
- I engage in unhealthy behaviors (e.g., excessive drinking or crying regularly) to cope with work stress.

## Mental Health and Illness in the Workplace

- I am afraid of getting punished for taking a day off to attend to my mental health.
- My organization provides a safe and supportive environment for employees who live with mental illnesses.
- I would be comfortable asking my manager or human resources for a mental health accommodation if I needed it.
- My organization would support me if I needed to take leave for a mental health concern.

## Organizational Investment

- My organization is invested in their employees' well-being.
- My organization's leadership speaks openly about mental health in my workplace.
- My organization invests in developing supportive managers.
- My organization invests in an inclusive environment where employees of all identities feel valued and represented.

## Workplace Culture

- I feel acknowledged and accepted at work.
- I trust my team or coworkers to support my work activities.
- I tend to work alone because my workplace is unhelpful or hostile.
- It is safer to remain silent about things that need improvement in my workplace.
- My workplace is overly focused on trivial activities (e.g., feeling micromanaged or having bureaucratic policies).
- I find it difficult to concentrate at work.
- I spend time looking for a new position.

## Managerial Support

- My manager cares about my personal well-being.
- My manager provides emotional support to help me manage my stress.
- My manager regularly checks on my workplace needs.
- I receive enough guidance to perform my job well.
- My manager actively encourages me to take time off when I need it.

## Employee Empowerment

- I am aware of what mental health services I can use when I'm struggling at work.
- I would be comfortable using my organization's services for a mental health concern.
- I am comfortable reporting dishonest or unfair practices to human resources or management.
- I am comfortable providing feedback to my manager about their performance.
- I can negotiate my responsibilities and workload with my manager.

# EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN POLICY AND PROGRAMS CHANGES

Creating a mentally healthy workplace requires cross-departmental collaboration and investment from all levels of an organization – transformative change doesn't occur overnight, but it is definitely worth the outcome! In working with MHA's [Bell Seal Recipients](#), MHA identified the six most common policy and program change areas that have proven effective based on employees' direct feedback.<sup>1</sup> Examples are provided for each area.

## 1. INCREASED OR IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCE SUPPORT

- Provided full coverage of mental health counseling visits, regardless of provider or network level
- Provided in- and out-of-network benefits covered at the same co-pay or co-insurance rates
- Implemented \$0 co-pay for unlimited mental health therapy sessions
- Increased telehealth options
- Increased the number of annual Employee Assistance Program (EAP) sessions
- Offered a free virtual 1:1 counseling program
- Hired a full-time behavioral health specialist
- Expanded family-building benefits for the LGBTQIA+ community
- Provided crisis child care or eldercare support

## 2. EVALUATED COMPENSATION EQUITY AND ROLE STRUCTURE

- Implemented performance-based merit increases
- Increased compensation transparency and equity
- Increased minimum wage to reflect the current costs of living
- Restructured roles to fit employees' needs or provide greater clarity and equity

## 3. IMPLEMENTED PERMANENT FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES AND ENHANCED LEAVE POLICIES

- Implemented a four-day work week
- Offered "Flexible Fridays" in which employees take half days off or schedule no meetings
- Implemented a permanent hybrid work environment
- Developed 40+ different schedules for ultimate flexibility
- Implemented a caregiving policy
- Offered paid family leave to care for family members with health conditions
- Implemented floating and organization-wide "Mental Health Days"

## 4. ENCOURAGED EMPLOYEE RESILIENCE AND PROVIDED MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

- Offered small group well-being coaching
- Provided a four-week emotional wellness program
- Provided monetary incentives for reaching personal wellness goals
- Launched a series of learning simulations for Mental Health Month
- Provided Mental Health First Aid training

## 5. SUGGESTED BALANCED APPROACHES TO DAILY INTERACTIONS AND SCHEDULED MEETINGS

- Implemented 45-minute meetings vs. 60-minute meetings
- Suggested "No Meeting Wednesdays" or two-hour calendar blocks to focus on other work responsibilities
- Circulated a "work preferences survey"
- Suggested adding working hours to email signatures

## 6. MAINTAINED CONNECTION AND MITIGATED SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG COLLEAGUES

- Offered in-person and virtual colleague-to-colleague support
- Hosted "Connection Meetings" and virtual happy hours



1. Adams, T (June 2022). "Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health 2022 Brief: 92 Employers Leading the Workplace Mental Health Movement." Mental Health America, <https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/2022-Bell-Seal-Brief-FINAL.pdf>.

# DEVELOP A MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY WITH DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING IN MIND

According to research, employees who experience feelings of inclusion in the workplace are associated with a positive workplace culture and increased employee engagement.<sup>1</sup> Developing a meaningful mental health strategy with diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in mind affects the culture, employees' feelings of confidence and inclusion, and opportunities available to employees with diverse backgrounds.

## HERE ARE FOUR WAYS TO APPROACH YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY WITH DEIB AT ITS CORE:

1.

**Develop a framework based on well-documented practices.** The [Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion](#) (EARN) provides a mental health [toolkit](#) to help employers create the initial framework for a mental health strategy built around the "4 A's": **Awareness, Accommodations, Assistance, and Access.**

- **Awareness:** Build awareness and a supportive workplace culture by conducting mental health training, leading anti-stigma campaigns, and educating employees about benefits and available resources.
- **Accommodations:** Make it simple for employees to request and use reasonable accommodations and other workplace supports, such as adjustments or modifications that enable people with mental health conditions to perform the essential functions of a job efficiently and productively. Train managers on how to respond and process a request for disability accommodations.
- **Assistance:** Promote services available to assist employees, such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), stress management training, or other supports. In addition to increased employee productivity, the benefits of EAPs include reduced medical costs, turnover, and absences.
- **Access:** Ensure access to mental health services by assessing the specific mental health benefits covered by your health insurance providers, including treatment for substance use conditions.

Once you have identified employees' primary needs, establish the goals, action items, and measures for each of the "4 A's" as you develop your mental health strategy. The issues and action items you outline in your mental health strategy will ultimately depend on the needs and capacity of your organization.

## 2.

**Build a diverse workforce.** Weaving diverse populations, including employees with lived experience, into the fabric of an organization should be high on the list of priorities. An organization's leadership and workforce should reflect a diverse community representing identities including, but not limited to, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and those who identify as living with a mental health condition or substance use disorder. Consider the following ideas for recruiting diverse candidates:

- Craft position descriptions with inclusive language and in more than one language. Inclusive language examples include person-centric descriptors, such as using person with a disability vs. physically challenged person; person with a substance use condition vs. addict; person who has been incarcerated vs. convict; persons 65 years and older vs. the elderly.
- Reduce minimum requirements that hinder applicants, such as requiring a high school or college degree for an entry-level position.
- Collaborate with partners, vendors, universities, local nonprofit organizations, and the clients and communities you serve to increase the organization's network and open up a larger pool of candidates.
- Allow hiring managers a longer timeline during the recruitment process to cultivate a more diverse candidate pool.
- Encourage hiring managers to consider how an applicant might be a "job add" rather than a "job fit."
- Offer interviews in more than one language or provide accommodations to applicants during the interview, if needed.
- Train hiring managers about unconscious or implicit biases and provide with clear guidance on how to interview candidates for their strengths and differences.

## 3.

**Create an inclusive workplace culture.** Employees who feel represented and welcomed during the hiring process will be excited to join the organization. But how can an employer retain and ensure new employees enjoy coming to work each day? Look at what already likely exists in your organization: the business model. Depending on the industry and region, the business model is often written in a way that appeals to diverse markets. Do you sell products that are sold internationally? Does the demographics of your clientele or customer base reflect that of the organization's workforce? Think about how the plans described in the business plan can apply to your own workforce and contribute to your organization's diversity goals.

Understand the makeup of your workforce and strategize how to celebrate and embrace a diverse and inclusive workplace with your employees' needs in mind. For example, while efforts made by employees all deserve recognition, highlighting the contributions made by women or people of color over the course of an organization's history, celebrating awareness months, or wearing a symbolic color in solidarity for a cause can contribute to a more inclusive culture.

## 4.

**Have a voice as an organization.** The employer should not only create an environment where all can feel welcome but actively denounces and condemns acts, ideologies, and policies that support or condone institutional systems of oppression. For example, are managers trained about how to speak to staff who are insensitive about mental illness, race, or gender?

For communities who are often marginalized, it's not enough for a workplace to be open and inclusive, but it is also important to actively denounce racism, sexism, xenophobia, anti-LGBTQ bias, and other systems of oppression and those who support those systems. By being accepting of all, an employer is also being accepting of these ideologies. Therefore, an employer is not creating a truly inclusive work environment but bringing individuals who are often marginalized into another dangerous space by accepting all, including their oppressors.

1. Downey, S. N., Werff, L., Thomas, K. M. and Plaut, V. C. (2015), Diversity practices and engagement. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 45: 35-44. doi:10.1111/jasp.12273.

# MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING RESOURCES

This list of trusted partners and resources was developed to help employers identify the appropriate in-person, virtual, recorded, or self-guided mental health training for their workforce.

**Active Minds:** [Active Minds @Work](#) offers simple and actionable tools for the next generation of employees and employers to improve mental health culture in high-performing environments.

**American Psychiatric Association Foundation's (APAF) Center for Workplace Mental Health:** APAF's Center for Workplace Mental Health offers [Notice.Talk.Act. at Work](#), an e-learning training module that supports leaders and managers to understand the impact of mental health on employees and the organization, notice the signs of potential mental health concerns, and be better equipped to act by connecting a person with services and supports.

**Evolving Minds:** Evolving Minds' [Connected Cultures](#) eight-week training program for nonprofit organizations teaches employees how to apply their workplace model, practice resilience skills, and engage in small and large group discussions to build a work culture of care.

**LessLonely.com:** LessLonely is the world's first resource to help lessen loneliness and strengthen connections at work. With a Team Connection Assessment, live workshops for leaders, online courses, consulting services, and science-based connection technology, LessLonely helps build more belonging-based workplaces. With 300+ clients and 50,000+ users, LessLonely is trusted by the world's leading organizations to improve mental health by making people feel fully seen.

**Mental Health America webinars:** Mental Health America offers bi-weekly webinars covering various mental health topics. The presentations offer important information and practical tips on navigating different life stressors, building resiliency, and implementing new well-being programs. Here are three recorded webinars to help you get started:

- [Lessening Loneliness and Boosting Belonging in the Workplace](#)
- [Mental Health for Remote Workers – Supporting Employees and One Another](#)
- [Shaping the Future of Work: Enhancing Mental Health in the Workplace](#)

**Minding Your Mind:** Minding Your Mind offers [Improving Wellness in the Workplace](#), a 90-minute workshop designed to educate adults on basic mental health issues and how they impact daily life in the workplace, at home, and during interactions with others. The instructional piece supports hands-on learning exercises that guide communication techniques when discussing mental health issues and positive coping skills that can alleviate stress in any situation.

**National Council for Mental Wellbeing:** The National Council's [Mental Health First Aid at Work](#) training program teaches participants how to notice and support individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use concern or crisis in a work environment and connect them with the appropriate employee and community resources.

**Oregon Healthy Workforce Center:** The Oregon Healthy Workforce Center's [Safety and Health Improvement Program \(SHIP\)](#) is an evidence-based Total Worker Health® toolkit designed for managers in any industry. SHIP contains online training modules, behavior tracking templates, and team strategies that can help improve employees' safety, health, and well-being.

**Shatterproof:** Shatterproof's [Just Five](#) program is an online, self-paced, mobile enabled program focusing on increasing awareness, reducing stigma, and sharing information about addiction prevention and treatment. Just Five includes six five-minute learning experiences. Lessons combine animated and expert videos, interactive learning, and supplemental materials.

**Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Foundation and Psych Hub:** The SHRM Foundation and Psych Hub offer a [Workplace Mental Health Ally Certificate](#) that equips HR professionals and people managers to understand critical mental health topics and identify appropriate approaches to help.

**University of Colorado's Center for Health, Work & Environment:** In this free, 30-minute [Mental Health in the Workplace online training](#) course, participants will learn how to address workplace mental health. The course offers research-based outcomes, video testimonials, and interactive activities to understand how individuals can play an active role in supporting the mental health of workers.

# BUILD AN IMPACTFUL MENTAL HEALTH EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP

A mental health employee resource group (ERG) is an opportunity for employees passionate about mental health to volunteer for a leadership position that lets them represent their colleagues to leadership. If you want to change how your workplace addresses mental health, consider establishing a mental health team, taskforce, workgroup, or ERG to identify and address concerns with workplace culture and promote mental health awareness, education, and available resources to peers. The team should include members with differing perspectives in the workplace, such as managers, front-line workers, HR, executive leadership, and the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) coordinator. Smaller employers may need to designate only one person to be a wellness champion or ambassador.

Leadership can support a developing mental health ERG by providing the following guidance and resources:

- Sponsoring or participating in the mental health ERG;
- Providing a budget to cover the expenses of hosting wellness events, sharing digital and printable public education materials, or offering mental health training and workshops;
- Allocating a specific number of work hours for ERG members to attend to the group's activities;
- Establishing a clear and accessible procedure by which the ERG can provide feedback to upper management about findings or suggestions; and
- Routinely following up about changes that can or will be made based on feedback from the ERG.

If you are starting your own group or participating in an existing mental health ERG, you can download the following materials to help: (1) build your case to leadership on why workplace mental health is important; (2) plan your calendar year with mental health observances in mind; (3) learn tips on how to plan wellness events; (4) spread mental health awareness with an internal email or e-newsletter article; and (5) encourage employees to take an anonymous and confidential online mental health screening with digital and printable posters and postcards.

**All materials can be downloaded as one toolkit or as individual items here:**

- **Building the Case for Workplace Mental Health (Sample Case for Support Letter to Leadership)**
- **2023 National Mental Health Awareness Observances (Calendar)**
- **12 Tips for Planning a Wellness Event (Fact Sheet)**
- **Spread Mental Health Awareness among Employees (Drop-in Article)**
- **Poster with Screening URL Link & QR Code (Printable Poster)**
- **Postcard with Screening URL Link & QR Code (Printable Postcard)**

## Employer Spotlight: 2021-22 Bell Seal Recipients

EMPLOYER	INDUSTRY	PROGRAM
Cengage Group	Educational technology and publishing	Cengage Group's Mental Health Alliance ERG educates employees about and destigmatizes mental health, fosters connection around holistic health and wellness topics, and strengthens their commitment to diversity, inclusion, and conscious workplace culture.
ConvergeOne	Technology and telecommunications	ConvergeOne's Team Resource Groups include executive sponsors and leaders who volunteer their time, open their minds, and participate in their selected groups. Leaders listen, lead, foster connection and support beyond the workplace, and encourage each team member to find their place, live their purpose, and reach their full potential.
Faith Technologies Incorporated (FTI)	Construction	FTI's Workplace Culture Task Force consists of leaders passionate about supporting the organization's overall culture, including keeping team members' mental health top of mind, encouraging respect and inclusion within their workplace, and fostering a supportive, caring, and safe environment without fear of being bullied or harassed. Respect and inclusion within their workplace, and fostering a supportive, caring, and safe environment without fear of being bullied or harassed.
Hubbell	Manufacturing	In celebration of World Mental Health Day in October, Hubbell created a World Mental Health Day Toolkit. The toolkit offered onsite activity ideas, talking points, mental health fact sheets, printable posters, mental health worksheet activities, and organization resources.
Kearney	Consulting and professional services	Kearney's Global People Care Team develops and advances global initiatives and projects related to mental health, well-being, employee engagement, and culture while supporting regional and local teams on these topics.

# BUILDING THE CASE FOR WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

## Sample Case for Support Letter to Leadership

### Purpose

The employees of [Organization] seek permission, support, and an annual budget of [proposed amount] to establish and grow a mental health employee resource group (ERG) [or designate a mental health ambassador] to improve our workforce's mental health and well-being.

### Background

Mental health conditions are the leading cause of disability in the workplace and result in \$200 billion in lost productivity each year in the U.S. alone.<sup>1</sup> Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) have traditionally been the primary resource for mental health services in the workplace, but on average, less than 5% of employees use these services.<sup>2</sup> [Organization] can estimate its cost of mental health conditions in the workplace using the American Psychological Association Foundation's [Mental Health Cost Calculators](#).

One in 5 employees will experience a mental health condition each year,<sup>3</sup> but provided with the appropriate support, all employees can benefit from a psychologically safe workplace. Employers who value and prioritize mental health can see its positive impact on employee retention, engagement, and health care costs. For every dollar invested into scaled-up treatment for common mental health conditions, there is a \$4 return on investment in improved health and productivity.<sup>4</sup>

### Proposed Activities

The [Organization]'s mental health ERG [or designated mental health ambassador] seek(s) to improve the workforce's mental health and well-being by participating in one or more of the following proposed activities:

- Serve as the liaison between staff and leadership to identify employee needs, communicate feedback to leadership, and provide input on policy or programs changes that impact well-being;
- Educate our workforce about mental health and [Organization]'s available resources; and
- Participate in MHA's [Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health](#) national employer certification program to benchmark and celebrate our workplace mental health efforts.

### Leadership Support

Research shows that leaders that adopt an engaging leadership style, and understand their employees as well as their clients, will drive engagement and productivity.<sup>5</sup> Leadership can demonstrate its commitment to a mentally healthy workplace by providing the following guidance and resources, including but not limited to:

- Sponsoring or participating in the mental health ERG or designating a mental health ambassador;
- Allocating a specific number of work hours for ERG members to attend to the group's activities;
- Providing a budget to cover the expenses of hosting wellness events, sharing digital and printable public education materials, or offering mental health training and workshops;
- Establishing a clear and accessible procedure by which the ERG can provide feedback to upper management about findings or suggestions; and
- Routinely following up about changes that can or will be made based on feedback from the ERG.

### Organizational Impact

Both employers and employees receive a host of benefits from a workplace that supports mental health. Employees are happier, more productive, and more loyal. Employers attract and retain employees and, ultimately, improve overall operations. By supporting a mental health ERG [or designating a mental health ambassador], [Organization]'s leadership can demonstrate its commitment to its workforce and aspire to be a leader in the growing workplace mental health movement.

# 2023 NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH OBSERVANCES

MHA developed the following calendar to help employees navigate national (and international) mental health observances for 2023. Consider choosing one observance every one to two months to celebrate on social media, in an e-newsletter, or an internal email. Each observance includes one to two related resources that can be easily shared with staff and communities. We also included national observances for various populations. Many factors, including chronic health conditions and systemic “-isms,” contribute to mental health concerns, especially for the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and LGBTQIA+ communities.

MONTH	DATES	NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH OBSERVANCE	SUGGESTED RESOURCES
<b>JAN</b>	All Month	Mental Wellness Month	<a href="#">Live Mentally Healthy</a>
	All Month	American Heart Month	<a href="#">Co-occurring: Mental Health and Chronic Illness</a>
<b>FEB</b>	All Month	Black History Month	<a href="#">Black History Month</a> <a href="#">Black And African American Communities and Mental Health</a>
	20 - 26	National Eating Disorders Awareness Week	<a href="#">Eating Disorders Information &amp; Resources</a>
	13 - 19	Brain Awareness Week	
<b>MAR</b>	20 - 26	National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week	<a href="#">Addiction/Substance Use Information &amp; Resources</a>
	20 - 24	LGBT Health Awareness Week	<a href="#">LGBTQ+ Communities and Mental Health</a>
	12 - 18	National Sleep Awareness Week	<a href="#">Get Enough Sleep</a>
	17	World Sleep Day	
	1	Self-Injury Awareness Day	<a href="#">Self-Injury Information &amp; Resources</a>
	30	World Bipolar Day	<a href="#">Bipolar Disorder Information &amp; Resources</a>
<b>APR</b>	All Month	BIPOC Health Month	<a href="#">BIPOC Mental Health Toolkit</a>
	All Month	Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month	<a href="#">Sexual Assault and Mental Health</a>
	All Month	Alcohol Awareness Month	<a href="#">Addiction Screening</a>
	6	National Alcohol Screening Day	
18 - 24	Volunteer Week		
<b>MAY</b>	All Month	National Mental Health Awareness Month	<a href="#">Mental Health Month Toolkit</a>
	All Month	Women's Health Month	
	All Month	Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month	<a href="#">AAPI Communities and Mental Health Resources</a>
	1 - 7	Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week	<a href="#">Maternal Mental Health</a>

MONTH	DATES	NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH OBSERVANCE	SUGGESTED RESOURCES
JUN	All Month 27	National PTSD Awareness Month National PTSD Awareness Day	<a href="#">PTSD Information &amp; Resources</a> <a href="#">PTSD Screening</a>
	All Month 12 - 18	Men's Health Month National Men's Health Week	<a href="#">Men's Health Month</a>
	All Month 7 - 14	Pride Month Multiracial Heritage Week	<a href="#">Pride and Mental Health</a>
	8 - 10	MHA's Annual Conference	<a href="#">MHA's Annual Conference</a>
	21	International Day of Yoga	<a href="#">Yoga</a>
	JUL	All Month	BIPOC Health Month
All Month		Disability Pride Month	
26		National Disability Independence Day	
24		International Self-Care Day	
AUG	All Month	Back-to-School Season	<a href="#">Back to School Toolkit</a>
SEP	All Month 10 - 16	National Suicide Prevention Month National Suicide Prevention Week	<a href="#">Suicide Information &amp; Resources</a> <a href="#">Suicide Prevention</a>
	10	World Suicide Prevention Day	
	All Month	National Recovery Month	<a href="#">Recovery Support</a>
OCT	All Month	Hispanic Heritage Month (9/15-10/15)	<a href="#">Latinx/Hispanic Communities and Mental Health</a>
	All Month	ADHD Awareness Month	<a href="#">ADHD Information &amp; Resources</a> <a href="#">ADHD Screening</a>
	All Month	Depression Awareness Month	<a href="#">Depression Information &amp; Resources</a>
	5	National Depression Screening Day	<a href="#">Depression Screening</a>
	1 - 7	Mental Illness Awareness Week	<a href="#">Mental Illness Awareness Week</a>
	8 - 14	OCD Awareness Week	<a href="#">OCD Information &amp; Resources</a>
	10	World Mental Health Day	
	11	National Coming Out Day	
19	Global Peer Support Day	<a href="#">I Am Not Alone</a>	
NOV	All Month	National Family Caregivers Month	<a href="#">National Family Caregivers Toolkit</a>
	All Month	Native American Heritage Month	<a href="#">Native and Indigenous Communities and Mental Health Resources</a>
	13 - 19	Transgender Awareness Week	<a href="#">LGBTQ+ Communities and Mental Health</a>
	1	International Stress Awareness Day	<a href="#">Stress Information &amp; Resources</a>
	11	Veterans Day	<a href="#">Military Mental Health</a>
	18	International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day	<a href="#">Bereavement And Grief</a>
DEC	All Month	Holiday Season	
	3	International Day of Persons with Disabilities	<a href="#">Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) Information &amp; Resources</a>



# 12 TIPS FOR PLANNING A WELLNESS EVENT

Whether your organization is large or small, all employers have the opportunity to reduce stigma and educate employees about mental health, benefits, and available resources by hosting mental health events or activities. Here are 12 tips for planning your next mental health event.

## 1. START SMALL.

If your organization already hosts annual events for employees, choose an event that best aligns with wellness and incorporate mental health topics or activities, such as hosting a stress management session or encouraging employees to take a [mental health screening](#).

## 2. START WITH RESOURCES YOU ALREADY HAVE.

If your organization has a mental health employee resource group or task force, ask if they would be interested in brainstorming and planning the event.

## 3. THINK ABOUT THE THEME.

Choose a topic or theme for the event to help your organization decide what activities and partners should be included in the planning process. For example, your organization can host a “Stress Less” event with activities such as yoga and meditation and partners specializing in stress management or life-work balance.

## 4. THINK ABOUT TIMING.

Pick a date that aligns with mental health awareness months, for example [Mental Health Month](#) (May), Pride Month or Men’s Health Month (June), [BIPOC Mental Health Month](#) (July), or Suicide Prevention Month (September). To help spread the word about your event, MHA develops several toolkits per year to help promote mental health awareness and information available to the public at no cost.

## 5. PREPARE A BUDGET.

The amount of financial support an employer can dedicate to an event varies greatly across organizational size and industry. However, planning a realistic budget and getting creative with resources can lead to a successful event. Leverage existing partnerships with local health-related groups your organization collaborates or volunteers with by asking them to participate as vendors or resources for employees.

## 6. TAKE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO HEALTH.

Mental health is still stigmatized in professional settings, and employees may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the topic altogether. Introduce mental health slowly by incorporating wellness activities such as yoga, meditation, or Zumba into your event. Explain the connection between physical and mental health to participants and why it is important to treat health holistically.

## 7. GET INSPIRATION FROM YOUR EMPLOYEES.

Survey employees on their health interests and hobbies that help them manage their stress. Employees may even volunteer their time to host a simple exercise, healthy cooking demonstration, or knitting for beginners.

## 8. MARKET YOUR EVENT.

When promoting the event, keep your messaging and brand consistent. This event could be the activity employees look forward to attending every year.

## 9. OFFER SCREENING ON SITE.

An easy way to get your employees to start thinking about their mental health is to offer free, anonymous, and confidential [mental health screening](#) at your event. After answering 10 to 15 questions (depending on the mental health concern), employees will receive immediate results and access to the next steps.

## 10. PROMOTE YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) AND BENEFITS.

Have a representative from your EAP or HR table explain the services or benefits available to employees at the event.

## 11. FEED TWO BIRDS WITH ONE SCONE.

Use the event as an opportunity to host seminars or training on how to support a coworker, how to manage stress, or how emotional intelligence can help people managers.

## 12. ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEES TO ATTEND OR VOLUNTEER AT EVENTS HOSTED BY A LOCAL MHA AFFILIATE.

Can’t host your own event? Look for one in your community. Also, [MHA’s Annual Conference](#) brings together affiliates, consumers, family members, and advocates from across the country to talk about important and emerging mental health issues each year.

# SPREAD MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AMONG EMPLOYEES

## Drop-in Article

From uncertainty to new working environments, the workforce has seen many new challenges over the past few years. These changes can bring stress, anxiety, and fear, along with new opportunities to reshape systems to be more considerate of personal well-being in the workforce.

To that end, [Organization] would like to reiterate that we care about the mental health of our employees and are taking steps to translate that concern into action. Beginning [Effective Date], [Organization] will be:

- [Insert organization-specific examples here, e.g., reduced co-pay for mental health visits.]
- Example 2
- Example 3

More and more people are discussing their mental health in the open and understanding that it's just as important as physical health. There are ways everyone from all levels of a workplace can improve both their own and their coworkers' experiences while on the job. Take time to look at what benefits are currently offered by your organization, and, if in a leadership role, consider how to improve or spread the word about them.

As employees, we encourage you to:

- Join the Mental Health Employee Resource Group. Please contact [Contact Name] at [Contact Email] for more information about how to get involved.
  - Learn more about mental health by [Insert examples, e.g., visiting [www.mhanational.org](http://www.mhanational.org), reading our monthly employee newsletter, participating in lunch and learn events being organized by HR, etc.].
  - Take a mental health screen at [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org) to assess your mental health quickly and confidentially.
  - Call 988 if you are in a mental health crisis and need to speak with someone immediately.
- Championing workplace mental health is an evolving journey. However, investing in your well-being remains a firm commitment for the leadership team, and we appreciate the trust you have placed in us to continue transforming our work culture.

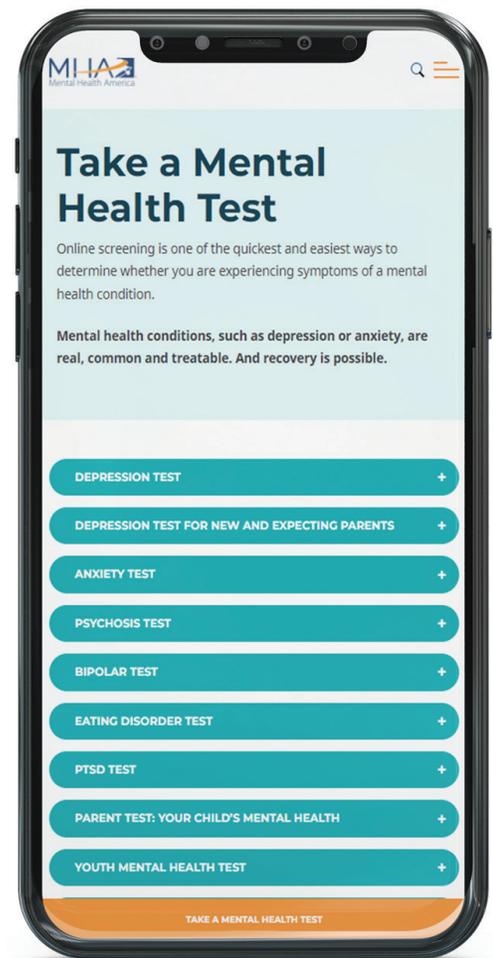
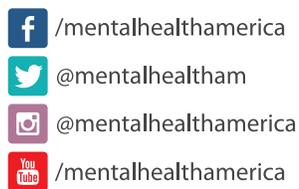
If you have questions about our benefits and programs or would like more information about how to get involved with [Organization]'s workplace mental health efforts, please contact [Contact Name] at [Contact Email].

# PRINTABLE SCREENING POSTER

IS IT STRESS AND BURNOUT,  
OR ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION?

THE SIGNS ARE SOMETIMES SIMILAR.

TAKE A SCREEN AT MHASCREENING.ORG.  
IT'S A QUICK, FREE, AND PRIVATE WAY  
TO ASSESS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH.

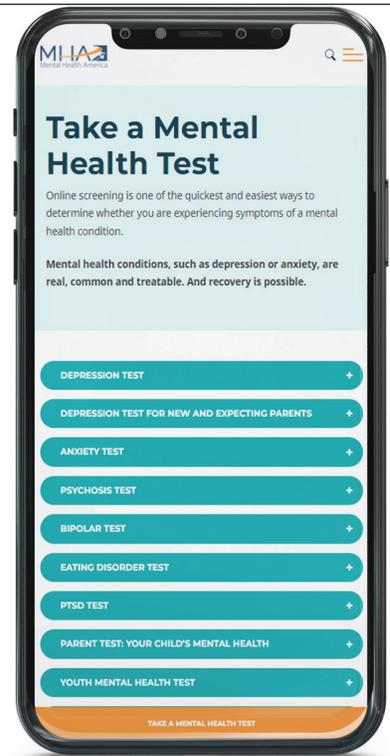


# PRINTABLE SCREENING POSTCARD

IS IT STRESS AND BURNOUT,  
OR ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION?

THE SIGNS ARE SOMETIMES SIMILAR.

TAKE A SCREEN AT [MHASCREENING.ORG](https://mhascreening.org).  
IT'S A QUICK, FREE, AND PRIVATE WAY  
TO ASSESS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH.



## ARE YOU IN CRISIS?

Trained crisis counselors are available to help 24/7.  
Call 988 or text MHA to 741741 to talk to someone immediately.

# BENEFITS AND RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

## Provide and Educate Employees About Benefits

An employer can take concrete steps to ensure that employees understand and can access quality health care and other benefits. According to a survey, health insurance is the most important employee benefit.<sup>1</sup> Not only is health care important to employees, but employers who invest in health care understand its financial and health implications on rates of absenteeism and presenteeism. According to research, the cost of employee absences, planned and unplanned per year, could be as much as 36% of payroll, more than twice the cost of health care.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, employees who have access to affordable and comprehensive health insurance are far less likely to miss work and are more likely to be productive when at work.<sup>3</sup> Simply put, investing in employee health is better for business.

At a minimum, the employer-sponsored health care and disability benefits offered should cover mental health and substance use services. Health care options offered to employees should include a sizable number of in-network behavioral health providers and cover various mental health services. Employers should also educate employees about their health care options and the services offered by their Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other resources.

In addition to health care, an employer can support its workforce by providing paid time off (PTO). Employers who offer and encourage PTO usage allow employees to care for themselves or a sick family member, prevent burnout from a demanding workload, and reduce rates of presenteeism – the hidden cost of reduced productivity.<sup>4</sup>

Employers that are invested in employee mental health should offer benefits with the following outcomes in mind:

- Employees and their families have access to affordable, high-quality, and easy-to-understand health insurance covering mental health and substance use services at parity with physical health services.
- The employer offers a robust and accessible EAP that supplements, not replaces, the employer's efforts to support employee mental health.
- Employers measure the utilization of mental health benefits, including insurance, PTO, disability benefits, and EAP.
- Employees are provided PTO and are actively encouraged to use it for vacation, sick days, holidays, or to care for a family member with a physical or mental health condition.
- The employer offers paid disability benefits and adequate mental illness and substance use recovery leave.

**Download the following materials to help improve existing mental health offerings and educate employees about available benefits and resources:**

- **19 Questions to Ask Your Benefits Broker and EAP (Checklist)**
- **Introducing Mental Health During New Hire Orientation (Checklist)**
- **Educate Employees about Benefits that Support Mental Health (Internal Email Template)**
- **Encourage Employees to Take Time Off (Internal Email Template)**
- **Workplace Mental Health Solutions for Small Employers (Fact Sheet)**

## Employer Spotlight: 2021-22 Bell Seal Recipients

EMPLOYER	INDUSTRY	PROGRAM
Alkermes	Biopharmaceuticals	Alkermes waives copays for behavioral health visits for covered family members on their health plan to support employees and their family members' mental health care.
Edward-Elmhurst Health (EEH)	Health care	EEH's Employee Support Coordinators (ESC) provide direct staff support while prioritizing employee well-being and emotional health in the workplace. ESCs provide confidential emotional support sessions while connecting employees with resources and referrals within the community, including their Employee Assistance Program.
Happy Endings Hospitality (HEH)	Food and beverage	During the COVID-19 pandemic, HEH started a program to link its team members to online therapists and encouraged all 170 staff to utilize their "Mental Wealth" benefit, allowing 50% of therapy session costs to be reimbursed (up to \$200 per month).
Mental Health Minnesota	Nonprofit	As a small non-profit employer, Mental Health Minnesota provides its workforce, which includes many part-time employees, additional pay to help cover the cost of premiums offered through the exchange. As a result, their workers can obtain better health insurance with lower deductibles and take advantage of certain tax credits.
NewYork-Presbyterian	Health care	In 2022, NewYork-Presbyterian added a paid day off for employees to use as their "Cultural Heritage Day," a day that is culturally significant to the employee. NewYork-Presbyterian fosters an environment where everyone who comes to them for care and every employee feels a true sense of belonging.
NYU Langone Health	Health care	At the end of each calendar year, NYU Langone Health rewards eligible employees who don't use all of their sick time by allowing them to convert all or some of their prior year's unused sick allowance into "Bonus Vacation Hours" at the rate of two to one (two sick days equal to one bonus vacation day).

1. Chamberlain, Andrew, et al. "Which Benefits Drive Employee Satisfaction? Glassdoor Research." Glassdoor Economic Research, [www.glassdoor.com/research/studies/benefits-drive-employee-satisfaction/](http://www.glassdoor.com/research/studies/benefits-drive-employee-satisfaction/).
2. Hastings, Rebecca R. "Expert: Cost of Absenteeism Rivals Health Care." SHRM, SHRM, 11 Apr. 2018, [www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/expertcostof.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/expertcostof.aspx).
3. Lofland, Jennifer H, and Kevin D Frick. "Effect of Health Insurance on Workplace Absenteeism in the U.S. Workforce." Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Jan. 2006, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16404205](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16404205).
4. Levin-Epstein, Jodie. "Presenteeism and Paid Sick Days." Clasp.org, Center for Law and Social Policy, 28 Feb. 2005, [www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/files/0212.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/files/0212.pdf).

# 19 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR BENEFITS BROKER AND EAP

According to a 2019 brief, more than half of people living in the U.S. under age 65 – about 158 million people – get their health insurance through an employer.<sup>1</sup> For workers and families who rely on employer-sponsored health care, the employer should ensure that their employees receive adequate care and other benefits. Here are 19 questions you should be asking your insurance provider, benefits broker, third party administrator (TPA), or Employee Assistance Program (EAP):



1. Bureau, US Census. "Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2019." Census.gov, 8 Oct. 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2020/demo/p60-271.html>.

## INSURANCE PROVIDER OR BENEFITS BROKER

1. Do our health plans have the same benefits and coverage limits for physical and mental health conditions?
2. What is the percentage of behavioral health providers that are in-network and currently accepting new patients for the health insurance plans we offer?
3. For the health insurance plans we offer, do you provide a comprehensive and user-friendly online behavioral health directory with a selection tool to help users access specific services?
4. Can you provide us with an up-to-date, accurate, and complete provider directory of mental health professionals who are accepting new patients?
5. Do our health plans cover a variety of mental health services, including home-based services or different types of outpatient care – for example, peer services?
6. Do our health plans cover effective prescription medications for mental health conditions at a level that encourages appropriate regular use?
7. Do our health plans encourage mental health and stress management through a comprehensive wellness and health promotions program?
8. Do our health plans track disability claims for mental health conditions and provide case management services to facilitate a timely return to work?
9. Do our health plans provide access to behavioral health providers in after-hours emergencies?
10. How quickly can an employee or dependent get an appointment in an emergency?
11. Are the health insurance plans we offer accredited through NCQA MBHA or External Mental Health Parity Compliance Audit?
12. Do our health plans reimburse for collaborative care in primary care?
13. Do our health plans offer a care navigator to help our EAP or employee access timely in-network qualified providers?

## EAP PROVIDER

14. How can your program be an extension of our workplace culture rather than a separate entity?
15. How can we work together to promote and educate our employees about the services you offer?
16. Can you describe the experience of an employee who first interacts with your services until they no longer need them?
17. Do you provide regular and confidential utilization data, and can you make recommendations for how to apply what we learn from the data?
18. How do you define utilization? Does utilization include web hits and event participation in addition to actual cases and consultations?
19. What resources can you provide to our supervisors?

# INTRODUCING MENTAL HEALTH DURING NEW HIRE ORIENTATION

Orientation is a newly hired employee's first impression of the organization's mission, values, and culture. The employee is often presented with a tedious checklist of documents to sign and policies to review. However, orientation is an important opportunity to clearly communicate the organization's values around mental health and well-being. Here is a checklist to help you incorporate mental health as part of new hire orientation:

- **Call attention to mental health and substance use care in your health care offerings.**

Make it a point to describe the mental health and substance use services available under your organization's health care plans.

- **Explicitly mention what mental health services your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers.**

An EAP provides a range of services to employees, including financial planning and legal assistance, so mention that mental health services are available, too.

- **Include mental health resources in your employee handbook.**

Mental health resources could be general mental health information, online mental health screenings, or locating a local support group for a particular mental health concern. This toolkit includes an external resource list to help you identify resources most relevant to your workforce.

- **Consider adding mental health crisis resources to employee identification cards.**

Resources could include the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988lifeline.org), Crisis Text Line (crisistextline.org), or EAP contact information.

- **Pair a new employee with a "buddy."**

Implementing a new hire "buddy system" is a cost-effective, widely applicable method to help new employees navigate informal social and workplace cultural norms.<sup>1</sup>

- **Ensure HR and people managers check in regularly with new employees.**

Staff should provide ongoing emotional support in addition to job training in the first couple of months of an employee's start date.

1. "Real World Solutions for Systems Change." Recruitment & Retention - Employee Orientation and Onboarding [2.4.0], <http://toolkit.ahpnet.com/Orientation-Onboarding-Intervention-Strategies/Employee-Orientation-and-Onboarding.aspx>.

# EDUCATE EMPLOYEES ABOUT BENEFITS THAT SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH

## Internal Email Template

We thank you for being a valued employee at [Organization]. We are committed to providing you benefits and resources that support your and your family's mental health and well-being. All benefits are listed in the employee handbook or provided during new hire orientation. As a reminder, our benefits include:

*[The listed benefits are examples; please edit this email to reflect your organization's offerings.]*

- **Health Insurance.** [Organization] provides the following plan(s) to employees [and their families] with the following costs to employees through [Vendor]. Attached, you will find a Summary of Benefits and Coverage (SBC), an easy-to-read guide to copays, deductibles, and out-of-pocket maximums. Open enrollment for all employees takes place during [Open Enrollment Period].
  - Plan Name A, Plan Type (ex. HDHP, HMO, POS, PPO) Monthly Cost for Employee Premium, Monthly Cost for Employee + Spouse Premium, Monthly Cost for Employee + Children Premium, Monthly Cost for Employee + Family Premium
  - Plan Name B, Plan Type, Monthly Premiums
  - Plan Name C, Plan Type, Monthly Premiums
- **Short-term or Long-term Disability.** [Organization] has short- and long-term disability plans that provide salary coverage to you if you are out for an extended period on disability. If you plan to be out for a long time, or if a sudden health crisis occurs, contact your benefits team about how the application process works. A physician and [Organization] will need to file documents certifying disability. *[Share whether your organization pays for benefits and coverage. Also, share if your plan has limits on mental health and substance use benefits.]*
- **Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).** [Organization] complies with all U.S. laws concerning FMLA. FMLA allows employees to take unpaid leave for covered individual and family medical needs. Contact your benefits team if you have any questions about whether your or your family's medical needs qualify for FMLA. For more information, visit the U.S. DOL's FMLA FAQ section.
- **Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** [Organization] offers an EAP through [Vendor]. The EAP provides a wide range of services to support employees. In addition to counseling sessions, our EAP can also help with [financial planning, nutrition, and other support]. This service is provided at no cost to the employee. *(Tip: Have an organizational leader endorse the EAP by sharing their personal experience with the system to improve EAP usage.)*
- **Paid Time Off (PTO).** [Organization] provides the following paid time off benefits: Holidays, vacation leave, sick leave, personal leave, mental health days, floating holidays, parental leave, and other types of leave (e.g., bereavement, jury duty, election days). *[For each category you provide, share the total number of hours or days an employee can use and whether all employees are entitled to holidays (e.g., Line vs. management staff).]*
- **Flexible Work Schedule.** [Organization] values its employees and wants to work with them on as flexible a work schedule as the role allows. Please discuss flexible work options with your manager. Flexible work options include [late start times, flex times, comp days].
- **Other Benefits.** [List additional mental health benefits or resources here. Benefits might include discounted gym membership, professional development funds, tuition reimbursement, access to Section 125 plans for health care or child care, or professional memberships.]

For questions about benefits, please contact [Contact Name] at [Contact Email] or visit [Website] for more information.

# ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEES TO TAKE TIME OFF

## Internal Email Template

At [Organization], we recognize the importance of life-work balance and how time away from work responsibilities contributes to a happier and healthier workforce. Taking a vacation or personal time away from work lowers stress levels, reduces burnout risk, and improves mental health and well-being. Therefore, we encourage all eligible employees to take full advantage of the paid time off (PTO) policy that [Organization] offers.

*[Insert a paragraph to describe your organization's PTO policy. Be direct and transparent about employee status and eligibility, like PTO granted to full-time vs. part-time employees.]*

At [Organization], we offer additional ways for all employees to enjoy personal time away from work, including: *[Insert examples of time off offered in addition to your PTO Policy. Examples might include closing all work sites during the holiday break, implementing an organization-wide mental health day, provide a floating holiday for employees to use on their day of choosing, or allowing employees to leave early on Fridays during the summer season.]*

*[Insert a paragraph to describe how many hours can be rolled over into the next year. It's important for employees to know what PTO they may lose if unused. Also, note if your employer requires employees to take a certain amount of time off per year.]*

*[Insert clear instructions to describe how an employee can request time off. Note if requests need to be approved in advance. Also, be transparent about how decisions are made for time off requested during the year with high-volume PTO requests (i.e., winter or spring break).]*

*[Insert instructions on who to contact if the employee is not receiving timely manager approvals for PTO requests or feels like their workload or demands are too high for them to take a vacation.]*

We encourage all people managers to check in with their teams and themselves to ensure everyone feels supported in taking time away from work. If you don't have a vacation or staycation planned, consider using a [vacation planning tool](#). Please contact [Contact Name] at [Contact Email] or refer to the employee handbook at [Website] for more information.

# WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL EMPLOYERS

Tips on improving employee mental health may seem impractical for small employers or business owners – health insurance is prohibitively expensive, an HR team or individuals may be non-existent, and flexible work arrangements are only feasible for certain job functions. Fortunately, there are ways for small employers to improve mental health, even with limited resources. MHA's Work Health Survey findings show that certain non-financial perks are more important than financial compensation, can foster positive workplace perceptions, and increase employee engagement.<sup>1</sup>

## Consider Low-cost Solutions

- **Train your managers to support people.** Eight in 10 employees consider quitting their jobs because of a poor manager. Oftentimes, people are promoted to management because of their success in other roles, but without proper training, successful employees can make poor people managers. Invest in cost-effective online training programs, provide managers with allocated work time to attend training or other professional development course, and meet 1:1 with your managers to understand their strengths and areas that may need improvement.
- **Get to know your employees.** Small employers are at an advantage when getting to know each employee. Use active listening skills to learn what matters to them. Remember and note birthdays, important moments, or family hardships to show employees that you listen and care. Even if you cannot provide full holidays, consider giving early release or flexible scheduling to employees when it matters.
- **Be creative with your benefits.** Consider swapping benefits with other small employers or business. Can you negotiate discounted pricing for healthy lunch meals or a gym or yoga studio membership? Can you provide catering to employees who work over holidays? Can you rotate schedules so employees who work on a holiday have first priority for the following holidays?

## Research Group Solutions

- **Expand your depth chart.** If an employee left your organization or retired on positive terms, they might be available to pick up shifts or cover on an as-needed basis. Similarly, you might know someone who works in a similar work environment who has all the skills but might need a day or two to get trained on specific software or equipment. Having people who can fill in as needed can allow your regular employees to take time off.
- **Team up with other employers.** Consider teaming up with other local employers to create a business group or join a professional employer organization. These structures allow your organization to pool resources for finance and human resources support and achieve affordable health care or other benefits.

## Challenge Long-held Assumptions

- **All organizations can achieve better wellness.** After the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations discovered many creative ways to support employee mental health. Benefits and support that seemed impossible to provide before became more accessible, such as affordable telehealth options or employer-sponsored wellness apps.
- **Providing sick time is a public health imperative.** After the pandemic, workplaces are more willing to recognize the importance of sick time. Small businesses often use social media to communicate any daily schedule changes because of staffing disruptions.

1. Hellebuyck, Michelle, et al. "Mind the Workplace 2018 Report." Mental Health America, <https://www.mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Mind%20the%20Workplace%20-%20MHA%20Workplace%20Health%20Survey%202017%20FINAL.pdf>.

# WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR A HEALTHY LIFE-WORK BLEND

People in the U.S. who are employed full-time spend an average of 8.8 hours a day at work.<sup>1</sup> Time spent at work is more than the average person spends sleeping (6.8 hours), participating in leisure activities (three hours), and caring for or helping family and friends (one hour).<sup>2</sup> Given the events of the last several years, employers that want to keep employees satisfied and recruit top talent need to be able to support and encourage a healthy life-work blend among employees.

The rising generations of those entering the workforce often seek positions that offer flexibility and allow workers to integrate personal obligations into professional responsibilities for a fluid life-work

experience. In addition to flexibility, additional workplace support, such as family assistance programs or recovery-friendly workspaces, can help employees balance and integrate life-work matters and keep them engaged and productive at work.

## Download the following materials to encourage and support a healthy life-work blend:

- Granting Employees Flexibility within Their Positions and Work Environment (Fact Sheet)
- Resources that Consider Social Determinants of Health (Fact Sheet)

## Employer Spotlight: 2021-22 Bell Seal Recipients

EMPLOYER	INDUSTRY	PROGRAM
Alkermes	Biopharmaceuticals	Alkermes provides benefits for family and senior care planning and legal assistance: (1) Family care planning ranges from pregnancy planning to paid time off for bonding with new children, to finding backup child care. (2) Senior care planning provides support and guidance from expert senior care advisors to navigate adult and senior caregiving. (3) Employees can participate in a third-party legal service that provides access to experienced attorneys to help with various matters at a group rate.
City of Port St. Lucie	Public sector	The City of Port St. Lucie offers a wellness program that promotes mental, nutrition, fitness, and financial education and well-being. They encourage employees to utilize the employee assistance program and foster values that promote mental well-being.
Parkway School District	Education	The Parkway School District offers a holistic, voluntary well-being program that provides access to programs as broad as “Mediterranean Eating for the Busy Person” to a “Sleep Challenge” to “Native Gardening.” They hope to attract and inspire the personal well-being of their diverse workforce.
Watchdog Real Estate Project Management (REPM)	Real estate	Watchdog REPM was designated and presented with “Recovery-Friendly Workplace” accreditation by Unity Recovery, a mental health and substance use recovery organization in the Philadelphia area, as part of the company’s organizational strategy to support employee health and overall wellness.

1. “Charts Related to the Latest ‘American Time Use Survey’ News Release | More Chart Packages.” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, [www.bls.gov/charts/american-time-use/activity-by-work.htm](http://www.bls.gov/charts/american-time-use/activity-by-work.htm).  
 2. Gallup, Inc. “In U.S., 40% Get Less Than Recommended Amount of Sleep.” Gallup.com, Gallup, 18 Apr. 2019, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/166553/less-recommended-amount-sleep.aspx>.

# GRANTING EMPLOYEES FLEXIBILITY WITHIN THEIR POSITIONS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

When organizations think about flexibility, they often think about flexible work arrangements, like different schedules or remote work. But there's more to flexibility than when and where employees work but also how they work. Here are four ways employers can grant employees flexibility within their positions and work environment:

## 1. EXPLORE HOW FLEXIBILITY WORKS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION.

Research on “employee empowerment” as a tool for engagement dates back to the 1990s, when the term became a buzzword for organizations across the United States. Empowerment through flexibility is more important than ever for employees and people managers. Consider how flexibility can work for your organization, and you might experience a decrease in burnout and chronic stress.

## 2. PROMOTE EMPLOYEE AUTONOMY, BUT ALSO PROVIDE GUIDANCE.

Different management styles influence the degree to which employees play a decision-making role, how information is exchanged between management and employees, and how employees receive support from management. Management styles impact how employees perceive themselves and their workplaces, and these perceptions impact their behaviors. Micromanaging employees (spending excessive time controlling details and processes) makes employees feel less engaged. Not managing employees at all can make them feel aimless and checked out. Managers should strive for a middle ground, setting goals and offering resources to help employees accomplish goals without prescribing exact ways.

## 3. ALLOW EMPLOYEES TO HAVE INPUT ON DECISIONS.

Employees who participate in decision-making are more engaged, motivated, and productive. Employees feel a sense of inclusion and self-efficacy when they have some influence on their workplace outputs, policies, and practices (high-involvement practices). Employers should consider implementing a shared decision-making process annually, in which supervisors and their direct reports clearly define and negotiate their roles, responsibilities, and support needs in writing. Employees should be able to provide feedback on their managers and how they have supported them in the past year. It varies from traditional performance assessment tools – where managers only provide feedback to direct reports – and allows for more employee flexibility and engagement.

## 4. OFFER FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS.

Based on MHA's Mind the Workplace 2018 Report, flexible work arrangements were associated with the healthiest workplaces across all industries.<sup>1</sup> 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 eight 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. Flexible work allows employees to determine a work schedule that works best for them, and workplaces retain a productive, engaged, and confident workforce.

1. Hellebuyck, Michelle, et al. “Mind the Workplace 2018 Report.” Mental Health America, <https://www.mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Mind%20the%20Workplace%20-%20MHA%20Workplace%20Health%20Survey%202017%20FINAL.pdf>.

# RESOURCES THAT CONSIDER SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Social determinants of health are conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality-of-life outcomes.<sup>1</sup> The workplace is one environment that can either hinder or support different populations' access to health care and other resources. Employers that offer additional support can help employees balance their personal and professional lives and contribute to a better quality of life for employees and their families. It's important to remember that all workers have a right to privacy and may not share their personal hardships with their employer for various reasons. Be sure to familiarize yourself with other community resources (independent of your organization's offerings) to help support employees – see the "MHA Partner Resources" section for suggestions. Here are examples of additional supports to consider:

## Mental Wellness

- Hire a mental health counselor, social worker, behavioral health specialist, or peer support specialist on staff.
- Research how a peer-led program might be an appropriate fit for your organization. Peer-led programs are formal or informal support networks of individuals with lived experiences.
- Sponsor community support groups to help employees and community members work through personal or family challenges. Established support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and Narcotics Anonymous have guides for starting a support group.
- Research mental health apps or digital therapeutics for your employees. The American Psychiatric Association's App Evaluation Model and One Mind's Psyber Guide are helpful resources for evaluating mental health apps.

## Physical Health and Nutrition Assistance

- Consider a smoking cessation program to improve employee health and reduce health care costs. The American Lung Association provides a smoking cessation program.
- Incentivize healthy physical habits by offering gym membership discounts, an onsite gym, or employer-sponsored exercise programs. Many gyms have built-in employer programs.
- Provide healthy snacks on site. All employees should be encouraged to take a break for lunch or other meals but providing snacks can replenish energy and motivate employees to push through difficult workdays.

## Life-Work Balance

- Provide onsite child care or subsidize child care costs. Child care is often expensive, and for working parents, arranging child care can be a major stressor.
- Reimburse for parent-related expenses like new parent courses, tutoring lessons, or test prep courses.
- Consider allowing pets on site or reimburse for pet care services or training.
- Reimburse or subsidize public transportation costs to and from work.
- Reimburse for skill-building courses to encourage employees to pursue hobbies outside of work.

## Financial Education and Planning

- Hire a financial planner to assist employees with their personal finances. If you offer a 401(k), you may already have a financial planner that can meet with employees to discuss all financial matters, not just retirement resources.
- Establish an emergency fund for employees who experience sudden hardship, such as losing a house to a hurricane or house fire.
- Reimburse or provide tuition funds to help employees recover costs associated with education.

## Community and Social Engagement

- Sponsor social events like happy hours, parties, or celebrations to boost morale and help employees make social connections.
- Offer a volunteer program to give back to the community and help employees connect as a team, or cover costs associated with volunteering or hosting community events.

1. "About Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10 Mar. 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/about.html>.

# ADDITIONAL MHA RESOURCES

## Employee Support Guide

MHA with MHA of Greater Dallas created a [downloadable guide](#) to help employers address the mental health needs of employees as they transition back into the workplace after the COVID-19 pandemic.

## In the Open Podcast

MHA's weekly In the Open podcast features MHA's America Paredes and Theresa Nguyen, who answer questions and discuss various mental health topics. The conversations are easily accessible to people just beginning to learn about their mental health. The In the Open podcast is available on [PodBean](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), Google Podcasts, and Spotify. Check out these workplace-specific episodes:

- [How Do I Find Balance in My Life?](#)
- [Dealing with Mental Health at Work](#)

## Mental Health Education

MHA's Mental Health Month toolkits include fact sheets organizations can print out for distribution to employees, activities for staff, and self-help worksheets for people to do on their own to build skills. New toolkits are released each April in preparation for Mental Health Month in May.

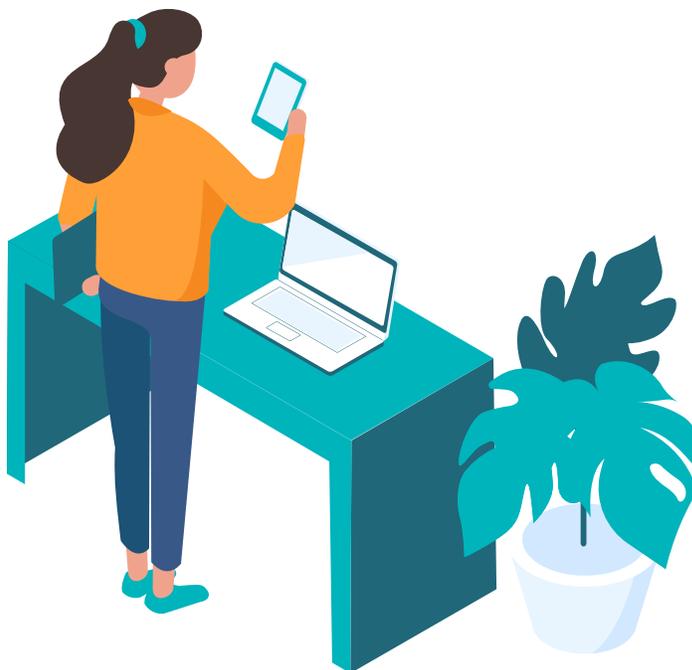
- [Back to Basics \(2022\)](#): The Back-to-Basics toolkit provides foundational knowledge about mental health, common conditions, and what people can do if their mental health is a cause for concern.
- [Tools 2 Thrive \(2021\)](#): The Tools 2 Thrive toolkit provides practical tools everyone can use to improve their mental health and resiliency regardless of their situation.

## Mental Health Screening Tools

MHA provides free, anonymous, online [screenings for common mental health conditions](#). Screening tools are scientifically validated and the most commonly used screens in primary care. After screening, people have access to education, DIY tools, treatment information, linkage to services, or ways to connect to others anonymously online.

## MHA Affiliates

MHA has over 200 affiliates in 42 states, 6,500 affiliate staff, and over 10,000 volunteers that bring direct services and advocacy to communities around the country. Find your local affiliate [here](#).



## MHA Affiliate-led Workplace Mental Health Programs

[Mental Health Connecticut](#) (MHC): MHC believes the next chapter of workplace wellness is creating a mentally fit, thriving environment for all. The MHC Collaborative equips business leaders and HR teams with the tools to elevate mental fitness and psychological safety as top priorities through strategic guidance, evidence-based training, and custom initiatives that deliver long-term impact. MHC is a trauma-informed, recovery-oriented organization that is platinum-level certified in MHA's Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health. For more information, contact Suzi Craig, MHC's chief strategy officer, at [info@mhconn.org](mailto:info@mhconn.org).

[Mental Health America of Ohio](#) (MHA Ohio): Since creating the [Occumetrics](#)® assessment process in 2016, MHA Ohio has conducted over 80 workplace health assessments with 50+ businesses and organizations. Through an in-depth data gathering process, Occumetrics helps organizational leaders better understand the workplace challenges specific to their employees. They are provided with tailored recommendations – that matter to their staff – to improve the work environment, increase job satisfaction, and decrease turnover.

[Mental Health America Lakeshore](#) (Wisconsin): MHA Lakeshore's [Workplace Wellness 360](#) allows organizations to customize a workplace wellness program based on the needs of their workforce to cultivate engaged, productive, and less-stressed employees using evidence-based best practices for the mind, body, and heart. They provide seminars on Before Stage 4, suicide prevention, mindfulness, leadership, support groups, and more.

## MHA COVID-19 Resource Hub

A wealth of articles, webinars, blogs, and podcasts about how to deal with the mental health struggles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic can be found in this [hub here](#).

## Parent and Child Resources

MHA's Back-to-School and Caregivers toolkits are useful for organizations that want to support the mental health needs of working parents, caregivers, and dependents. Toolkits are released annually in August and September in preparation for the new school year and National Family Caregivers Month in November.

- [All The Feels \(2022\)](#): MHA's 2022 Back-to-School toolkit aims to help students, parents, and school personnel explore and understand emotions. Also, the toolkit shares what actions can be taken to help young people struggling with mental health.
- [National Family Caregivers Toolkit \(2021\)](#): MHA's 2021 Caregivers toolkit focuses on parents – while not all caregivers are parents, all parents are caregivers. MHA has gathered a wealth of resources to help parents and other caregivers work through the challenges of caregiving, start conversations, deal with a crisis, and address their mental health. We've also created new resources for single parents, the sandwich generation, and new fathers – who may feel left out of parental health conversations.

## Workplace Mental Health Research

Since 2015, MHA has analyzed over 56,000 employee surveys across 17 industries in the U.S. and published the following Mind the Workplace reports to report the current landscape of worker health:

- [Workplace Wellness Report: Mind the Workplace 2022](#)
- [Workplace Wellness Report: Mind the Workplace 2021](#)
- [Workplace Wellness Report: Mind the Workplace 2020](#)
- [Workplace Wellness Report: Mind the Workplace 2019](#)
- [Workplace Wellness Report: Mind the Workplace 2018](#)

## Workplace Mental Health Resource Hub

MHA's [workplace mental health initiatives](#) can be found on MHA's website, including its Mind the Workplace research, Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health national employer certification program, and employer and employee resources.

# ADDITIONAL PARTNER AND COLLABORATOR RESOURCES

This resource guide was developed to help employers offer their employees the appropriate mental health, substance use, and other resources. The resources below come from MHA's network of trusted partners and supporters, and these topics are included in the guide:

1. Suicide and Crisis Prevention Information
2. Mental Health and Substance Use Assistance
3. Workplace Mental Health Resources
4. Caregiver Resources
5. Child and Adolescent Mental Health
6. Chronic Disease Resources
7. Consumer and Recovery Support
8. Disorder and Issue Specific Resources
9. General Assistance
10. Military and Veteran Assistance
11. Spanish and Other Language Assistance

## Suicide and Crisis Prevention Information

If you or a coworker is in crisis, please call or text a resource below, call 911, or go to an emergency room immediately.

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** The Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24/7. Services are available for:

- For deaf and hard of hearing individuals: TTY users, use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.
- Chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).
- Veterans: Call 988 then press 1 to reach the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL). The VCL is also available via [chat](#) and text to 838255.

**Crisis Text Line:** Text MHA to 741-741 to text with a trained Crisis Counselor for free, anonymous, 24/7 support.

**Warmline.org:** Warmlines are staffed by trained peers who have been through their mental health struggles and know what it's like to need someone to talk to.

## Mental Health and Substance Use Assistance

### [SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services](#)

**Locator:** SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator is a confidential and anonymous source of information for persons seeking treatment facilities in the United States or U.S. Territories for substance use and mental health concerns.

**Psychology Today Therapist Finder:** Psychology Today has an extensive database of therapists where you can filter search results based on therapist gender, accepted insurance, types of therapy, and more.

**wikiHow:** wikiHow is an online community with an extensive database of how-to guides. Check out their course, created in collaboration with MHA: [Boost Your Well-Being: wikiHow's Healthy Mind Masterclass](#)

## Workplace Mental Health Resources

**Empower Work:** Empower Work is a national nonprofit that runs a free, confidential text line to support vulnerable workers dealing with workplace difficulties, including work-related mental health issues. The text line is staffed by trained peer counselors who provide real-time support to those dealing with work-related stress and anxiety, discrimination, harassment, bullying, and unsafe working conditions. To connect with a peer counselor, text 510-674-1414 or go to [empowerwork.org](https://empowerwork.org).

**FlexJobs:** FlexJobs is the leading career service for remote and flexible job listings, expert remote career advice, and career coaching services. FlexJobs believes that remote and flexible work can positively impact people's lives and transform organizations to be more healthy, inclusive, productive, and environmentally friendly.

**Health Links:** Health Links' Workplace Mental Health Module helps organizations assess their existing mental health supports and provides recommendations to meet the needs of employees. The module includes a survey, toolkit, customized recommendations, and advising sessions to use evidence-based practices to improve employee mental health.

**Holmes Murphy & Associates:** Holmes Murphy & Associates is a 90-year-old privately held insurance brokerage service provider committed to addressing mental health and well-being in workplaces. They provide resources such as the [13 Step Quick Action Guide for Addressing Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#) and [Building a Caring Culture: Addressing Mental Health in the Workplace](#), a co-branded whitepaper by MindWise Innovations, CSDZ, and Holmes Murphy & Associates. Resources include case studies of how companies in various industries address workplace mental health with empathy.

**International Employee Assistance Digital Archive:** The Archive is a free and publicly accessible site where Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and related professionals post original works, historical documents, other empirical papers, and multimedia focused on EAP and broader workplace behavioral health. As of Summer 2022, the archive has grown to over 23,500-page visitors and more than 149,000 file downloads.

**Job Accommodation Network (JAN):** JAN is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Staff at JAN offer 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.

**Mental Health Coalition (MHC):** MHC is a nonprofit organization comprised of passionate and influential organizations, brands, and individuals who have joined forces to end mental health stigma. MHC created a [Roadmap](#) that guides managers on how to have important conversations around mental health in the workplace. This guide is filled with actionable steps to help managers address mental health with their teams to improve the workplace culture around mental health.

**Mind Share Partners:** Mind Share Partners is a national nonprofit changing workplace mental health culture so employees and organizations can thrive. It builds [public awareness](#), [hosts communities](#) to support mental health employee resource group (ERG) leaders, and provides custom [workplace training](#), strategic advising, and [on-demand](#) solutions. Mind Share Partners offers free [toolkits](#), [frameworks](#), [research](#), and resources in its [blog](#). It also runs two columns in [Forbes](#) and [Thrive Global](#) and publishes [articles in Harvard Business Review](#). Diversity, equity, and inclusion ([DEI](#)) [are intrinsically tied to mental health](#), and that lens is core to its work and activities.

**National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention:** National leaders from diverse industries have been working for several years to freely develop and disseminate the national guidelines for workplace suicide prevention. The guidelines are based on eight guiding principles and nine practices that cover upstream, midstream, and downstream approaches to prevention and intervention in the workplace. To access the materials and learning community, visit [the website](#) and pledge to make suicide prevention a health and safety priority for your workplace or professional organization.

**National Organization on Disability (NOD):** NOD increases employment opportunities for Americans with disabilities. Their programs and services enable companies to realize the competitive advantages of hiring people with disabilities. NOD's [Disability Employment Tracker](#), a free benchmarking tool that allows companies to measure their progress in disability inclusion against more than 200 participating companies.

**[The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\):](#)** The **[NIOSH Worker Well-Being Questionnaire](#)** (NIOSH WellBQ) provides an integrated assessment of worker well-being across multiple spheres, including individuals' quality of working life, circumstances outside of work, and physical and mental health status. The NIOSH WellBQ is intended to help researchers, employers, workers, practitioners, and policymakers understand the well-being of workers and target interventions to improve worker well-being, among other applications.

## Caregiver Resources

**[Caregiver Action Network \(CAN\):](#)** CAN is the nation's leading family caregiver organization working to improve the quality of life for the more than 90 million Americans who care for loved ones with chronic conditions, disabilities, diseases, or the frailties of old age. Individuals can reach out to their **[Caregiver Help Desk](#)** for guidance and support.

**[Eldercare Locator:](#)** The Eldercare Locator, a public service of the Administration on Aging and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is a nationwide service that connects older Americans and their caregivers with information on senior services.

## Child and Adolescent Mental Health

**[National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health:](#)** The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health has local chapters that can assist individuals with various issues, including navigating the system, advocating for their child, and finding support groups.

**[American Academy for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry \(AACAP\):](#)** AACAP is a national organization that provides mental health information for professionals and families. It has various resources useful for families, especially its **[Facts for Families](#)** section, which includes downloadable fact sheets.

## Chronic Disease Resources

**[American Diabetes Association:](#)** The American Diabetes Association's Center for Information and Community Support provides individuals with access to trained information specialists who can help guide them through the different resources and information available to them to the wide-ranging issues that can be present with diabetes.

**[American Heart Association:](#)** The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization for fighting cardiovascular diseases and stroke. The website provides a wide range of resources and information on specific conditions.

**[National Cancer Institute \(NCI\):](#)** NCI's Cancer Information Service is a federally funded cancer education program that provides accurate, up-to-date, and reliable information that is easy to understand. Individuals can speak with a trained information specialist, who can answer cancer-related questions in English and Spanish.

## Consumer and Recovery Support

Consumer/peers are people in recovery from mental illness or substance use. Consumer services are for individuals who are not ready to see a professional or want a friendlier navigator.

**[Inspire:](#)** Access MHA's Inspire Community to engage with peers, who share similar experiences, across hundreds of condition-specific support communities.

**[Supportiv:](#)** Supportiv is a digital peer-to-peer support network that enables people to process, cope with, heal from, and problem solve mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression) and daily life struggles (e.g., loneliness, family pressure, parenting challenges, relationship conflicts, work stress) in safe, professionally moderated micro-community chats.

**[Compeer:](#)** Compeer is a nonprofit organization that provides consumers (both children and adults) with friendship relationships to assist them in their path to recovery. The organization has affiliates across the country to which people can reach out directly.

## Disorder and Issue Specific Resources

MHA has a wide range of information on disorders that can be found **[here](#)**.

### **[Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#)**

**[\(ADAA\):](#)** ADAA is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and the cure of anxiety, depression, OCD, PTSD, and co-occurring disorders through the alignment of science, treatment, and education.

**[ChoicesInRecovery.com:](#)** Find support and information for people with schizophrenia, schizoaffective, and bipolar disorder and their caregivers, including strategies for success that can be used daily by people living with mental health conditions.

**Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA):** DBSA envisions wellness for people living with mood disorders. DBSA offers peer-based, wellness-oriented support and empowering services and resources available 24/7, in local support groups, in audio and video casts, or in printed materials distributed by DBSA, their chapters, and mental health care facilities across America.

**Self-Injury Recovery Anonymous (SIRA):** SIRA provides a safe space for individuals who engage in physical self-injury to come together to share experiences, strength, and hope without judgment or criticism to stop physical self-injury.

**National Resource Center on ADHD:** The National Resource Center on ADHD is a program for the Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD), a national nonprofit organization providing education, advocacy, and support for individuals with ADHD.

**National Alliance for Eating Disorders:** The National Alliance for Eating Disorders is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the outreach, education, early intervention, support, and advocacy for all eating disorders.

**Postpartum Support International:** The mission of Postpartum Support International is to promote awareness, prevention, and treatment of mental health issues related to childbearing in every country worldwide.

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP):** AFSP is a voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a nationwide community empowered by research, education, and advocacy to act against suicide. AFSP has local chapters in all 50 states with programs and events nationwide.

## **General Assistance**

**2-1-1 Information and Referral Line:** Each state has a 2-1-1 Information and Referral Line for free and confidential information and referral. Call 2-1-1 for help with food, housing, employment, health care, counseling, and more.

**Community Health Centers:** Community health centers provide individuals with access to low-cost health care. Most often, what an individual pays will be determined by their income. These centers are located in urban and rural areas and provide prenatal care, baby shots, general primary care, and referrals to specialized care, including mental health, substance use, and HIV/AIDS.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline:** The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides individuals access to highly trained expert advocates to talk confidentially with anyone experiencing domestic violence, seeking resources or information, or questioning unhealthy aspects of their relationship.

**Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN):** RAINN is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country and operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the Department of Defense.

## **Military and Veteran Assistance**

**Vet Center Call Center:** The Veteran Center Call Center is an around-the-clock confidential call center where combat veterans and their families can call to talk about their military experience or any other issue they are facing in their readjustment to civilian life by calling 1-877-927-8387.

**Military OneSource:** Military OneSource is a Department of Defense-funded program providing comprehensive information on every aspect of military life at no cost to active duty, Guard and reserve service members, and their families. Information includes deployment, reunion, relationships, grief, spouse employment education, parenting, and child care.

**Veterans Crisis Line (VCL):** VCL is a 24/7, confidential crisis support line for veterans and their loved ones. Call 988 then press 1 to reach the VCL, or access via [chat](#) and text (838255).

## **Spanish and Other Language Assistance**

**National Alliance for Hispanic Health Su Familia:** The National Alliance for Hispanic Health Su Familia program provides families and individuals free, reliable, and confidential health information in Spanish and English by calling 1-866-783-2645.

**Office of Minority Health Resource Center:** The Office of Minority Health Resource Center is a one-stop-shop for minority health literature, research, and referrals.

# CASE STUDY

*Walgreens*

## Walgreens' Approach and Commitment to Workplace Mental Health

Walgreens' employee vision is to care for its team members as whole people. Supporting employee well-being – body, mind, and spirit – and that of their family members is key to realizing this vision. The company strives to develop comprehensive programs and benefits that meet its team members' needs, whether at its corporate offices, distribution centers, or nearly 9,000 retail locations across the U.S. Walgreens focuses on a wide range of workforce populations and continually listens to its team members to understand how the company can best support their health and well-being.

As part of its commitment to mental health, Walgreens' investments go beyond its team members' time at work by delivering both professional and personal support. The organization knows that when it meets the needs of its people, the team is also best equipped to serve its customers and patients.

*We're continually listening to our team members to understand how we can best support their health and well-being. The relationship between employers and employees has never been more critical.*

Walgreens was making investments to provide access to mental health resources for its employees many years before the COVID-19 pandemic, including expanding its Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefits, offering more services like free counseling sessions, and having all company-sponsored medical and prescription drug plans include comprehensive mental health care for eligible employees. In 2019, it also launched a mental health first-aid training program for both members of its human resources team and a subset of Walgreens pharmacists.

When it comes to leadership, Walgreens encourages its managers to lead with authenticity and vulnerability to forge strong relationships with their groups and ensure team members can bring their "whole selves" to work. Walgreens managers also work to encourage an open dialogue and create an inclusive environment and "safe space" for employees to talk about whatever may be on their minds. Additionally, Walgreens strives to continually get a pulse on how their people feel through regular surveys and in-person conversations.

### Walgreens Programs and Benefits that Support Team Member Well-being

Walgreens has long offered a wide range of mental and behavioral health benefits and services and has since expanded these offerings. For Walgreens, and employers everywhere, the pandemic amplified the need to prioritize and support their workforce in a way few companies had considered before. In May 2022, Walgreens introduced additional resources as part of its Be Well Connected initiative.

Some of these resources include:

- Through its EAP, Walgreens' Life365 platform offers digital mental health tools, 24/7 access to counseling, unlimited virtual visits, and five free mental health counseling or therapy sessions for team members and their families that can be conducted virtually or in person.
- Walgreens offers Journey Live, a web-based platform and mobile app featuring live classes with expert instructors in which team members can interact and ask questions. A wide range of classes is available, ranging from five to 30 minutes, and includes the opportunity for on-demand replay. Topics include managing stress, reducing anxiety, improving life-work balance, and getting better sleep. Just three months after launch, more than half of its U.S. team members and family members have downloaded and are using the app today.

- Walgreens also introduced iNDIEFLIX, a documentary film series featuring mental health topics, including anxiety, social media addiction, cyberbullying, and harassment. Each film includes empowering strategies and practical tips. The “premiere” of each film is accompanied by an internal panel discussion with Walgreens team members and leaders.
- Walgreens communicates frequently with team members across a wide range of platforms. News and information regarding benefits and services available through programs like Be Well Connected are shared via direct mail, email, the company intranet, WConnect (team member mobile app), and workplace fliers. They also post regular videos with HR leaders, its chief medical officer, and others to continually help get the word out to team members.

*We strive to foster a workplace where team members feel supported, respected, and celebrated for being their authentic selves. We're committed to providing access to a wide range of tools and resources they may need.*

Walgreens is also deeply committed to unlocking the organization’s full potential by fostering an environment where team members can come to work and be unapologetically human. It embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion to make the workplace function for all team members and their families, including working parents, single parents, and caregivers. Walgreens believes having a diverse workforce that reflects the communities it serves helps them better understand and respond to its customers and patients.

## *About Walgreens*

Walgreens ([www.walgreens.com](http://www.walgreens.com)) is an integrated health care, pharmacy and retail leader serving millions of customers and patients every day, with a 120-year heritage of caring for communities. With nearly 9,000 retail locations across America, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Walgreens is proud to be a neighborhood health destination serving approximately 9 million customers daily. Walgreens pharmacists play a critical role in the U.S. health care system by providing a wide range of pharmacy and healthcare services.

