

# 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>.