

Thrive in Your Workplace: Toolkit for Employers Redefining Workplace Mental Health



THRIVE
NYC

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To learn more about Thrive in your Workplace,
please email: TWP@Thrive.nyc.gov

Your quick start guide to strengthening workplace mental health

Whether your organization is a small business, large corporation, or social service provider, there are evidence-driven and innovative strategies that can help you **promote mental health for your employees and strengthen your organization's ability to deliver on its goals. There are many benefits to becoming a workplace that promotes mental health, including:**

- A more engaged and present workforce, with less absenteeismⁱ
- Improved job retention and productivityⁱⁱ
- Reduced health care costsⁱⁱⁱ

Every employer can get started with these three steps:

- Enhance your employees' awareness of existing mental health resources:
 - [Share a directory of resources, such as NYC Well, a free 24/7 helpline](#)
 - [Schedule a Mental Health First Aid training at your workplace.](#)
- Contact Thrive in Your Workplace. We will be happy to offer you free consulting services to help you select and operationalize the strategies and resources best-suited to your goals.
- Complete our Workplace Assessment, which will allow Thrive in Your Workplace to develop a tailored set of recommendations from this toolkit that reflect your organizational context.

Ready to learn more? Explore the range of workplace mental health innovations that are possible for your organization.

To improve Access to Care, your organization could:

- Distribute an employee survey to learn more about your employees' mental health needs.
- Contact your benefits or employee assistance plan to discuss mental health coverage.

To strengthen Leadership and Organizational Culture, your organization could:

- Develop and share a workplace mental health business case with your organization.
- Convene a town hall to discuss workplace mental health and learn more about your workforce's needs.

To promote Awareness and Communication, your organization could:

- Launch an internal communication campaign to increase knowledge of the importance of mental health and the resources available through your organization.
- Create a campaign of Instagram Stories and have leadership shares their experiences with mental health and why it is important to the organization.

To increase availability of Workplace Programs, your organization could:

- Empower mental health champions to support mental health initiatives at the organization.
- Implement a cognitive behavioral therapy program for stress reduction in the workplace.

To develop Management Skills, your organization could:

- Conduct a training for managers about common mental health issues and how to supportively address performance issues related to mental health.
- Implement a management training program to promote psychological safety, such as Guiding Minds at Work, a free program that can enhance employees' psychological well-being.

ⁱ Lerner D., Adler D.A., Rogers W.H., Chang H., Greenhill A., Cymerman E., & Azocar F. (2015). A randomized clinical trial of telephone depression intervention to reduce employee presenteeism and absenteeism. *Psychiatr Serv*, Jun; 66(6):570-7.

ⁱⁱ Lerner, D., Adler, D., Hermann, R. C., Chang, H., Ludman, E. J., Greenhill, A. & Rogers, W. H. (2012). Impact of a work-focused intervention on the productivity and symptoms of employees with depression. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine*, 54(2), 128-135. doi:10.1097/JOM.0b013e31824409d8

ⁱⁱⁱ Vasilicadis H.-M., Dezetter A., Latimer E., Drapeau M., Lesage A. (2016). Assessing the costs and benefits of insuring psychological services as part of medicare for depression in Canada. *Psychiatr. Serv.* 68, 899-906.

I. Part 1

Introduction

About the Office of ThriveNYC and Thrive in Your Workplace

The overarching aim of new Mayoral Office of ThriveNYC is to ensure that every New Yorker who needs mental health support has access to it, where and when they need it. The Office addresses needs that have gone unmet by traditional services and we pilot innovative strategies. This includes new services for historically underserved special populations, expanding the range of mental health support available to New Yorkers, and enhancing mental health equity across the city. The Office works with City agencies and strategic partners to achieve effective citywide implementation of strategies, maximize their effectiveness and ensure sustainability.

Reaching New Yorkers where they are means putting mental health front and center where people live, learn, and work. A part of ThriveNYC, (TWP) is a public-private partnership that engages New York City (NYC) employers to bring mental health support to the one in five New Yorkers who experience mental illness in a given year. The workplace has long been a powerful driver for social change – from influencing civil rights, to women’s rights, to LGBTQ inclusiveness, among many other issues – and now is the time to build on its potential to promote mental health. Alongside a national and international groundswell of interest in workplace mental health, local employers that participate in TWP join a cadre of industry leaders who are committed to leveraging the workplace to raise awareness and fight the stigma of mental health; to teaching the critical skills needed to recognize and respond appropriately to mental health challenges; and to promoting their employees’ access to care.



Why workplaces?

In an increasingly stressful world where people spend most of their waking hours at work, workplace mental health is now more important than ever. In NYC, workers across industries spend more time at work than their counterparts in other cities, on average, and typically experience longer commuting times.ⁱ Workplace stressors affect all aspects of our lives as they relate to job security and financial stability, interpersonal

and relational dynamics, workload and work/life balance, fit with values, among many others. The dynamism of the local economy offers us an opportunity to leverage workplaces as places that promote mental health and encourage connections to care where appropriate, ensuring that NYC workers and organizations are equipped to meet their potential.

While NYC workplaces are often at forefront of innovation, the fast pace of work can come at a cost; these workplace environments can be stressful in their own right, or even aggravate underlying mental health conditions.

Alongside the daily stress faced by New Yorkers, the rise of mental health challenges also has a profound effect on the workplace. Poor mental health can be costly to both individuals and their employers. In NYC alone, depression and substance abuse are estimated to cost \$14 billion in lost productivity.ⁱⁱ Globally, more than 300 million people suffer from depression, with many people also experiencing symptoms of anxiety.ⁱⁱⁱ A recent World Health Organization (WHO)-led study estimates that depression and anxiety disorders cost the global economy US\$1 trillion each year in lost productivity. Another WHO study estimated that absence, disability, and loss of productivity due to mental illness cost employers more than four times the price of medical treatment itself. Research also points to even greater savings from providing appropriate treatment of mental disorders and addictions via increased employee productivity, speed and quality of return to work after disability, and decreased absenteeism and turnover.^{iv}

In spite of the suffering caused by mental illness, recovery is possible and many people who experience a mental illness can go on to live a joyful, productive life with the right support and treatment.^v

Now is a good time for employers to act. Recently, there has been a national and international groundswell of interest in workplace mental health, seen in diverse contexts ranging from Arianna Huffington's [Thrive Global](#) initiative and WHO's recent recognition of [burnout as an occupational hazard](#). Additionally, employees are interested in the role that workplaces can play in improving mental health. A recent national poll of U.S employees found that nine out of ten respondents agreed that employers have a responsibility to support mental health, with many respondents stating that employers can do more than they are currently doing in relation to mental health benefits and support at work.^{vi} There is a burgeoning body of research showing that mental health interventions delivered in the workplace are effective at improving mental health,^{vii} and emerging methods, such as digital technologies, can provide new opportunities to increase access to care and support employees to live emotionally healthy lives both in and outside of the workplace.

What do we mean by “workplace mental health?”

Mental health-friendly workplaces are those that value the health of their employees, including their mental health and well-being, and have specific practices and policies in place to support employees. Specific policies and practices can include valuing diversity, treating mental illness with the same urgency as physical illness, promoting a healthy work-life balance, and providing training for managers and supervisors on mental health issues. In addition, mental health friendly workplaces support employees in seeking treatment, safeguard employee health information, and provide employees referral resources such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).^{viii}



What do we mean by “workplace mental health innovation”?

A goal of Thrive in Your Workplace is to encourage employers to adopt workplace mental health innovations, which entails adopting or expanding workplace interventions that increase the ways employees can learn about mental health, receive support, or access mental health care. A sample of potential workplace mental health goals and their corresponding innovations is below:

We suggest some general principles to guide every employer’s efforts:

Sample Employer [Global Corporation]	Sample Employer [Large non-profit]	Sample Employer [Small business]
<p>Goal: Increase knowledge of mental health resources and help-seeking behavior</p> <p>Innovation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Develop an awareness campaign to reduce stigma and promote help-seeking behavior (2) Implement an Employee Assistance Program to help employees optimize their health benefits 	<p>Goal: Educate workforce about mental illness and build supportive skills</p> <p>Innovation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Train managers to recognize, appropriately support, and refer employees to care (2) Develop a peer navigator program for employees with lived experienced to provide support to others in the recovery process 	<p>Goal: Facilitate connection to high-quality mental health support</p> <p>Innovation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Assess mental health benefits and utilization to determine accessibility and affordability (2) Provide employees with free or subsidized access to digital health tools to help manage mental health needs

II. Part 2

Taking action on workplace mental health

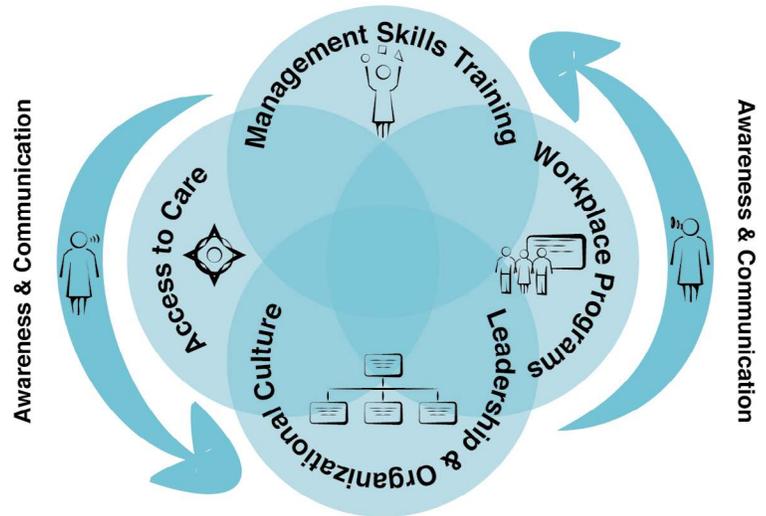
This toolkit shares high-quality, evidence-driven workplace mental health strategies that will guide employers towards creating a mental health friendly workplace that support the needs of your workforce. The toolkit is organized around five researched-informed priority areas in workplace mental health:

1. Access to Care
2. Leadership and Organizational Culture
3. Awareness/Communication
4. Programs
5. Management Skills

Let us help you develop a strategy specifically for your organization.

We encourage employers to complete our Workplace Assessment, which will allow Thrive in Your Workplace to develop a tailored set of recommendations from this toolkit that reflect your organizational context. We will be happy to offer you free consulting services to help you select and operationalize the strategies and resources best-suited to your goals.

Workplace mental health includes 5 key priority areas:



Within each priority area, the toolkit presents strategies that help organizations shape their workplace mental health efforts. Each strategy is paired with a range of tactics and suggested resources for operationalizing a new workplace mental health support. Resources include links to expert reports or tools, such as lists of evidence-based digital health applications or health risk assessment surveys. We have indicated which resources are free or paid in the toolkit; however many of the paid options have pricing structures that vary according to organizational size and therefore cannot be represented accurately for all employers.

Who is this toolkit for?

The Toolkit is designed for decision-makers within your organization who are responsible for, or involved in, establishing your organization's workplace mental health strategy.

Decision makers typically include staff from a variety of teams such as Leadership, HR, Benefits, Training, Operations and Employee Groups. As organizational structures often differ among employers, Thrive in Your Workplace staff will defer to our employer partners on this question, however we are available to confer with you on who best to empower with this responsibility.

To make this process as beneficial as possible, we encourage leadership to identify a program champion who is tasked with leading this effort. The champion is an individual who is in charge of the program and given authority to guide the day-to-day work, make strategic choices, and collaborate across departments to build support. While this individual does not have to be a membership of the leadership team, it is critical that they are able to make decisions and are trusted by other departments in order to effect change.

Setting your organization up for success: Guiding principles for all employers

We suggest some general principles to guide every employer's efforts:

1. *Carefully plan before introducing changes:* Thinking through how you will implement new changes prior to launch can dramatically improve your chances of success.
2. *Introduce one change at a time:* Changing knowledge about mental health and creating new policies in the workplace can be complex. Narrowly defining an initial focus can streamline implementation and provide quick and early wins to lay the groundwork for future initiatives.
3. *Think about implementing recommendations that promote change at both the organizational and employee level:* Many workplace mental health interventions focus only on employee behavior (e.g. stress reduction strategies) instead of looking at root causes (e.g. policies, workload)^x. While you should not introduce many new initiatives at once, creating a culture of mental health will ultimately require change at all levels of the organization.



4. *Consider the accessibility needs of your workforce:* When you select workplace mental health strategies, acknowledge how and where your workforce will interact with the new support or policies. If your workforce is dispersed or maintains irregular work schedules, you might focus on digital solutions – such as mental health apps – that employees can use on their own time, or provide recorded trainings that are accessible off-site.
5. *Involve all different levels of the workforce in the decision-making process:* Employees from different levels and divisions will bring unique perspectives on organizational priorities and challenges. Including employees early on in the process can spark innovation, provide valuable feedback, and/or ultimately increase take-up and reach of programs.
6. *Plan for broad dissemination and sustainability:* Once an intervention has demonstrated effectiveness on a small scale, develop a plan to both sustain the change in the current setting and to subsequently spread the change to other settings.
7. *Be nimble and adjust your approach as needed:* If your organization currently uses an existing model of process improvement, such as Lean or Six Sigma methodology^x, use that framework to support implementation. However, if your organization does not have a current quality improvement process in place, TWP recommends using the *Model for Improvement* to guide this work. The *Model for Improvement*^{xi} is a conceptually simple model that organizations can apply as they adopt a workplace mental health strategy. The two primary components of the Model for Improvement are (1) identifying small tests of change and (2) conducting Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles that allow for organizational processes to proceed while a team applies small changes to processes. More information about the Model for Improvement is available to employers through Thrive in Your Workplace’s Technical Assistance.

One of the benefits of using the Model for Improvement is the ability to quickly test small changes and then decide to either keep the strategy, refine or drop it!

ⁱ New York City Office of the Comptroller. (2015). The Hardest Working Cities. NYC Economic Brief. Accessed from: https://www.scribd.com/document/259163982/Longest-Work-Weeks-March-2015#fullscreen&from_embed

ⁱⁱ Muenning, P., Goldsmith, J.A., El-Sayed A.M., Goldmann, E.S., Quan, R., Barracks S., Cheung J., Behavioral Health in New York City: The Burden, Cost, and Return on Investment. Unpublished Raw Data, 2015.

ⁱⁱⁱ World Health Organization (September 2017). *Mental health in the workplace*. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/mental_health/in_the_workplace/en/

^{iv} Center for Workplace Mental Health. *Making the Business Case*. Retrieved from <http://workplacementalhealth.org/Making-The-Business-Case>

^v Mental Health America. *Recovery is a Journey*. Retrieved from <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/recovery-journey>

^{vi} American Heart Association CEO Roundtable (March 5, 2019). *Mental Health – A Workforce Crisis*. Retrieved from <https://ceoroundtable.heart.org/mental-health-a-workforce-crisis-report/>

^{vii} LaMontagne A. D., Martin A., Page K., Reavley N., Noblet A., Milner A., et al. Workplace mental health: developing an integrated intervention approach, *BMC Psychiatry*, 2014, vol. 14 pg. 131

^{viii} Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Workplaces that Thrive: A resource for Creating Mental Health-Friendly Work Environments*. SAMHSA Pub. No. P040478M. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2004

^{ix} LaMontagne et al, *Ibid*.

^x Burgess, N. and Radnor, Z. (2013). Evaluating Lean in healthcare. *International J Health Care QA*, 26(3), pgs. 220-235.

^{xi} Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (February 2015) *Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Directions and Examples*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy-toolkit/healthlitoolkit2-tool2b.html>

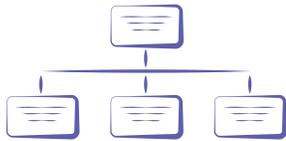
III. Part 3

Workplace mental health strategies: Implementation guide

The following chapter provides strategies, tactics, and resources to help organizations advance the five key areas of focus in workplace mental health:



Access to Care



Leadership and Organizational Culture



Awareness and Communication



Workplace Programs



Management Skills Training



Access to Care

While many Americans experience mental health issues, few have access to timely and effective treatment. Most insurance plans offer some coverage of mental health services, however it can remain difficult for employees to actually access care.

A recent study conducted by the American Psychiatric Association found that, for three of the largest health insurance carriers in Washington, DC, only 14% of callers were able to schedule an appointment with a psychiatrist in the directory.ⁱ In addition to difficulties accessing the care, when people do receive care, it may not adhere to the quality guidelines or be delivered in a culturally competent way.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Improving access and quality of mental health care is a critical component of creating a mental health friendly workplace.



Summary: Access to Care Strategies

1. Conduct an employee health risk assessment or workplace mental health needs survey
2. Provide a health benefits plan that provides affordable and accessible mental health coverage
3. Optimize or implement an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Strategy: Conduct an employee health risk assessment or workplace mental health needs survey

Surveying employees can offer invaluable information as you work towards creating workplaces that are responsive to your workforce's needs and interests. Surveys can provide a baseline understanding of current employee mental health conditions and needs, help to identify opportunities for improvement and measure progress. Regardless of the type of survey that you select, remember to inform employees about the purpose early on to gain buy-in: explain the goals of the survey and address confidentiality concerns around participation.

The first step in conducting an employee survey is to identify your goals in order to choose a survey format. There are two types of assessments that are used to collect information from employees: (1) a health risk assessment and (2) a workplace mental health survey. The following questions can guide a selection:

- *How will you use the information?*
- *What would you like to accomplish?*
- *Do you aim to identify employees who are experiencing mental health issues and/or appropriately link employees to resources?*
- *Inform programming needs?*
- *Understand workplace culture and how it affects mental health?*

Tactic 1: Conduct a Health Risk Assessment (HRA)

A health risk assessment (also known as a health risk appraisal) is a survey instrument used to collect health information to assess an individual's health status, risks, and habits. HRAs aim to identify the current behaviors that may cause future health problems and learn about personal health habits such as nutrition, exercise, and family health. HRAs are often used to set baselines around employee wellbeing and design health promotion programs that can improve employee health, and reduce costs associated with healthcare expenditures.



Tactic 2: Conduct a workplace mental health survey

As opposed to an HRA, a workplace mental health survey focuses on understanding the workplace environment. The survey focuses on factors that are associated with promoting positive mental health, addressing sources of stress and increasing psychological safety at work. A Workplace Mental Health Survey is a useful tool to increase employee engagement and/or to learn more about the culture of your workplace.

A note on ethics, confidentiality and civil rights:

There are important ethical considerations regarding confidentiality, civil rights, and rights of the medically disabled when conducting any type of employee survey. These concerns require attention on the part of survey administrators to protect the safety of all participants.

Importantly, make sure to establish procedures to protect the confidentiality and privacy of employees in order to avoid the perception or fear of harassment, discrimination or retribution directed towards employees who may express unfavorable responses. The following recommendations are based on guidance from the CDC's Workplace Health Model.ⁱ



- Collect survey responses anonymously so that individual participants cannot be identified.
- Appoint an administrator (preferably someone external) to distribute and collect survey; do not allow supervisors to collect survey responses from subordinates.
- Provide envelopes for returning paper surveys to shield responses. If allowing “drop offs” (e.g., for off-shift employees), provide a locked container or other secure holding arrangement so that survey responses cannot be seen by other employees.
- Establish privacy procedures during data collection and management. To prevent survey responses from being traced back to the participants, limit access to a trusted data analyst. This may also involve changing software settings to NOT collect email and IP addresses of participants.
- Individual responses can be unintentionally identified when reporting results for groups of 25 or less, even if they are aggregated; this is especially true in small- and medium-sized organizations. For intimate workplace settings, avoid reporting results by work unit, location, or any demographic category.

Resources

1. Health Risk Assessments

- [NHWP Employee Health Assessment \(CAPTURE™\)\[PDF-957K\]](#) assesses employee health status, health behaviors, readiness to change, needs and interests related to worksite health and safety, and work-related health history (Free)
- [NHWP Health and Safety Climate Survey \(INPUTS™\)\[PDF-857K\]](#) assesses employee perceptions of the work environment, working conditions, and the attitudes of supervisors and coworkers that support a healthy worksite culture (Free)
- [NHWP Health and Safety Climate Survey \(INPUTS™\) Manual \[PDF-1M\]](#) discusses how to administer and score the Health and Safety Climate Survey (Free)
- [MOS 20-Item Short Form Survey Instrument \(SF-20\) \(HTML\)](#) was developed by RAND to assess employee health including questions on physical and mental health, role and social function and pain (Free)
- [General Health Questionnaire \(GHQ-12\)](#) can be used to identify minor psychiatric disorders in the general population (Free)

2. Workplace Mental Health Survey

- [Mental Health America Screening Tools](#) include a variety of screening tools for specific mental health conditions and a work health survey that addresses different components of workplace mental health (Free)
- [Beautiful Brains – A Mental Health Manual for the Modern Workplace](#) provides a series of discussion questions for a workplace event to engage employees in identifying programmatic interests and needs in workplace mental health (Free)

Strategy: Offer health coverage that provides affordable and accessible mental health benefits

Access to care is essential to treat mental illness and address many outcomes associated with poor workplace mental health, such as increased sick days taken due to depression or presenteeism in the workplace. A comprehensive package of medical benefits and prevention programs for mental health should provide affordable coverage of both outpatient and inpatient care, and prescription medications for mental health conditions.ⁱⁱ

Some common barriers often make it challenging to access mental health care:ⁱⁱⁱ

- High out-of-pocket costs for employees
- Insufficient network coverage and number of providers, including lack of culturally competent providers
- Lack of financial incentives for insurers to innovate mental health coverage
- Required prior authorizations for mental health treatment
- Inconsistent implementation of evidence-based treatments

Tactic 1: Conduct an organizational benefits assessment to improve benefits design

To check whether you offer robust mental health benefits, start by conducting a benefits assessment to determine the current state of coverage and utilization rates, and then translate this information into changes to your benefits design.

To begin an assessment, request the following information from your insurance provider to answer the following questions:^{iv}

- Use of mental health and substance use disorder benefits: *What types of services are your employees accessing? Is there more inpatient or outpatient utilization? If one in five Americans will experience mental health issues during their lives, does your organization see a realistic number of claims to reflect the reality of this statistic?*
- Pharmacy spend for medications commonly prescribed for mental health issues: *Are people complying with prescription therapies for recommended courses of treatment? Are prescribed dosages at standard therapeutic levels?*
- Short and long term disability claims related to mental health: *How many disability claims are related to mental illnesses as the primary diagnosis?*

In addition to conducting a benefits assessment, you can also conduct an employee health risk assessment as described in the “Access to Care” section. This can provide information about chronic conditions that are common in your workforce, their effect on employees, and help you prioritize areas of benefit design.

Tactic 2: Revamp your healthcare benefit program design

Negotiate with your insurance provider to ensure the plan covers all mental health services and removes unnecessary barriers to treatment, such as preauthorization for specific mental health conditions or limitations on outpatient treatment sessions. Ask your insurance provider about their reimbursement to mental health providers to determine if providers are financially incentivized to provide integrated care.

Tactic 3: Collaborate to improve quality of care

Work with your insurance provider to verify that a large number of trained primary care clinicians can facilitate collaborative care for depression and other common mental health disorders. Collaborative care models integrate mental and physical healthcare treatments in primary care and can be efficient in improving patient outcomes.^v

Employers can require the use of standardized measurement-based tools (e.g. PHQ-9, GAD-7 and others) by providers in their network to guide decisions and provide aggregate outcomes data for employees being treated for mental health and substance use conditions. Doing so allows you to identify how mental health programs can enhance medical care. These metrics can be used to measure quality improvement for mental health care.^{vi}

- Depression Remission at Six Months
- Depression Remission at Twelve Months
- Depression Response at Six Months - Progress Towards Remission
- Depression Response at Twelve Months - Progress Towards Remission
- Use of the PHQ-9 Tool for Depression
- Use of the GAD-7 Tool for Anxiety
- Experience of Care and Health Outcomes (ECHO) Survey
- Follow-Up After Emergency Department Visit
- Gains in Patient Activation (PAM) Scores at 12 Months
- Excessive Use of Emergency Room Visits
- Inconsistent Use of Antidepressant Medication
- Member satisfaction with provider and with outcome



Tactic 4: Confirm adequate network coverage of mental health services

Keeping an up-to-date record of current in-network providers is very challenging, but requiring employees to call multiple providers to corroborate in-network status is an even greater hurdle to accessing timely care and treatment. Work with your plan to determine the availability of in-network mental health providers including psychiatrists, psychologists, and licensed mental health social workers. Verify that the provider manual is accurate to facilitate easier access for employees and hold plans accountable to continually add and update the providers in their network. Some leaders in this field recommend updating directories every two weeks.

Tactic 5: Consider digital health strategies to enhance network coverage

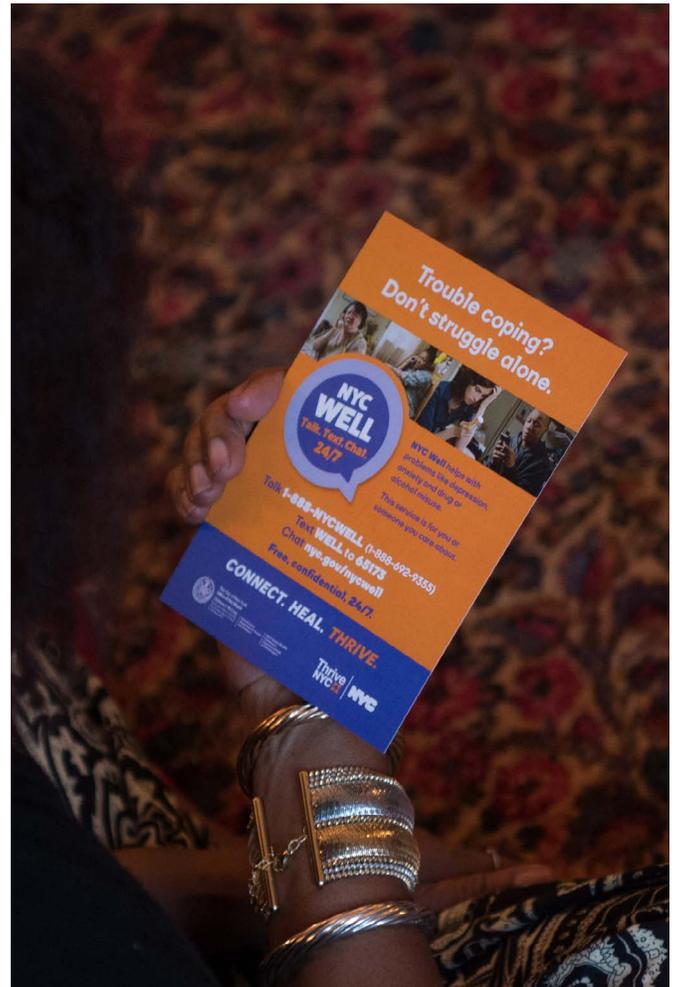
Employers can also increase access to mental health services by contracting with telemedicine providers, either through their existing plan or with a third-party provider. Digital coaching and therapy platforms can provide vital access to employees who face obstacles accessing care; who could benefit from additional care coordination; or who have difficulty attending in-person appointments. When choosing a digital health platforms, employers should ensure the program is HIPPA compliant and that employees can express their privacy preferences on not only general usage and user data, but also health-related data in detail.^{vii}

A Note on the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act requires group health plans for employers with 51 or more employees that offer mental health and/or substance use disorders coverage to *have parity between mental health/substance use disorder benefits and medical/surgical benefits with respect to financial requirements and treatment limitations.*

Resources

1. [NYC Well](#) is New York City's free, confidential support, crisis intervention, and information and referral service for anyone seeking help for mental health and/or substance misuse concerns, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year (Free)
2. [Northeast Business Group on Health \(NEBGH\)](#) is a membership-based and employer-led coalition of benefits leaders and healthcare stakeholders. NEBGH helps employers manage costs, get more value from the benefits and services, and improve the health and wellbeing of employee populations. Members receive networking opportunities and a variety of tools and resources about benefit design from local experts. Specific resources that may be useful in health plan benefit design include participating in their health plan user groups to discuss best practices and lessons learned in health plan purchasing and design, and/or participating in their educational and networking opportunities
3. [Center for Workplace Mental Health](#): The American Psychiatric Association Foundation Center for Workplace Mental Health provides several resources to help employers ensure they are providing high quality mental health coverage (Free)
4. The [Working Well Toolkit](#) provides information about delivering affordable access to care (see more in Chapter three of this toolkit) that includes common barriers to accessing care, suggestions about reporting by your insurance company, best practices for mental health coverage and other resources (Free)



5. [APA Recommendations for Improving Access to Mental Health and Substance Use Care](#) provides in-depth guidance about how employers and health plans can improve access (e.g. specific billing codes) and information on mental health parity laws (Free)
6. [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) provides a short, concise description of mental health parity and some tips for how to determine if your plan meets parity requirements (Free)
7. [The Society for Human Resource Management \(SHRM\)](#) is a human resources professional society that has a membership model offering a vast array of resources about health accounts and account based plans, health plan benefits administration, including mental health parity and wellness plan information and payment reform
8. [Alma](#) is a co-practicing community for mental health care providers aiming to simplify and elevate the therapy experience. With beautifully designed spaces and shared technology and services, therapists at Alma represent a range of disciplines and areas of clinical focus. For interested employers, Alma offers a Preferred Access program in partnership with Thrive. Employees can email thrive@helloalma.com for access to a dedicated concierge to help connect with them best therapist to meet their needs
9. [New York Presbyterian On Demand](#) is a suite of digital health services for patients and providers delivering care and expertise from Columbia Doctors and Weill Cornell Medicine. Services-include second opinion, urgent care, express care, virtual visit and inter-hospital consult. This can be a valuable resource if your organization wishes to increase access to mental health providers or specialists
10. [Talkspace](#) is an online therapy program that connects individuals with therapists and provides the ability to communicate with a therapist via text message, audio message, as well as picture and video message in a private, text-based chat room. There are a variety of different plans for users starting out at \$196 per month. This can be a valuable resource if your company is trying to increase access to mental health services and focus on affordable and mobile options
11. [Ginger IO](#) is an app that connects employees with an on-demand behavioral health system that includes emotional-health coaching, teletherapy and telepsychiatry
12. [Lyra Health](#) combines technology and data with the most effective care to create a refreshingly better experience for you and your people. The platforms includes therapy, coaching programs, and self-care apps that are tailored each individual's needs and preferences. Lyra vets mental health providers for quality, expertise and availability and our top providers only use evidence-based methods that are proven to work

Strategy: Optimize or introduce an Employee Assistance Program

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) can help to create a mentally healthy workplace. **Research has shown that EAPs can be effective in producing positive clinical change, improvements in employee absenteeism, productivity and turnover, and savings in medical, disability or workers' compensation claims.**^{viii} Studies have also found that there is a strong business case for providing employees with access to an EAP. The typical analysis produces a return on investment of between \$3 and \$10 dollars in return for every \$1 dollar invested in the EAP.^{ix} However the variety of design and quality, difficulty in measuring outcomes, and low utilization can limit the EAPs' potential.



If you choose to analyze EAP utilization, the following metrics are generally tracked, however you should specify the definitions with your EAP as they may differ across providers:

- *Clinical case usage rate:* Aggregates the number of people or cases (employees and family members) who received a clinical assessment and have had one or more counseling sessions from the EAP during the reporting period.
- *People use rate:* Aggregates the number of unique people (including employees and family members) who used the EAP for any type of service: clinical counseling, information and referral, management or organizational services, attendees of worksite trainings, crisis management events and so on, divided by the number of employees at the organization
- *Total activity rate:* Aggregates the contact events and discrete services provided by the EAP, including all calls, website hits, attendees at worksite trainings, and management consultations, divided by the total number of employees at the organization.

Tactic 1: Ensure the EAP offers an array of high quality services

While there is a lack of consensus about the definition of an EAP, the National Group on Health convened a workgroup in 2007 that developed the following definition of EAP services: “*Employee Assistance Programs provide strategic analysis, recommendations, and consultation throughout an organization to enhance its performance, culture, and business success. These enhancements are accomplished by professionally trained behavioral and/or psychological experts who apply the principles of human behavior with management, employees, and their families, as well as workplace situations to optimize the organization’s human capital.*”^x Given differences in EAP definitions, clearly outlining the scope of your organization’s EAP services can assist you in managing quality, providing relevant services, and preventing duplication of services across benefits and other human resources functions.

- Ensure EAP providers have a minimum standard of qualification, e.g., staff should be credentialed as Master of Social Work (MSW) or psychologists.
- Provide choices about the method of counselling offered to suit individual preferences, including face-to-face sessions, e-counselling, telephone counselling or group sessions.
- Provide options for employees to contract with a specific EAP provider above and beyond the allotted sessions (the number of counselling sessions per individual is often capped) by paying through other benefits or out of pocket.
- Ensure that the EAP can refer employees to appropriate providers with appropriate expertise (i.e. addiction, couples counselling or eating disorders, among others).
- Request that your EAP counsellors become knowledgeable about and are able to refer employees to local and community-based resources for mental health issues.

Tactic 2: Address barriers to EAP usage by your workforce

Increasing engagement in EAP services is one of the more pressing concerns for employers in order to reach the true promise of EAP services. After verifying quality standards and setting utilization targets, it is also important to identify and address any pain points associated with EAP implementation and address those. Some studies have found that only 7% of employees use EAPs each year.^{xi} While EAPs have recently begun to offer more flexible services, such as mobile support for employees who work offsite, engagement often remains low.

Consider the following approaches for identifying and addressing barriers to EAP usage:

- *Address employee concerns about confidentiality:* EAPs are required to maintain confidentiality and receive written permission before sharing information. However, many employees may be suspicious about the confidentiality of the EAP. Assure employees that their privacy is protected under federal and state regulations.
- *Obtain firsthand and secondhand feedback about EAP services:* Learning about the EAP experience first- and second-hand can help to increase engagement. Conducting secret shopper calls and/or engaging the end user – your employees – can shed light on the EAP’s services and generate feedback for the EAP.
- *Collaborate with HR and management to understand perceptions of the EAP:*
 - o Why or why not are managers using the EAP?
 - o Do they find the services helpful? If not, why?
 - o Is this relevant to why employees are not utilizing the services? Why/ why not?

- *Develop a communication plans to reduce stigma associated with seeking help:* This tactic will be covered in more depth in a subsequent chapter of the toolkit (“Awareness and Communication”) but it is important to note here, as well: employees and managers are not always aware of services offered by the EAP. As previously mentioned, there may also be unfounded privacy and confidentiality concerns that hinder uptake. Frequent communication about how to access EAP benefits can raise awareness of the resource and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues.

Resources

1. [The Center for Workplace Mental Health - Employee Assistance Programs](#) provides an overview of EAPs, a sample delivery and pricing model, and suggestions for implementation (Free)
2. [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#) offers some practical tips to maximize EAP responsiveness (Free)
3. [The Employee Assistance Trade Association](#) published *Selecting and Strengthening Employee Assistance Programs: A Purchaser’s Guide*, a practical tool with guidance about different EAP programs, how to evaluate programs and tips for successful implementation (Free)
4. [The Society for Human Resource Management \(SHRM\)](#) is a membership society for HR professionals that offers digital and in-person resources about EAPs
5. [National Business Group on Health](#) offers a variety of resources about EAPs including toolkits and additional resources about program design and utilization
6. [Mental Health of America](#) offers tips about improving mental health through EAPs. (Free)
7. [Empaq](#) is an employer-driven measurement tool for evaluating EAPs. It was created by employers to provide their peers with credible metrics to assess the performance of their health, productivity and absence programs. It can be a helpful resource to assist you in measuring the effect of your EAP

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016) Employee Level Assessments. Accessed from: <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/model/employee-level-assessment/index.html>

ⁱⁱ American Heart Association CEO Roundtable, Mental Health – A Workforce Crisis, Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bipartisan Policy Center. (2019). Integrating Clinical and Mental Health: Challenges and Opportunities. Retrieved from <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Integrating-Clinical-and-Mental-Health-Challenges-and-Opportunities.pdf>

^{iv} Center for Workplace Mental Health (June 2016). Working Well. Retrieved from: <http://workplacementalhealth.org/getattachment/Making-The-Business-Case/Link-2-Title/working-well-toolkit.pdf?lang=en-US>

^v Unutzer J, Park M (2012) Strategies to improve the management of depression in primary care. *Primary Care*. 39(2):415–31.

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^{vii} Jung, Youna. Kim, Minsoo (2016). HIPAA-Compliant Privacy Policy Language for e-Health Applications. *Procedia Computer Science*, Volume 98, pgs. 283-289.

^{viii} Attridge, M., & Amaral, T. M. (2002, October). Making the business case for EAPs with the Core Technology. Presented at the annual conference of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association, Boston, MA.

^{ix} Hargrave, G. E., Hiatt, D., Alexander, R., & Shaffer, I. A. (2008). EAP treatment impact on presenteeism and absenteeism: Implications for return on investment. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 23(3), pgs 283-293.

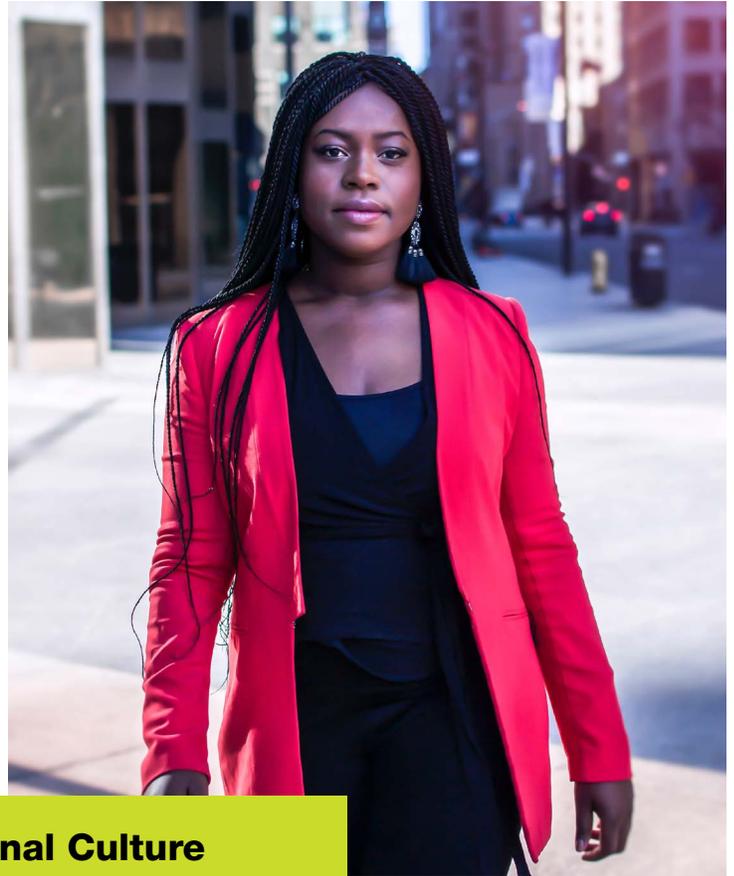
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^{xi} Chestnut Global Partners. Trends Report 2016. Retrieved from: <http://chestnutglobalpartners.org/Portals/cgp/Publications/Chestnut-Global-Partners-EAP-Trends-Report...>



Leadership and Organizational Culture

Previous research has found that strong leadership support for workplace health promotion programs can enhance employee wellbeing as well as influence the social climate of an organization in creating a culture of health.ⁱⁱⁱ Leaders can also communicate the purpose and processes of the workplace mental health program to all levels of the organization, and be particularly effective in emphasizing the importance of programming to managers alongside other programmatic and organizational priorities. **Leadership must be engaged early and often in planning as their initial support, resource allocation, and prioritization of workplace mental health initiatives, can accelerate successful implementation.**



Summary: Leadership & Organizational Culture Strategies

1. Develop a business case to advocate for workplace mental health that reflects organizational priorities
2. Broadcast a Workplace Mental Health Mission Statement
3. Create achievable and aligned workplace policies to promote a mental health friendly workplace
4. Advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the workplace

Strategy: Develop a business case to advocate for workplace mental health that reflects organizational priorities

Gaining support can be achieved by developing a business case that reflects business priorities and explains the value that a new program will bring to an organization. There are many examples of strong business cases for creating a mental health friendly workplace that you can reference.

A strong business case will:

- Provide a brief overview of common mental health issues, their prevalence across the working age population and the effect of mental illness on individual health, organizational culture and the organization's bottom line.
- Present research that shows that most mental illness is treatable in a cost effective manner to illustrate potential savings to the employer.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Demonstrate the positive effect that mental health friendly policies can have in multiple domains including improved employee health, reduced stress, fewer sick days taken, and increased productivity.
- Advocate for the use of limited resources to generate intended outcomes.^{iv}

Resources

1. [Mental Health - A Workforce Crisis](#) provides a sample business case advocating for workplace mental health that includes compelling data and infographics (Free)
2. [Center for Workplace Mental Health](#) dedicates a section of its website to a business case for workplace mental health. This section includes statistics on workplace mental health and alcohol, as well as depression and substance abuse calculators that allow you to estimate the effect of specific conditions on your workforce, and the potential benefits of basic and enhanced medical care (Free)
3. The [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#) 'Making the Business Case' includes information on costs associated with untreated mental illness, relevant statistics, identifying potential areas of improvement in implementing a comprehensive mental health strategy and suggestions for union-management collaboration (Free)
4. [One Mind at Work](#) provides a sample business case, infographics and fact sheets about workplace mental health and a serious depression cost calculator that provides a best guess of how much clinical depression is costing your company (Free)
5. [HBR Ascend](#) provides templates of compelling business cases (Free)

Strategy: Broadcast a workplace mental health mission statement

Issue a workplace mental health mission statement to lay the groundwork for new programs or policies. The mission statement builds on the business case and makes a commitment to achieving those goals. Here is an example: *‘Our organization is committed to protecting and promoting the health and safety of all employees. This includes mental health. We are embarking on a new initiative to create a mental health friendly workplace and will consider the psychological health of all employees in every facet of our operations.’* As illustrated above, this simple message clearly states the organization’s commitment to creating a mental health friendly workplace.

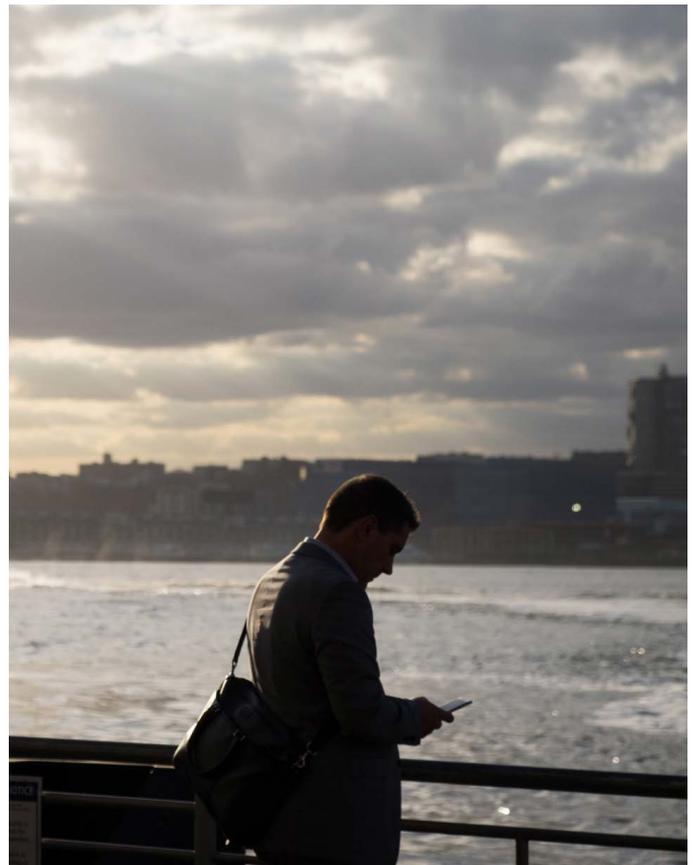
Tactic 1: Engage employees in collaborative decision-making

As you develop your Workplace Mission Statement, involve your different audiences and anticipate their potential concerns. Workplace mental health is affected by the way in which all employees interact on a day-to-day basis, so a participatory process can facilitate lasting change.

- Address employee skepticism: *Were there past workplace mental health – or other culture change – initiatives that failed? Are there relational challenges that corrode overall trust in the organization?*
- If there are barriers, turn the focus toward solutions rather than blame: One way to achieve this is to ask leaders to step up and take responsibility for any existing or recent challenges, even if they were not involved in the conflict or the cause of the problem
- Be clear that the preliminary goal is to improve the organization’s approach to workplace mental health, not to address personal health concerns

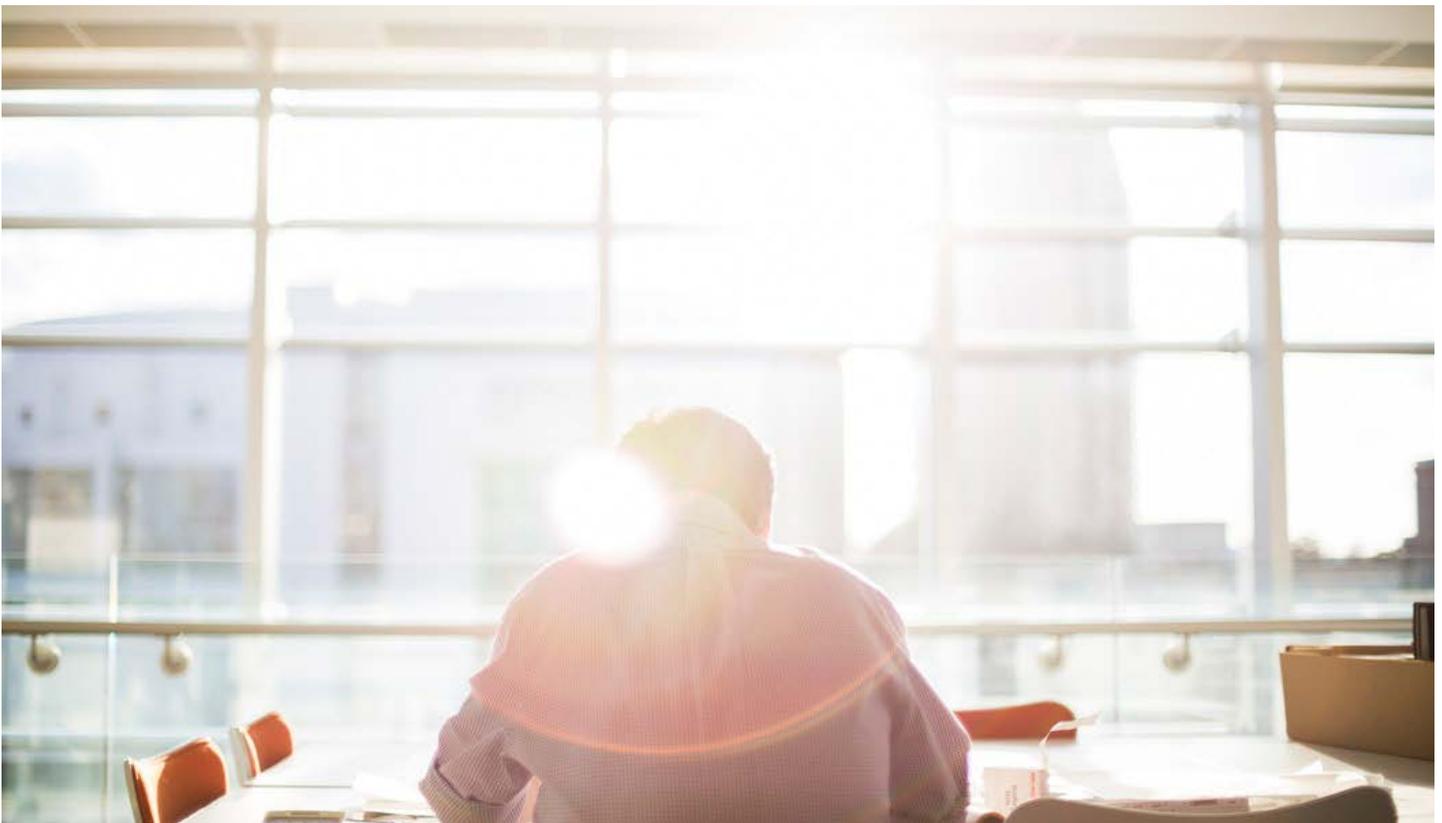
Tactic 2: Hold leaders at all levels of the organization accountable to the workplace mental health mission statement

Whether your organization is new to developing workplace mental health programs or has a deep portfolio of programs on which to build, vocal and visible support is essential to initiating a positive culture and promoting participation in mental health programs. Once your organization has created the Workplace Mental Health Mission Statement, it is important to demonstrate that commitment at all levels of the organization; employees need to see the proof that leaders and managers are invested in creating mental health friendly working conditions. Studies show that the behaviors of leaders influence the actions of employees, and that paying attention to positive leadership behaviors and environments can help promote employee mental health.^v



Resources

1. Thrive Talks are an initiative of ThriveNYC. Thrive Talks create a space to address social and perceived stigma through facilitated discussion while providing an overview of mental health. Thrive Talks are free, flexible, interactive, and can be molded to reflect specific communities and age groups. They can be conducted in Spanish or English. To schedule a Thrive Talk, please email thrivenyc@cityhall.nyc.gov (Free)
2. [Beautiful Brains: A Mental Health Manual for the Modern Workplace](#) provides a sample organizational pledge and email templates (Free)
3. [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#) provides sample messages for employers to communicate with employees about mental health and implementation guidelines (Free)
4. [On the Agenda](#) is a unique online resource offered as part of Guarding Minds at Work to help employers facilitate discussion and action aimed at developing a psychologically healthy and safe workplace (Free)
5. [Mind Share Partners](#) offers a variety of workshops and educational materials to facilitate change towards a mental health friendly workplace, including custom executive training for organizational leadership and packages of workshops and services designed to create sustained impact at every level of a company and optimized for every budget.



Strategy: Create achievable and aligned workplace policies to promote a mental health friendly workplace

Clear policies and expectations about topics related to work-life balance can help to create a mental health friendly workplace. While most large organizations have written policies documenting norms, very few policies are consistently enforced. Some barriers may be that policies are written in legalese and it is unclear how the rule would apply in real life settings; people may not have knowledge of their options or available services; or the reality of office culture is very different than written policy.

Change takes time, but consistent implementation can facilitate shared understanding of values and accelerate culture change, particularly for a potentially sensitive topic like workplace mental health.

The following policies have demonstrated significant, positive effects on employee mental health: Flexibility and paid time off. Flexible working hours and remote work are becoming more typical in certain industries. Research has found that flexibility in working patterns, which give employees more choice over how they spend their time, is likely to have positive effects on health and wellbeing.^{vi} To this end, allowing limited carryover of vacation time off into another calendar year can encourage employees to take appropriate vacation or sick time. In general, providing employees control over when, where and how they do their work can promote workplace mental health.

- **Predictable work schedules:** Preventing employees from working after hours or during vacations can protect employees from unnecessary stress or burn-out. Setting up projects to enable shared responsibility can help employees to effectively disconnect when they are out of office.
- **Generous time for workplace transitions:** Workplace transitions – whether returning to work after parental leave or after a mental health leave – can be stressful for both the employee and employer. Nationally, about 1 in 9 women experience symptoms of postpartum depression.^{vii} And, approximately 4% of fathers experience depression in the first year after their child's birth.^{viii} Supporting employees during these transitions with generous leave policies or gradual transitions can help improve employee mental health and ensure they feel supported as they return to work.
- **Address bullying and harassment without delay:** Bullying at work has been found to deeply affect employee mental health and can lead to workplace trauma. It has been linked to increases in depression, anxiety, and even symptoms related to posttraumatic stress disorder.^{ix} Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behavior intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. In general, there will be differences in opinion and sometimes conflicts at work. However, behavior that is unreasonable and offends or harms any person should not be tolerated. Having a policy in place to protect employees and ensure that bullies are dealt with appropriately is an important component of both promoting mental health and creating psychologically safe spaces.

Tactic 1: Align policies to HR and legal standards by working across teams

Compliance with laws and existing HR policies can set the stage for successfully adopting new policy, and clarify roles and responsibilities pertaining to implementation on-site. Collaboration at the beginning of the development of new policies allows all departments to be on the same page, present a united front, and reduce disagreements later on.

Tactic 2: Gain employee buy-in

Once you have identified appropriate workplace policies, invite employees' input to obtain feedback about new policies.

- Share the rationale for new policy to increase understanding of why it is needed and to reduce anxiety around change. You might set up a webinar or meeting to explain the new policy and offer an opportunity for employees to ask questions.
- Receive employee sign-off on the policy to ensure they have read and understand the policy. This should be done on a recurring basis and as part of new employee training to ensure that all staff are aware of and understand the policy.

Tactic 3: Evaluate and coach staff to support implementation

Early on, identify specific processes and metrics to measure and monitor whether a new policy is being implemented with fidelity. Even if your organization currently has flexible policies in place, it is important to revisit a policy to make sure it is uniformly carried out across the organization, with thoughtful exceptions made for specific workplace functions (for instance, it may not make sense to allow a flexible work policy for a receptionist). Focusing on consistency can promote feelings of fairness across an organization, a factor that has been found to increase satisfaction, well-being and productivity in the workplace.^x To understand if your policies are working, you can assess leave time and work schedules as part of the performance review process.

Resources

1. [Workplace prevention of mental health problems: Guidelines for Organizations](#) contains guidelines consisting of actions organizations can take to prevent common mental health problems in the workplace (Free)
2. [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#) offers specific tips and tools related to bullying/harassment and returning to work (Free)
3. [Society for Human Resources Management](#) offers sample policies on a variety of topics and tips for ensuring your policy is in compliance with local law
4. [Americans with Disabilities Act National Network](#) provides fact sheets about the ADA, how to ensure compliance and how to best support employees who took leave due to mental health reasons (Free)
5. [Department of Labor's Job Accommodation Network](#) provides expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues (Free)
6. [Mental Health America](#) offers tips about how to address bullying at work and the role of flexible schedules in promoting workplace mental health (Free)
7. [One Million for Workplace Flexibility](#) is a national initiative promoting workplace flexibility. Companies can sign onto the pledge for workplace flexibility and connect with peer organizations (Free)



Strategy: Advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the workplace

Thrive in Your Workplace views diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as a central part of creating a mental health friendly workplace. Research has robustly and consistently shown that identities with a history of oppression, such as people of color, members of the LGBTQI community and women, among others, experience increased negative physical and mental health symptoms related to perceived discrimination and harassment at work.^{xi} It is imperative that organizations think critically about the intersection between culture and identity and mental health to develop programs and policies that support mental health at work for everyone. In addition, individuals experiencing mental health challenges at work are also more likely to experience workplace discrimination and should be considered in conversations about DEI as well.^{xii}

There has been a growing recognition of the importance of having a diverse and inclusive workplace. Organizations with diverse and inclusive workforces have been found to:

- Increase employee productivity and innovation^{xiii}^{xiv}
- Increase job satisfaction and knowledge sharing^{xv}
- Earn above-average profits compared with companies with less diverse executive teams and boards

Developing approaches to address potential discrimination and promote diversity, equity and inclusion at work can encourage positive mental health for everyone, support individuals who are at risk of discrimination and/or workplace trauma, and create an environment in which all can thrive. DEI is a complex, multifaceted issue and the following tactics are suggested starting points for creating an inclusive workplace. The Resources section includes links to tools and articles that can support the further development of DEI-informed policies and programs.

“Diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.”
Vernā Myers

Tactic 1: Create a shared language around DEI

Discussing issues of race, gender or other inequalities at work can increase feelings of anxiety, shame or guilt for everyone involved, particularly for groups of people who have been marginalized in the past or are currently feeling excluded at work. To pre-empt and/or address these negative outcomes, it is important to provide education for all levels of the organization, but particularly for leadership who set the example for the rest of the organization.

While the terms diversity, equity and inclusion are often used interchangeably, each has a specific definition that appoints to a specific component of workplace culture. The definitions for each term and how they apply to the workplace are below:

- **Diversity** refers to all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity and gender — the groups that most often come to mind when the term diversity is used — but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives and values.^{xvii}

- **Equity** refers to the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, effects and outcomes for all.^{xviii} Equity and equality are often conflated and should be clearly differentiated.
- **Inclusion** refers to authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Developing a shared language around DEI and ensuring that all employees understand why the organization has chosen to emphasize a DEI lens can lead to productive conversations in the future.^{xix}

Tactic 2: Integrate DEI principles into the structure and policies of your organization

Much research has shown that discrimination has significant negative effects on physical and mental health.^{xxxix} It is imperative that organizations seeking to create a mental health friendly workplaces review their current policies and procedures to ensure that they are written with DEI principles in mind. Begin by reviewing your organization’s antidiscrimination and harassment policies and consider the following questions:^{xxii}

- Are all racial and ethnic groups that are affected by the policy, practice or decision involved in shaping policy?
- How will the proposed policy, practice or decision affect each group?
- How will the proposed policy, practice or decision be perceived by each group?
- Does the policy, practice or decision worsen or ignore existing disparities?

Based on the above responses, consider the policy or practice changes that are needed to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in your workplace. And when and if any new policies or processes are implemented, ensure they are communicated widely across the organization and offer opportunities for questions and further discussion.

Tactic 3: Create safe spaces for employees to share concerns and provide feedback

Creating affinity groups or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) for people with shared characteristics, such as race, gender or sexual orientation, can provide a safe space for employees to share concerns with others who may have similar experiences and create a sense of belonging. Feelings of belonging have a strong correlation to commitment and motivation at the workplace, which can increase employee retention and motivation.^{xxiii}

In addition to creating opportunities for social support, organizations should consider creating a diversity committee or appointing a diversity manager who is charged with ensuring that employee concerns related to harassment or discrimination are addressed in a safe, confidential manner and empowered to take action to implement DEI programming.



Tactic 4: Develop a culturally competent organization

While previous tactics in this section have focused on internal organizational processes, diversity, equity and inclusion principles can also effect how organizations interact with their customers or clients. In social services or healthcare organizations, this is often referred to as providing culturally competent care or building culturally competent organizations.

“Cultural competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each.”^{xxiv} Providing services or partnerships in a culturally competent way can serve to bolster your organizations commitment to DEI internally and has also been found to improve health outcomes, increase respect and mutual understanding between patient and provider, and increase participation from the local community in programming.^{xxv}

Consider the following best practices for developing a culturally competent organization:

- Build a network of local community leaders to provide expertise about the various cultural, linguistic, racial, and ethnic groups served by your organization.
- Develop partnerships with organizations serving similar communities and share lessons learned for providing culturally competent services.
- Identify the different cultural, racial and ethnics groups with which your organization interacts and conduct a customer satisfaction survey to obtain feedback about their experiences and surface ways to improve.
- Include cultural competency in job descriptions and reiterate its importance during the interview and onboarding processes.

Resources

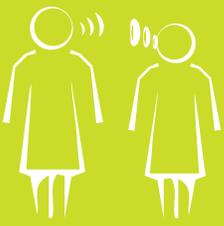
1. [Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege](#) offers ideas for DIY facilitation that will stimulate conversation and learning. (Source: University of Southern California) (Free)
2. [Awake to Woke to Work](#) outlines steps for getting started to create an equitable organization, including establishing a shared vocabulary, identifying advocates at the board and senior leadership levels, and naming race equity work as a strategic imperative and opening a continuous discussion around it. (Free)
3. [National Council of Nonprofits](#) provides a comprehensive list of questions to guide your organizations work around DEI and links to many different resources about diversity in the workforce. (Free)
4. [Embracing Equity: Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide](#) offers research informed guidance and tools to guide your organizations in discussing and implementing DEI principles. (Free)
5. [Racial Equity Toolkit – An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity](#) provides implementation guidance for government jurisdictions interested in addressing racial equity. (Free)
6. The [Community Tool Box](#) includes a comprehensive chapter about building culturally competent Organization including tools, checklists and links to other resources. (Free)
7. [General Assembly Blog](#) post on diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace that includes thoughtful brainstorming questions and practical guidance for organizations. (Free)



8. [Belonging: A conversation about Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) is a helpful blog post that provides a frame work for DEI and examples of when workplaces fail to include DEI principles in practice. (Free)
9. [Assessing Workforce Diversity: A Tool for Mental Health Organizations](#) helps organizations assess the successes and challenges in building a diverse workforce and provides tools and templates to assist organizations. (Free)
10. [Developing Culturally Responsive Approaches to Serving Diverse Populations](#) is a resource guide to help social service and community based organizations serve diverse populations. (Free)

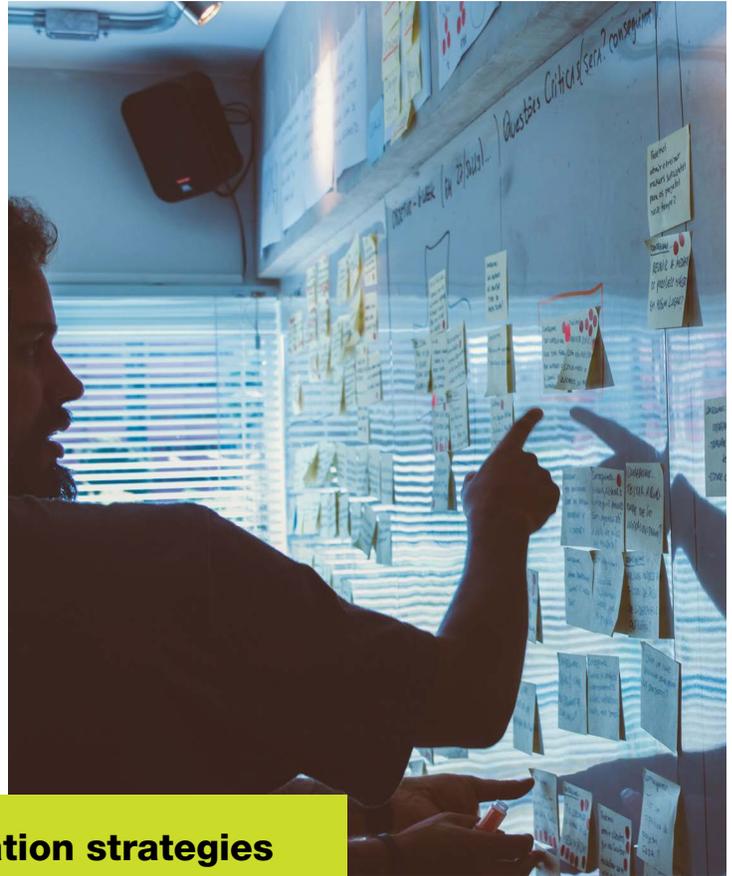
- i Skakon, J.; Nielsen, K.; Borg, W.; Guzman, J (2010). Are leaders' well-being behaviors and style associated with the affective wellbeing of their employees? *Work Stress*, 24, 107–139, DOI: 10.1080/02678373.2010.495262
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- v American Heart Association, Mental Health – A Workforce Crisis, Ibid.
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- xv Joep Hofhuis, Pernill G. A. van der Rijt, and Martijn Vlug, “Diversity Climate Enhances Work Outcomes Through Trust and Openness in Workgroup Communication,” *SpringerPlus*, vol. 5 (2016).
- xvi Vivian Hunt, Sara Prince, Sundiatu Dixon-Fryle, and Lareina Yee, *Delivering Through Diversity* (McKinsey & Company, 2018).
- xvii University of California–Berkeley Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity. (n.d.). Glossary of terms. Retrieved from <http://diversity.berkeley.edu/glossary-terms>.
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- xxv Wilson-Stronks, A. and Mutha, S. (2010). From the perspective of CEOs: What motivates hospitals to embrace cultural competence. *Journal of Healthcare Management* 55(2010) 339-352.





Awareness and Communication

Effective health communication increases knowledge about mental health issues and about how to access care. Health communication is “the art and technique of informing, influencing, and motivating individual, institutional, and public audiences about important health issues.”ⁱ Before you embark on a new awareness or communications campaign, convene your leadership team and identify your objectives. Is it to reduce stigma by increasing the knowledge about mental health? Increase knowledge about company resources and benefits? A clear objective for the communications plan will inform the rest of your campaign design and measurement strategy.ⁱⁱ



Summary: Awareness & Communication strategies

1. Develop an awareness campaign to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and encourage help-seeking behavior

Strategy: Develop an awareness campaign to reduce stigma associated with mental health and promote help-seeking behavior among employees.

Stigma and discrimination towards people with mental health issues can prevent people in need from seeking care. Stigma has been defined as “consisting of difficulties in knowledge (ignorance and misinformation), prejudicial attitudes, and discriminatory behavior.”ⁱⁱⁱ Stigma reduction programs in the workplace aim to promote mental health awareness and combat negative attitudes towards employees with mental health issues.^{iv} Sharing personal stories and testimonials can be a powerful way to normalize mental health and foster dialogue among employees. **Research on stigma reduction initiatives in the workplace have been found to improve manager and employee knowledge related to mental health and motivate help-seeking behavior.**

Tactic 1: Identify your target audience and tailor your message with a clear call-to-action

Once you identify who you are trying to reach, tailor the message to address their needs and potential concerns:

- *Are you trying to reach employees to increase use of benefits related to mental health?*
- *Are you trying to increase knowledge among managers about mental health in the workplace and how to speak with their employees about it?*
- Anticipate the concerns that different groups may have and address them. For instance, if a media campaign focuses on depression in the workplace, employees may be concerned about their privacy; the campaign should then include assurances that private health information will not be shared with managers.

Tactic 2: Ensure that messaging includes information about access to mental health care

Campaigns about depression or other mental health issues should always be combined with a message about how to access care.

For some employers, communicating about mental health issues can be daunting due to concerns that individuals may be increasingly motivated to seek care, or even triggered, yet do not have the knowledge to access the care that they need.



Tactic 3: Share the message through multiple mediums

Consider multiple avenues of communication including websites, email newsletters, social media like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter blog posts, onsite events, posters, flyers, or collaborating with anti-stigma campaigns to align to and build off existing efforts. In particular, social media programs have been found to be especially helpful in improving attitudes towards people with mental health issues.^v

As you begin to craft the campaign, consider tactics that will be most helpful in reaching employees:

- Where do employees spend their time?
- How do they get their information?

Check out a sample template for developing a comprehensive communications plan that takes both your audience and the appropriate communication channel into account:

Target Audience	Communication Channel					
	Web	Event	Email	Social Media	Paid Media	Direct Mail
All Employees						
Managers						

Tactic 4: Reiterate the campaign message over time

Your message should be reiterated over time through different platforms and channels. Previous research has shown that stigma reduction campaigns can be effective in the short term, but often require periodic refresher trainings to meet their potential.^{vi} For instance, if you are launching a public awareness campaign about health benefits available for mental health services, the message should be reiterated often to ensure people have information at their fingertips.



Tactic 5: Collect data to measure the reach and outcomes of your campaign

Once you have launched a campaign, collect data to determine whether it is achieving your goals. There are many types of process and outcomes metrics that can help you measure the program. You might consider both reach (to what extent your intended audience has received the message) and depth (to what extent the changes you promote have been adopted). To do so, employers should collect pre/post data to measure changes in knowledge, attitude and behaviors.

Check out a sample evaluation and data collection template to ensure you are maximizing both reach and impact of the campaign:

Goal	Metric	Data collection strategy	Data analysis approach	What does this tell us?
Increase visits to new EAP website	Employees who click through to new EAP website from email	Obtain email open rate and website hit information from IT department	# of email opened/ total # emails sent # of hits to email website/ # total open emails	Employees were interested in learning more about the EAP and other mental health resources.
Increase knowledge about mental health	Employees that click on the informational links enclosed in the email	Obtain email click through rate from IT department	# of clicks/# of emails opened	Employees were interested in learning more about mental health and reviewed the enclosed information.

A note about promoting awareness:

While communication is an important component of creating a successful workplace mental health initiative, employers should be careful to ensure that messages about mental health and illness are linked to available treatment options for employees who may be experiencing distress.



Resources

1. [Right Direction](#) addresses depression in the workplace. The Right Direction program provides turnkey, customizable resources and materials to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and motivate employees and their families to seek help when needed (Free)
2. [ICU Program](#) is an awareness campaign created for the workplace, designed to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and foster a culture that supports emotional health (Free)
3. [Time to Change](#) is a UK based growing social movement working to change the way we all think and act about mental health problems. They have specific resources to help facilitate conversations about mental health issues in the workplace (Free)
4. [Mental Health America](#) (MHA) creates Mental Health Month campaigns that are released in March in preparation for May Mental Health Awareness Month events. MHA toolkits include printable fact sheets, activities for staff, and self-help worksheets for individuals (Free)
5. [Heads Up](#) is a workplace mental health campaign developed in Australia. It provides a wide array of tools to launch an anti-stigma campaign in the workplace including fact sheets, videos and specific guidance for leaders, employees and managers (Free)
6. [Stamp out Stigma](#) is spearheaded by the Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness and substance use disorders (Free)
7. [I will listen](#) is an anti-stigma campaign and workshop led by NAMI-NYC to teach effective listening strategies for people struggling with mental health issues (Free)

ⁱ *Healthy People 2010*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2000.

ⁱⁱ Adapted from Planning Before You Communicate Tool. Public Health Foundation. Accessed from: http://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/Planning_Before_You_Communicate_Tool.aspx

ⁱⁱⁱ Corrigan PW, Druss BG, Perlick DA The Impact of Mental Illness Stigma on Seeking and Participating in Mental Health Care. 2014. *Psychol Sci Public Interest*. Oct; 15(2):37-70.

^{iv} American Heart Association CEO Roundtable, Mental Health – A Workforce Crisis, Ibid.

^v Clement S, Schauman O, Graham T, Maggioni F, et.al. (2015). What is the impact of mental health-related stigma on help-seeking? A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative studies. *Psychol Med*. 45(1):11-27.

^{vi} American Heart Association CEO Roundtable, Mental Health – A Workforce Crisis, Ibid.





Workplace Programs

Workplace Programs refers to on-site or digital health promotion activities that increase knowledge about common mental health issues, improve resilience skills, or provide non-clinical sources of emotional support.



Summary: Workplace Programs Strategies

1. Develop opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and support
2. Implement workplace health promotion programming
3. Incorporate principles of vicarious trauma-informed care into program design and operations

Strategy: Develop opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and support

Colleagues play an important role in supporting each other and creating a culture of health. Research has shown that employees who feel strong social support at work experience better health and well-being.ⁱ There are a variety of programs that provide opportunities for peer-to-peer support such as Employee Resource Groups, Employee Champions, Peer Navigators, or Employee Health Promotion Groups. Using the *Model for Improvement* can assist organizations in successfully selecting programs that are culturally resonant with your workforce, aligned to your leadership's vision, and are feasible given the resources you have on hand.

Tactic 1: Establish Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

ERGs are “employer-recognized group[s] of employees who share the concerns of a common race, gender, national origin or sexual orientation--characteristics protected in some instances by law and in many organizations as matter of company policy.”ⁱⁱ ERGs are typically associated with specific groups of people such as women or people of color in the workplace.

Industry research has shown that when mental health is included as part of larger wellness initiatives and not specifically called out, it may unintentionally increase the stigma associated with mental health issues.ⁱⁱⁱ

Many companies have ERGs dedicated more generally to health and wellness, but increased knowledge about workplace mental health has caused some companies to create ERGs specifically focused on mental health. A dedicated mental health ERG can increase knowledge across the company about mental health issues for all employees, provide a network of support for employees who may be experiencing mental health issues, and offer concrete tips and advice about how to navigate a mental health issue at work.

Tactic 2: Empower employee champions

Some organizations encourage employee to voluntarily advocate for mental health in the workplace. Volunteers are often referred to as ‘employee champions’; an employee champion is “someone who is by both workers and management, has a passion for the cause, and is willing to be the ‘face’ of the system. This is the person who acts as leader and communicates frequently to all workplace stakeholders.”^{iv} In this toolkit, the term employee champion can refer to individuals with and without lived experience of mental health issues, but we separate this role from a peer navigator, which only refers to individuals with lived experience, due to differences in implementation.



In order to be successful, an employee champion must be supported by a multidisciplinary team with a clear charge to improve workplace mental health. There are several roles that employee champions can play such as running events to break down stigma and discrimination, promoting awareness of new media campaigns, or serving as an internal expert who can share information about accessing mental health resources and care, among others.

Tactic 3: Launch peer navigator programs

Peer Navigators, or people with lived experience of mental illness or substance misuse, can provide social support to employees who are experiencing mental health issues or are in recovery, share resources for accessing care, reduce stigma, and model coping strategies in the context of the workplace.^v While peers have been used most often in behavioral health settings, other types of workplaces are exploring their use to improve employee health. Employers can incorporate peers as part of their EAPs, as essential service providers through employee health plans, or as important connectors between the workplace and community-based organizations. Organizations should also ensure that peers have a strong supervisory structure to ensure they feel supported in their role.

Tactic 4: Form an Employee Health Promotion Group (EHPG)

Many organizations have existing workplace health groups that consist of employees who are empowered to make recommendations for programming and services, and share input on existing initiatives.

To launch a mental health-focused EHPG, organizations may either include mental health as part of a larger wellness goal, or create a subgroup exclusively charged with improving workplace mental health. Some industry research has found that including mental health as part of a larger health promotion group may be less effective because it can be deprioritized compared to other health conditions, or individuals may experience stigma in sharing their experiences with mental health with the larger group.



Look at your organization's existing infrastructure and culture to determine if it makes more sense to layer mental health into the existing wellness groups, or if your workplace demonstrates the openness to create a mental health EHPG.

Resources

1. Employee Resource Groups
 - [Mind Share Partners](#) offers a free toolkit about mental health ERGs and advising services to create a safe, compliant, and productive forum for continuing the mental health conversation.
2. Peer Support
 - [Mental Health America Center for Peer Support](#) offers a variety of resources about integrating mental health peers into the workforce, including peer certification training programs, research and resources to guide implementation. They also offer confidential consulting and customized trainings for employers, including on how to integrate peers in the workplace (Free)
 - The [NYC Peer and Community Health Workforce Consortium](#) created an online toolkit to help organizations support and integrate peers and community health workers. It includes an online self-assessment to evaluate organizational readiness. After finishing the assessment, you will receive an automatically customized toolkit based on your responses (Free)
3. Employee Champions
 - [Time to Change](#) is a UK based social movement focused on mental health discrimination. Time to Change utilizes employee champions to drive forward change within organizations by tackling health stigma and by running initiatives to improve mental health among fellow employees. Their website offers tactical resources such as descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of employee champions, and examples of how they can help lead change in the workplace (Free)
 - The [Centre of Expertise on Mental Health in the Workplace](#) is a Canadian initiative focused on increasing psychological safety at work. This website includes specific definitions of the roles and responsibilities of workplace mental health champions and links to a technical roadmap that includes specific suggestions about how to select and deploy mental health champions in the workplace (Free)



Strategy: Implement workplace health promotion programming

The goal of workplace health promotion programs (i.e. physical activity programs, educational and skills training) is to educate and engage workers in healthy behaviors.

As you consider introducing a workplace program, consider the following questions:

- *What are your goals for the new program? What do you hope to achieve?* Your goals will naturally inform program choice. Try to be as clear as possible about what you hope to achieve and work backwards to select a well-suited approach. For example, if you wish to reduce stress among employees, the best match may be to implement a stress management intervention based on cognitive behavioral therapy techniques to teach employees skills to better manage their stress. If your goal is to increase knowledge about common mental health issues, developing a series of lunch and learns about different topics may help the organization meet its goal.
- *Where are most of your employees located?* Ensure your program will be accessible to employees. For example, if you have a largely dispersed workforce, digital – rather than onsite – programming may be a better fit.
- *How will you encourage participation in the programs?* Many workplace health promotion programs suffer from low participation rates.^{vi} Think about different ways to engage employees to increase participation such as using traditional marketing strategies or employee champions to publicize the program, or dedicating time to the program during work hours, and encouraging managers to encourage participation.

Tactic 1: Launch physical activity programs to improve mental health



Exercise is significantly associated with improving symptoms related to depression and anxiety, in addition to addressing a host of other health problems.^{vii} In particular, physical activity programs delivered in the workplace have been found to reduce absenteeism.^{viii} Examples of common exercise classes offered by employers include yoga, strength training, or Zumba. If your organization does not have the capacity to offer onsite programming, you can offer subsidized gym memberships and opportunities to visit the gym during work hours. Other examples include providing physical space for health-activities, healthy food options, and access to stairs.

Tactic 2: Facilitate screening for common mental health conditions

Offering free, evidenced-based self-assessment tools for employees to screen themselves for common mental health issues can help lead to the early identification of mental health concerns and timely connection to care. For example, if you develop a mental health screening program at work, consider devoting private spaces in which employees can access the screening tools and ensure that there is information about how to access care directly after the screening is completed (i.e. contact your EAP prior to offering screening to ensure they are prepared for a potential increase in demand for their services).



Screening should always be implemented with systems in place to ensure confidentiality, accurate diagnosis, effective treatment, and appropriate follow-up.^{ix}

Tactic 3: Develop on-site educational or skills training programs

There are many different types of educational programs delivered in workplaces – such as bringing in guest speakers or delivering ‘lunch and learns’ on mental health topics – however two types of programs have been particularly effective in supporting employees in need:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy programs have been found to help employees manage symptoms related to common mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.^{xxi} These programs are typically offered in a group format and led by trained counselors who can help employees identify negative thoughts and develop self-care skills.
- Mindfulness is also increasing in popularity. The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR) is the most common mindfulness intervention implemented in work settings so far.^{xii} Typically offered to groups over 8 weeks, MBSR consists of weekly classes and one silent retreat between the 6th and 7th weeks. The MBSR model has been found to be effective in diminishing symptoms of psychological distress among various types of employees.^{xiii}

Tactic 4: Provide employees with free or subsidized access to digital health tools to help them manage their mental health needs

Many employers currently offer employees free or subsidized access to digital health applications to improve employee health and wellbeing, while containing healthcare costs and reducing barriers to care. Digital and web-based health applications (e.g. recorded webinars, online cognitive behavioral therapy programs, or a combination of online and telephonic support) offer an opportunity to connect people with mental health support in a mobile, cost effective way. Among the various options, online stress reduction programs have been found to improve symptoms related to depression and anxiety.^{xiv} Digital health apps bring many potential benefits:

- Offer a cost-effective and convenient way to connect employees with care
- Provide anonymity to individuals
- Remove transportation obstacles or scheduling constraints
- Use technology to reach employees, rather than through a traditional route such as an EAP

While digital health apps hold promise for improving population health there is a lack of research about the outcomes of many applications, and there is little evidence that definitively show positive outcomes associated with using digital health strategies. However, this should not keep you from exploring the use of mental health apps. As the use of digital technology in managing health conditions grows, it is wise to use evidence-based practices when available, yet innovate as needed.

Strategy: Incorporate principles of vicarious trauma-informed care into program design and operations

Employees that work with individuals who have experienced trauma are at a heightened risk of experiencing vicarious trauma and stress themselves. Vicarious trauma – also sometimes referred to as “secondary trauma” – is an occupational challenge due to continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence. Frequent interactions with and exposure to with those who have experienced trauma is associated with negative psychological, emotional, and cognitive effects.^{xv}

Signs of vicarious trauma can include both personal symptoms, such as compassion fatigue, burnout, irritability or sleep and appetite changes, as well as changes in performance such as decreased quality of work, negative attitudes, and increased interpersonal conflict with colleagues or poor follow through.

In many of the helping professions, exposure to trauma is an inevitable part of the work, however organizations have a vital opportunity to support employees that have been exposed to trauma and reduce the negative outcomes that occur as a result of that exposure.

“One cannot be deeply responsive to the world without being saddened very often.”
Eric Fromme^{xvii}

Becoming a vicarious trauma-informed organization requires employers to recognize how daily responsibilities can have potentially harmful consequences on employee mental health and proactively address their effect. The following tactics are based on the Office for Victims of Crime Vicarious Trauma Toolkit’s Pillars of Healthy, Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organizations.^{xvi}

Tactic 1: Create a foundation of trust by communicating openly about the potential for trauma at work and the organizations commitment to supporting employees

Leaders who communicate openly about the mission of the organization and incorporate the potential for vicarious trauma in policies and procedures can better support employees who are exposed to trauma.^{xviii} Creating a culture which acknowledges vicarious trauma as a ‘normal’ response to working with individuals with trauma and offering tangible support to employees has been shown to reduce or prevent negative symptoms associated with vicarious trauma.^{xix} Examples of support include providing information about vicarious trauma throughout the interview process and in team meetings, fostering opportunities for team interaction and celebration, or providing access to a counselor trained in trauma informed care for debriefing outside of clinical supervision.^{xx}

Tactic 2: Develop supportive supervision practices

Managers often represent the primary form of support for employees experiencing symptoms related to vicarious trauma. Supportive supervision is critical to ensuring that employees feel comfortable discussing their concerns, receiving support in the face of challenging caseloads, receiving coaching to reduce burnout, and increasing connections to organizational resources. Structuring supportive management policies and processes, along with creating opportunities to share and receive feedback from colleagues, can counter the effect of vicarious trauma.^{xxi}



Tactic 3: Encourage collaboration among different teams and staff members

Compassionate work environments have been found to reduce the negative effect of vicarious trauma.^{xxii} It is common for employees to feel overwhelmed and/or isolated when faced with clients who have histories of trauma and complex needs. Encouraging collaboration among colleagues can both increase opportunities for social support and building “vicarious resilience,” which refers to the positive effects of witnessing the healing, recovery, and resilience of individuals who have survived severe traumas in their lives.^{xxiii}

Tactic 4: Provide opportunities for training and professional development

Providing training for employees that includes practical skills to manage symptoms associated with vicarious trauma have been found to improve the experiences of employees and the populations that they serve.^{xxiv} In addition to providing training specifically about vicarious trauma, organizations can also improve the employee experience and increase their confidence by providing professional development opportunities.^{xxv}

Resources

1. Screening Tools

- [Mental Health America Screening Tools](#): MHA offers a variety of free screening tools for specific mental health conditions (Free)
- [SAMHSA Screening tools](#) offers a list of free screening tools and links to paid tools

2. Digital health applications

- [Calm](#): Meditation app
- [Headspace](#): Meditation app
- [Insight Timer](#): Meditation app
- [myStrength](#): A digital app that provides support for managing depression, anxiety, stress, sleep and other conditions based on clinical models (i.e. cognitive behavioral therapy, acceptance therapy, positive psychology, mindfulness, motivational interviewing).
- [Big Health](#): A platform with two digital apps, Sleepio and Daylight, to help employees experiencing insomnia and anxiety, respectively.
- [Happify](#): A digital platform that focuses on behavior change, incorporating all of the behavior change disciplines including positive psychology, cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness and others. It supports mental health needs across the continuum from maintaining wellness, to living with chronic disease, and to receiving support for diagnosable mental health conditions.
- [Joyable](#): A digital therapy app that gives your employees and members access to proven solutions for depression, anxiety, or stress.
- [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#): A list of mental health apps that have been reviewed and rated by mental health professionals (Free)
- [New York Presbyterian on Demand](#): A suite of digital health services for patients and providers, delivering expertise from ColumbiaDoctors and Weill Cornell Medicine. Services include second opinion, urgent care, express care, virtual visit and inter-hospital consult.
- [Talkspace](#): An online program connect individuals with therapists via text message, audio message, picture and video messages in a private, text-based chat room.
- [Ginger IO](#): An online platform that connects employees with an on-demand behavioral health system that includes emotional-health coaching, tele-therapy and tele-psychiatry.
- [Lyra Health](#): combines technology and data with the most effective care to create a refreshingly better experience for you and your people. The platforms includes therapy, coaching programs, and self-care apps that are tailored each individual's needs and preferences. Lyra vets mental health providers for quality, expertise and availability and our top providers only use evidence-based methods that are proven to work

3. Educational Programs and Skills Training

- [Workplace Chronic Disease Self-Management \(wCDSMP\)](#), formerly known as Stanford's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP), is among the most widely disseminated and researched evidence-based programs.^{xxvi} It has been shown to be extremely effective in helping individuals better manage chronic disease and related complications.^{xxvii} wCDSMP has adapted the 6-week Chronic Disease Self-Management Program for the purposes of the workplace into 1-hour segments offered over six weeks.
- [Resilience Trainings: Team Resilience & TeamUpNow™](#): Team Resilience is a health promotion and prevention program designed to enhance participants' individual resiliency and increase healthy behaviors. A randomized clinical trial found that the web-based program reduced work related and personal stress.^{xxviii}



- [Right Direction](#) is a workplace initiative to address depression in the workplace. The Right Direction program provides turnkey, customizable resources and materials to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and motivate employees and their families to seek help when needed. It also provides access to screening tools for depression (Free)
- [The Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) developed an online resource that provides guidance to workplaces on how to develop a comprehensive suicide prevention program and presents 10 action steps for addressing the aftermath of a suicide in the workplace (Free)
- The UnLonely Project is a national initiative to broaden public awareness of the significant health risks of loneliness, a condition that is increasingly burdening individuals and communities. The UnLonely Project provides awareness and stigma reduction solutions, many of which tap into the power of creative arts expression to engage, activate and connect participants. The UnLonely Project awareness programs include a digital Interactive Film Festival and Engagement Platform that offers viewers a diverse collection of short films that address loneliness and isolation, demonstrating the importance of connection. For more information go to <https://artandhealing.org/> or contact@artandhealing.org.

4. Vicarious Trauma Informed Care

- The [Office for Victims of Crime Vicarious Trauma Toolkit](#) includes tools and resources to support organizations to address the vicarious trauma needs of their staff. These include an organizational assessment and a large compendium of resources.
- [Recommendations for Vicarious Trauma-Informed Supervision](#) provides guidelines and practices feedback for organizations to implement supportive supervision.
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) provides many resources specifically for organizations who work with children who have experience trauma but are relevant for other organizations.
- [Staying in Balance](#) is a free toolkit developed by Vibrant Emotional Health provides solutions for managing workplace stress and includes checklists and resources for both individuals and organizations.



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Management Skills Training

Managers play a critical role in creating an emotionally supportive workplace through relationships with their direct reports, and as a leaders influencing the organization's operations and culture. **However, middle managers also face the unique challenge of balancing their structural role in an organization as both supervisor and employee, simultaneously receiving directives from supervisors and carrying out those duties with the people who work beneath them.ⁱ**



Summary: Management Skills Training Strategies

1. Develop manager skills to support employees who are struggling or who may have mental health issues.

Strategy: Develop manager skills to support employees who are struggling or who may have mental health issues

When developing training programs about workplace mental health, focus on the responsibilities of middle managers and the unique circumstances they face carrying out their duties:

- Recognize the efforts of middle management in bearing the duties of ensuring a healthy and safe workplace.
- Provide resources to help motivate managers to participate in health promotion initiatives.
- Recognize managers' concerns about engaging their employees in discussions about mental health. This may include worries about addressing pushback, negativity, time commitment, unreasonable demands, or concern that the discussion is outside their expertise.ⁱⁱ

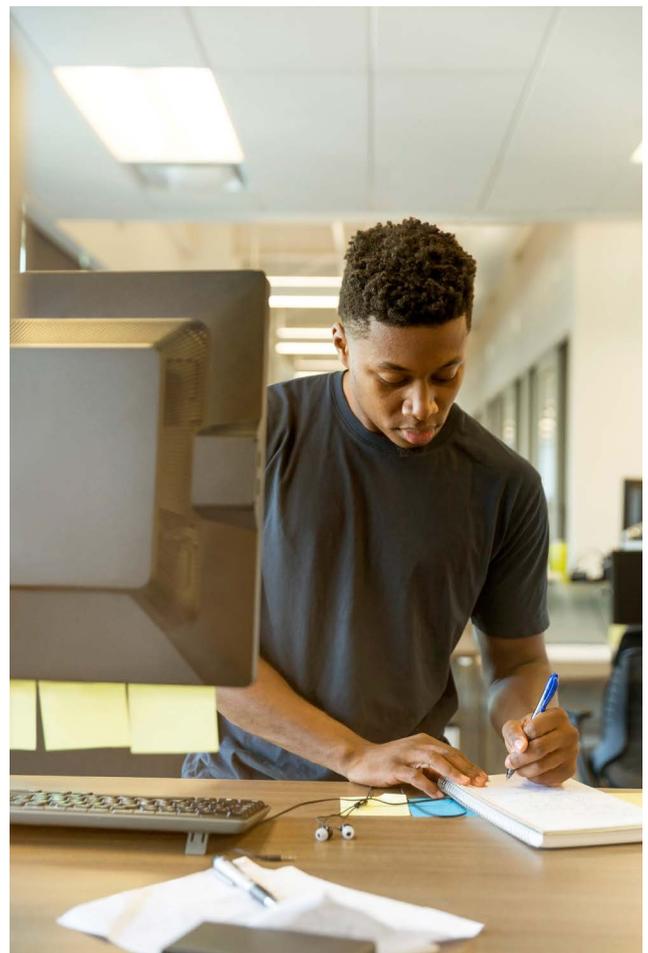
Tactic 1: Train managers to recognize, respond and support employeesⁱⁱⁱ

Organizations can prepare managers to support employees who are experiencing mental health issues by teaching managers how to:

1. Identify common symptoms of mental illness or distress and how they can affect employees
2. Discuss concerns with the employee in a supportive manner by using active listening skills, supportive language and emphasizing collaboration to achieve a solution.
3. Connect the employee to organizational resources. Provide information to managers so that they know what resources are available in their organization to share with employees.

Tactic 2: Implement a management training program to promote psychological safety

There is an opportunity for organizations to enhance the skills of their managers in promoting “Psychological Safety,” which has been defined as a “shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking.”^{iv}



Elements of psychological safety at work include four key areas: management commitment; management priority of psychological safety, organizational communication; and organizational participation.^v As opposed to manager training that focuses on supporting employees who undergo a mental health crisis at work, psychological safety seeks to address basic human needs before they present risks to mental health and actively reduce risks to opening up about mental health.



Resources

1. [Mental Health First Aid](#) is an evidence-based program that gives people the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene offers free Mental Health First Aid training to all New Yorkers, as part of the ThriveNYC initiative. [Click here to learn more or sign up.](#) (Free)
2. [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#) provides specific guidance on addressing performance issues as a result of a mental health issues, including support for managers to manage their own emotional response in the face of a challenging conversation. (Free)
3. [Guarding Minds at Work](#) is a unique, comprehensive set of resources designed to protect and promote psychological health and safety in the workplace. It includes tools to help employers identify and prioritize which psychosocial factors may be impacting their workforce and suggests program implementation tools to address those issues. (Free)
4. [Heads Up](#) is an Australian resource that includes a large section of resources specifically targeted to helping managers support employees in the workplace. (Free)
5. [Black Dog](#) Institute has several evidence-based workplace mental health programs and resources to help organizations create a work environment that promotes mental wellbeing, such as increased staff engagement and greater productivity. Black Dog Institute has several evidence-based workplace mental health programs and resources to help organizations create a work environment that promotes mental wellbeing, such as increased staff engagement and greater productivity.

ⁱ Anicich, E.M. & Hirsh, J.B. (2017). Why Being a Middle Manager is So Exhausting. *Harvard Business Review*. Accessed from: <https://hbr.org/2017/03/why-being-a-middle-manager-is-so-exhausting>

ⁱⁱ Commitment, Leadership and Participation. *Workplace Strategies for Mental Health*. Accessed from: <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/Psychological-Health-and-Safety/Commitment-Leadership-and-Participation>

ⁱⁱⁱ American Psychological Association. (2017) Work and Well-Being Survey. Accessed from: <http://www.apaexcellence.org/assets/general/2017-work-and-wellbeing-survey-results.pdf>

^{iv} Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350-383.

^v Hall, G. B., Dollard, M. F., & Coward, J. (2010). Psychosocial safety climate: Development of the PSC-12. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 17(4), 353-383.



V. Thank You for Joining a Community of Workplace Mental Health Innovators

When your workplace implements one or more of the strategies in this toolkit, you will be joining a growing community of innovative employers working to grow the field of workplace mental health.

Many partners have helped to create this evidence-driven toolkit. We specifically want to thank the following supporters, partners and experts.

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- Northeast Business Group on Health
- NYC Office of Labor Relations
- One Mind at Work

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