

# **Managing For Mental Health 2: Balancing Performance Management and Mental Health**

Presented by Thrive in Your Workplace |  
October 6, 2020

# Housekeeping & ground rules

- Your video and audio will be off during the webinar
- Please use the chat function for questions to the trainers about the topic of today's conversation
  - We will hold dedicated time for Q&A at the end of the training
- Be respectful and civil with each other and with the presenters
- Anyone not adhering to these ground rules will be removed from the conversation

# About Us



**Thrive in  
Your Workplace**  
Redefining Workplace  
Mental Health

Thrive in Your Workplace (TWP) **helps local employers integrate mental health support** at the workplace to:

- promote employees' emotional wellbeing
- facilitate access to mental healthcare
- create cultures of positive mental health at work

We work with employers from across sectors to shape customized workplace mental health strategies and implement workplace mental health programming. We also offer free trainings, resources and events to support the resilience of New York City's workforce.

## Today's facilitators

**Rachael Steimnitz, MPH**, is a public health professional who helps organizations develop and implement health improvement programs. She currently leads content development and implementation for Thrive in Your Workplace, working closely with employers across New York City. Previously, she supported various quality initiatives for Health and Hospitals Corporation (H+H) and directed trainings and programs at the State Office of Mental Health. Rachael has a BA from the New School and a Master's in Public Health in Sociomedical Sciences from the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University.

# Today's facilitators

**Margaret Poswistilo**, an HR, Training and Organizational Development specialist, is Vice President of Next Opportunity Group, a business advisory firm that helps mid market businesses grow to the next level. She is also the Director of the WVI Dolphin Foundation, which inspires Legacy Families to pivot toward “give back” and supports Veterans and Youth Sports for Good Initiatives. Margaret is a board member of NYC Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM).

# Agenda

- Integrating performance management and mental health
- Creating a strong system for accountability
- Implementing strong performance management practices as a supervisor
- Q&A
- Additional resources

# What is “performance management”?

Performance management is an ongoing process of communication between a supervisor and an employee that involves:

- Clarifying expectations
- Setting objectives
- Identifying goals
- Providing feedback
- Reviewing results

Before we get started...



# Reexamining performance management

- As the pandemic continues and “stay-at home” orders remain, employers have begun to shift their focus from acute needs to long-term planning
- Crises require us to shift how we apply accountability – not to remove all accountability
- Leaders must think critically about how to maintain performance standards while practicing empathy for employees, particularly those who may be experiencing a mental health challenge

# Workplace accommodations and mental health

- Employers often have little knowledge about how to identify employees with mental health challenges or mental illness, or what to do if they are brought up in the workplace
- Mental illness is protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act and there are specific policies and procedures that employers need to follow to ensure they are compliant with the law
- Connect with your Human Resources team if there may be specific concerns related to employment law and performance management

**The focus of this training will be on performance management for employees who are experiencing mental health challenges and does not substitute for internal discussions with your legal counsel and HR.**

Integrating performance  
management and mental  
health



# Understanding the mental health spectrum

- **Mental health** is a state of wellbeing in which people can cope with the normal stressors of life, work productively, and contribute to their communities
- **Mental health problems** is a broad term that recognizes that mental health is a spectrum and we all experience mental health challenges
  - E.g. daily stress or stress related to COVID-19, anxiety related to uncertainty, social isolation and loneliness, or grief
- **Mental illnesses** are conditions in which people's thinking, mood and behaviors negatively impact their day-to-day functioning
  - E.g. depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and others, as well as addictions

# Impact of COVID-19 on workers' emotional wellbeing nationwide

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, mental health concerns are prevalent:

- 85% of workers feel "worried and anxious they may catch COVID-19"
- 85% are also "worried and anxious they may lose their jobs"
- 84% of American workers report "really struggling" with employment-related matters. The reasons include mental health (37%), changes at work (27%), and managing money at home (23%)



# Emphasize equity in processes to support colleagues of color

- Identities with a history of oppression experience increased negative physical and mental health symptoms related to perceived discrimination at work
- Recent events illustrate the urgent need for social change to address discrimination and racism, and the massive escalation in racial trauma
- Bias permeates workplace across multiple functions including hiring practices, workplace assignments and performance reviews
- Developing approaches to address potential discrimination and promote diversity, equity and inclusion at work, and specifically in performance management, promotes positive mental health

# Mental health challenges affect the workplace in many ways

- Research estimates that mental health disorders will cost nations \$16.3 trillion between 2011 and 2030
- More workers are absent from work because of stress and anxiety than because of physical illness or injury
- Depression is estimated to cause 200 million lost workdays each year at a cost to employers of \$17 to \$44 billion
- A recent WHO-led study estimates that depression and anxiety disorders cost the global economy US\$1 trillion each year in lost productivity

## Good news: Mental health support helps



- Most people who experience a mental health issue will recover and live full, active lives
- Most individuals with mental health challenges will improve with appropriate diagnosis and treatment
- 80% of employees treated for mental health problems report improvements in their job satisfaction and productivity

Creating a strong system  
of accountability



# Benefit and importance of performance management systems

- Good performance management systems support both individual and organizational growth
- Employees who work in organizations where they feel valued and appreciated report working harder and feeling happier in their roles
- Performance management is not antithetical to employee wellbeing, but an important part of creating a culture of good mental health and productivity

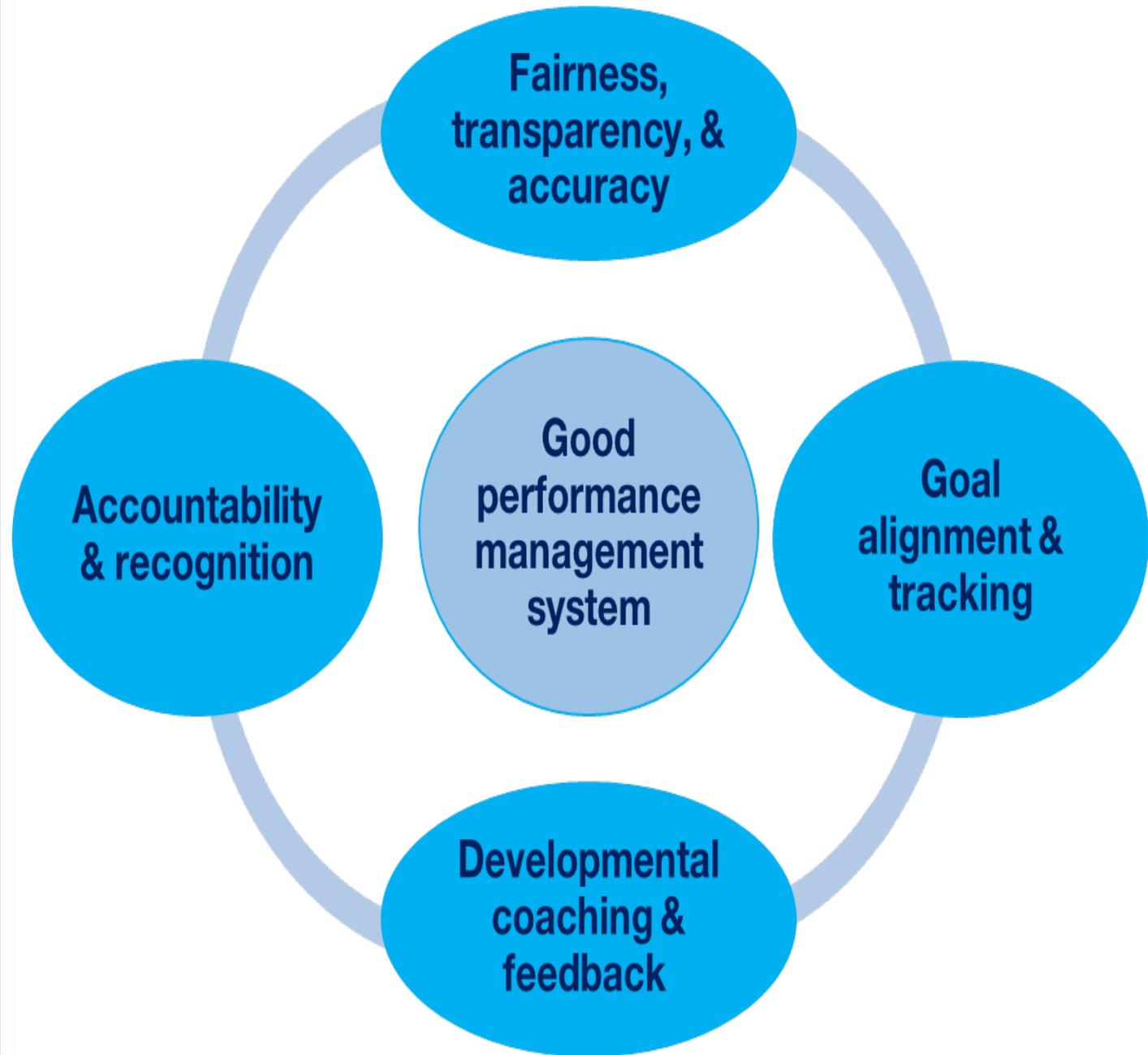


# Performance management during and after COVID-19 looks different

- This is not 'business as usual'
  - Economic uncertainty
  - Furloughs/ layoffs
  - Transition to remote work
  - Caregiving responsibilities
  - Anxiety and worry
- Performance management is always complicated, but remote work has made it both harder and more important for employees
- This pandemic is requiring employers to rethink their performance management strategy to respond to the changing needs of employees and organizational priorities



# Key elements of a good performance management system



# Four steps to develop a strong performance management system

1. Demonstrate fairness and transparency in performance management
2. Co-develop goals and metrics for success with employee
3. Provide development and coaching opportunities
4. Hold yourself and your employees accountable for the work

# 1. Demonstrate fairness and transparency in performance management

- Research from Gallup shows that **71% of employees** believe their performance reviews are unfair
- Fairness in this context can be viewed as whether employees perceive that central elements of performance management (PM) are designed well
- Organizational Justice Framework provides three key elements of fairness:
  - Process: employee feels PM process is consistent, accurate, ethical, and lacks bias
  - Interaction: employee understands PM decisions and is treated with respect
  - Outcomes: employee believes they are being paid or treated equally

## 2. Co-develop goals and metrics for success with employee

- Research shows that setting goals improves employee performance and reduces burnout
- Two questions to guide goal-setting:
  - Where do we want to go as a team and organization?
  - How will we know if we are getting there?
- Elements of effective goal-setting include:
  - Involve the employee from start to finish
  - Link individual goals to overall business objectives
  - Adapt and update as needed

### 3. Provide development and coaching opportunities

- One of the most powerful and least-utilized tools for performance management is providing feedback and coaching at regular intervals to:
  - Allow employees to improve their skills in real time
  - Foster an environment that focuses on learning
  - Make the performance review process a bit less scary



## 4. Hold yourself and your employees accountable for the work

- Performance management systems only work if there is accountability at all levels of the organization: employers, employees and managers must each support the process and hold each other responsible for participation
- A 2018 survey of over 850,000 employees found that **more than 50% of respondents felt their organizations did not address performance issues well**
- Several of the main causes of burnout are related to performance management issues:
  - Lack of autonomy and trust
  - Confusion around role in organization and how it supports overall business goals
  - Unresolved performance issues

# Look out for unconscious bias in performance management

- Unconscious biases are associations that are often unknown to the conscious mind
- In performance management, biases can lead to inconsistencies among different staff related to goal-setting and evaluation, coaching and feedback, development opportunities and rewards
  - 68% of respondents reported that bias had a negative effect on their productivity
  - 70% believed the bias they experienced negatively impacted how engaged they felt at work
- Creating a strong performance management system can help mitigate bias by creating transparent and objectives measures of success

# Common types of unconscious bias in the workplace

**Recency bias:** Managers tend to focus on employee's most recent performance as opposed to performance over the total reporting period

- What can you do? Document performance milestones at various times during the reporting period

**Idiosyncratic rater bias:** Managers tend to rate employees higher who are similar to themselves

- What can you do? Create specific, objective criteria to measure different elements of performance

**Gender bias:** Managers tend to focus more on the personality and attitudes of women as opposed to providing feedback on behaviors and accomplishments of men

- What you can do? Provide structured feedback forms as opposed to open text

Pop quiz!



Implementing strong  
performance management  
practices as a supervisor



# Good management allows employees and organizations to thrive

- Managers play a critical role in creating an emotionally supportive workplace
- Supportive management is a process by which supervisors can help staff to improve their own work performance on an ongoing basis in a respectful way
- Performance management addresses both workplace goals and individual well-being
- Many employees will struggle with mental health challenges at some point in their career, and in many cases, these challenges may have little or no impact on their work

**Providing supportive supervision is not about lowering standards**

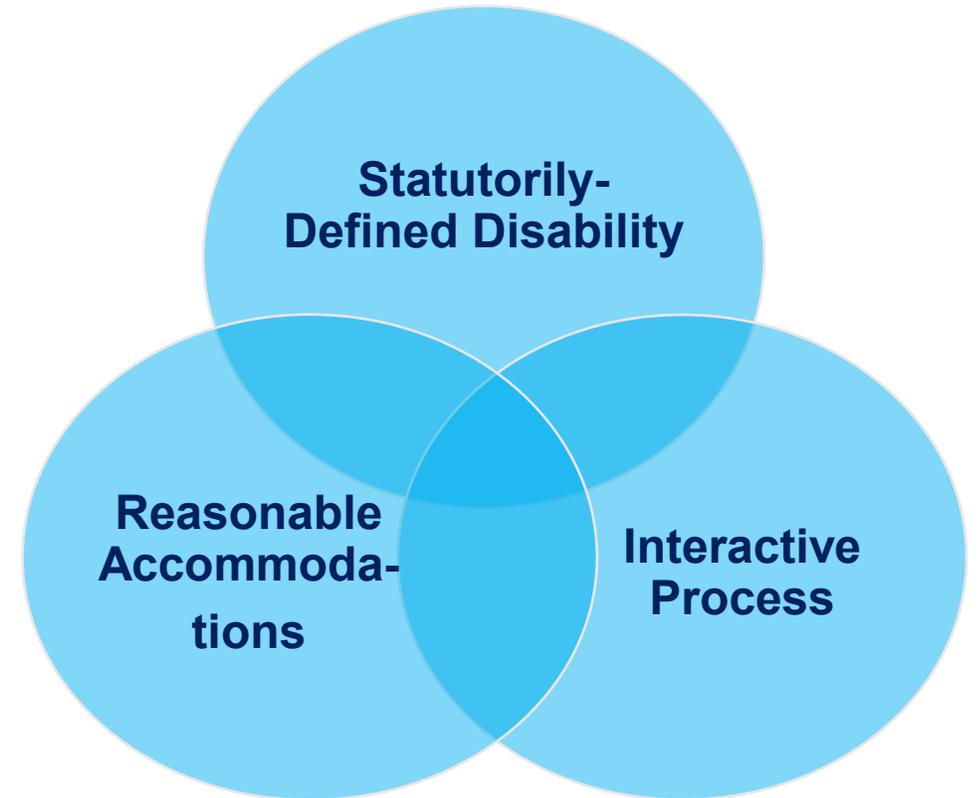
# Five step process to address performance issues with staff

1. Understand employee rights and protections (regulatory and organization-specific)
2. Discuss recent changes in behavior with curiosity and compassion
3. Identify specific performance challenges and co-develop solutions
4. Review and follow-up on progress
5. If performance issues continue, develop a feasible plan for next steps



# 1. Understand employee rights and protections

- Employers have an affirmative obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities, which includes employees with mental health impairments
- Partner with Human Resources to establish a standard procedure for requesting accommodations and ensure all employees are aware of this procedure
- Train managers and supervisors on cooperative dialogue and relevant legal requirements



## 2. Discuss recent changes in behavior with curiosity and compassion

- **Ask open ended questions** (e.g. ‘How are you feeling? What are some of your concerns?’)
- **Relate by sharing individual challenges** (e.g. ‘It has been really hard for me to sit and focus lately because I have been so worried about COVID-19’)
- **Acknowledge different experiences and needs among people** with different identities (e.g. check in on colleagues after recent racial justice protests and encourage them to practice self-care and take time off as needed)
- **Practice reflexive listening** (e.g. paraphrase employee concerns, validate what you hear, ask clarifying questions)

### 3. Identify specific performance challenges and co-develop solutions (1/2)

- **Consider the following prior to engaging employee**
  - Am I considering my role in the situation or believing that I have no need to improve?
  - Will this approach bring about new behavior or focus on old behavior?
  - Am I seeing the bigger picture or just this situation?
- **Focus the conversation on behavior and impact**
  - Job performance and productivity
  - Engagement with one's work
  - Communication with coworkers
  - Physical capability and daily functioning



### 3. Identify specific performance challenges and co-develop solutions (2/2)

#### Manager identifies specific task

- The TPS reports need to be completed on time weekly

#### Employee describes what success looks like for performing that task

- The report is correctly formatted and submitted by COB Thursday so that accounting can process it on time

#### Employee identifies what they need to be successful

- I need support managing my time so that I can allot more time for this task and additional training on how to export data, and help creating a template

#### Co-create a timeline for implementation

- Over the next two weeks we will provide additional training and create a standard template. After that, reports should be submitted on time weekly

#### Manager ensures that employee has capacity to complete required tasks

- Reprioritize competing demands (remove nonessential tasks)

## 4. Review and follow-up on progress

- Set up schedule of regular check-ins with employee
- Develop an objective reporting tool to measure progress
  - Process improvement form
  - Weekly tracker with specific metrics
- Identify and address issues early if they continue to occur
- Offer praise and positive reinforcement for successes

The image shows a close-up of an 'EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION' form. A black and gold pen is resting on the form. The form has several sections: 'ADDRESS INFORMATION' with fields for DATE, ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, and ZIP; 'EDUCATION' with fields for JR. HIGH SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL, and YEARS COMPLETED; 'EMPLOYEE INFORMATION' with fields for TITLE, EMPLOYEE NO., and NEXT SCHEDULED EVALUATION; 'REASON FOR EVALUATION' with fields for EMPLOYEE, DEPARTMENT, and DATE OF PRESENT POSITION; and 'DATE OF PROBATION' with a field for DATE OF LAST EVALUATION. There are also checkboxes for 'MERIT' and 'PROMOTION', and a scale for 'S - Satisfactory' and 'D - Dissatisfactory'. The form is partially filled out with handwritten text.

## 5. If performance issues continue, develop a plan for next steps

- Ensure that employee understands the job requirements and severity of the situation (there should be no surprises)
- Reach out to your boss or Human Resources (do not attempt to solve these issues by yourself!)
- Consider the following options:
  - Performance improvement plan
  - Leave of absence
  - Termination
- Although it is hard at the time, termination can be the appropriate response for the organization and team

# Moving forward

- We are in a new phase of working and learning together
- Never let a crisis go to waste
- Good performance management benefits all employees
- Now is the time to redesign our performance management processes to build a better system for all



## Discussion / Q&A

- Please share your questions in the chat
- A copy of the training slides and recording will be shared after the session
- Please complete our short evaluation survey



# Resources



# Mental health support is available



New Yorkers can visit the [ThriveNYC Resource Guide to Mental Health Services to Access While at Home](#) for regularly updated resources, including services tailored to the needs of aging New Yorkers, veterans, students and young people harmed by violence, crime, or abuse.

Follow [@MentalHealthNYC](#) on Twitter for the latest updates

Thank you for joining us!



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Visit <https://thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/workplace> to learn more about workplace mental health or contact [twp@thrive.nyc.gov](mailto:twp@thrive.nyc.gov) to schedule a free consult.

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