



Innovative  
BENEFIT PLANNING

# Employer Mental Health Toolkit

Resources to support your  
employees needs

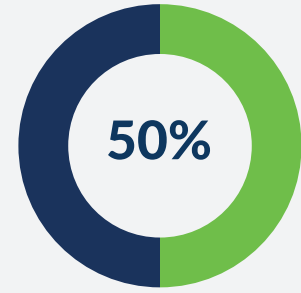


# A landscape of change

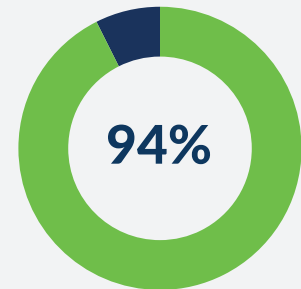
Now, more than ever, we are finding a greater need to address mental health challenges and promote positive mental health. Not only at home, but also in the workplace. Building a work environment that supports mental health initiatives can take time, commitment, and resources but can prove to be extremely impactful. This toolkit will help provide you with things to consider, a framework with actionable steps to help build an environment that supports mental health, and free resources to get you started.

# The time is now

Employers have typically included some mental health offerings in their benefits package, but it is now becoming a top priority. When a workplace prioritizes mental health, the impacts will be significant. You can see an increase in productivity, a decrease in absenteeism, improved physical health which can lead to decreased claims cost, stronger working relationships, and even provide you with a competitive edge in recruiting and retention.



In the United States, almost 50% of adults will experience a mental illness during their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>



94% of employee's report feeling stressed at work<sup>2</sup>



Since the start of the pandemic, mental and behavioral health requests have increased 100 percent.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CDC

<sup>2</sup>Wrike statistics

<sup>3</sup><https://www.hrmorning.com/articles/employee-mental-health/>

# What is it costing you to not support mental health?



Behavioral health claims are responsible for a 20% increase in employer mental health spending.<sup>4</sup>



\$10,836

The average annual health care cost for a person with major depression is \$10,836.<sup>5</sup>



Disengaged employees lead to 37% higher absenteeism<sup>6</sup>

## Advantages to addressing mental health:

1

Increased productivity

2

Decreased absenteeism

3

Better physical health for employees

4

Competitive advantage in recruiting and retention

5

Impact on health plan/claims costs

<sup>4</sup>Springhealth

<sup>5</sup>Wrike statistics

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/karlynborysenko/2019/05/02/how-much-are-your-disengaged-employees-costing-you/?sh=3577a1323437>

# 6 Ways Employers Can Boost Employee Mental Health



Break the Stigma



Create a Supportive Culture



Promote Workplace Wellness Initiatives



Offer Enhanced Benefits for Mental Health



Encourage Self-Help and Support Strategies



Train Management and Leadership





# Break the Stigma

Why is breaking the stigma important? According to the Psychiatry.org, there are three main types of stigmas to look at:

- 1 Public stigma** which involves the negative or discriminatory attitudes that others have about mental illness.

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- 2 Self-stigma** refers to the negative attitudes, including internalized shame, that people with mental illness have about their own condition.

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- 3 Institutional stigma**, is more systemic, involving policies of government and private organizations that intentionally or unintentionally limit opportunities for people with mental illness. Examples include lower funding for mental illness research or fewer mental health services relative to other health care.”





Stigma is ultimately what prevents people from seeking support and is something that **employers** can really work to change.

Burn the midnight oil

Work was insane today

Open enrollment is around the corner...the craziness begins

Stigma will vary from workplace to workplace and even from person to person. Example of stigma would be thinking that someone is expressing “weakness” for taking time off or saying that this workload is “crazy.” Stigma is what creates a gap between the seriousness of mental health issues versus the seriousness of physical health issues. Meanwhile, mental illness is the single greatest cause of disability worldwide.

-  **Encourage open communication.** Be open to conversations about mental health even if it might feel uncomfortable at first.
-  **Encourage awareness.** Educate yourself and others on the issues surrounding mental health.
-  **Show compassion.** Practice showing grace to those who exhibit a mental health condition or concern.
-  **Remove “Stigma” language** from workplace conversations

“Stigma drives silence, silence drives stigma”

Nearly 60% of employers offer on-site flu shots but we don't have any concrete strategies to deal with depression or anxiety.



# Create a Supportive Culture

Making changes to company culture is going to be key to creating a mental health supportive environment. Incorporating mental health into the culture will help employees know this is serious and that the company really values this initiative. There are many ways to encourage a supportive culture.

1

## Reject Stigma

As discussed on the previous page, start by rejecting stigma in the workplace.

4

## Reduce Zoom Fatigue

Try to limit meetings to reduce “Zoom Fatigue,” come up with creative ways to talk about items or just try to shorten meetings that are necessary.

2

## Encourage open and honest discussions

Encouraging open and honest conversation between managers and coworkers will be helpful to building that supportive culture.

5

## Promote Time Off/Flexible work hours

Make sure to encourage employees to use their vacation time and take well deserved time off. Encourage mental health days when appropriate.

3

## Evaluate Environment

Provide areas where employees can take a break and make sure to encourage regular breaks and lunch times. Provide natural lighting when possible and make sure workspaces are ergonomically correct and comfortable.

6

## Performance Management

Regularly scheduled performance evaluations provide a great opportunity to both employee and manager to review and evaluate performance. This takes out a lot of uncertainty which can cause unnecessary stress.

**PROPER ERGONOMICS**  
Wellness Tips

According to the CDC, one in four Americans sit for longer than 8 hours each day. Being aware of your workspace and surroundings during these 8 or more hours is extremely important to your health.

**Why Are Proper Ergonomics Important?**

- Increases productivity
- Contributes to communication
- Prevents injury

**Proper Ergonomics**

- Sit with your torso supported against the backrest. Adjust the height of the backrest so that both your upper and lower back are supported.
- Position your keyboard so that you don't have to reach forward with your arms. Relax your shoulders and arms so your elbows are at your sides.
- Make sure your keyboard is level with or slightly below the height of your elbows.
- Position your mouse at the same height as your keyboard.
- Position the top of your screen at or below eye level so you are viewing the monitor at a downward angle. You should not have to move your head up and down when viewing the screen.
- When seated in your chair, your knees should be near hip height.
- Your feet should be able to rest on the floor and you should have room to fully extend your legs under your desk. You can also use a footrest to support your feet.

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**Download** our Proper Ergonomic Tip Sheet

## Tips on Performance Management

- Lightbulb icon: Create a performance management process that fosters open dialog and opportunities to identify mental health and train all management on it.
- Lightbulb icon: Don't ignore discussions or only provide feedback once a year at an annual review.
- Lightbulb icon: Have regular check-ins to identify any challenges
  - How do you feel about what you are currently working on?
  - Is there anything getting in your way?
  - Is there anything you feel like we need to talk about?
  - How can I best support you?
- Lightbulb icon: Relate with personal challenges
- Lightbulb icon: Lead with empathy and listen

# Promote Workplace Wellness Initiatives

Stress can and will look different for everyone and because of this, there are many different things that can factor into someone's mental health. There are also many different tools that help individuals to cope with their stress and mental health. These can be tools related to physical fitness, nutrition, sleep management, tobacco cessation, chronic condition management, and many more. Providing a comprehensive workplace wellness program allows employees to have many options when it comes to improving their health.

## Ideas for Workplace Wellness Initiatives



Physical, mental, and nutrition challenges



Educational seminars



Health fairs



Financial wellness events



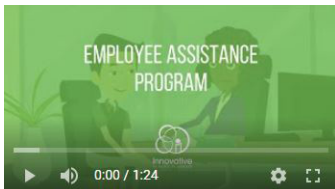
Mindfulness practices



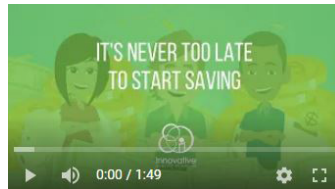
Educational communications

## Free Mental Health Resources for Download:

### Videos:



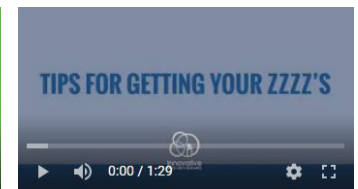
Understanding an Employee Assistance Program



It's Never too Late to Start Savings



Nutrition 101



Tips to Improve Sleep

### Tip Sheets:



10 Tips to Manage Stress



11 Techniques to Encourage Resilience



A Beginner's Guide to Meditation



Better Sleep for Better Health



Managing Winter Blues



6 Tips for Effective Goals

Promoting these resources helps employees know what is available and how the organization supports these initiatives.

For help developing workplace wellness initiatives and communications, please reach out to Innovative Workplace Wellness.



# Offer Enhanced Benefits for Mental Health

Plan sponsors are finding that traditional mental health case management doesn't address all the employee's needs. Most programs act as a gatekeeper to care. Members are looking for help in navigating mental health treatment options available to them. Plan sponsors can engage a mental health case management program that integrates with an enhanced EAP (employee assistance programs). The coordination between these benefits will enhance the member's success rates. The EAP counselor can offer options available to the members that are covered under the plan. The EAP counselor supports the member's progress through treatment.

- 1** Evaluate an EAP (employee assistance programs). Free programs offered through your medical or ancillary carriers are very limited. You should also consider an enhanced EAP service that provides additional services.

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- 2** Review your plans mental health Case management process.

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- 3** Assess the provider mental health provider network to determine if there are adequate providers in multiple disciplines.



If you would like assistance drafting a mental health operating plan or locating a vendor for specific services, please reach out to Innovative Workplace Wellness for support.







# Encourage Self-Help and Support Strategies

Helping to provide education on how employees can seek support can be extremely beneficial. This can be support both inside and outside of the workplace. Seeking support can be from family, friends, the community, neighbors, coworkers, and anyone who an employee has in their circle.

## Ideas for workplace support offerings:

- Office book club
- Exercise classes
- Support groups
- Organize community givebacks and volunteer opportunities
- Stress awareness day,
- Providing a Volunteer Time Off policy

[Download](#) a sample  
Volunteer Time Off Policy

## Self-Help by Promoting Time Off

- 💡 Require everyone to take time away from the office

**TIP:** One approach to force employees to take a break is through “use it or lose it” policies that require employees to take their vacation days during the calendar year or company wide shutdowns.

- 💡 Encourage participants in conference calls to get up from their desks and walk around, possibly taking their cellphones outdoors for fresh air.

- 💡 Restrict the number of meetings and calls.

**TIP:** Consider “Video Free Days”

- 💡 Offer or expand flexible work hours



# Train Front Line Management and Leadership

Leadership and managers are in a unique position to help their fellow employees since they are the ones with whom have the most contact. As role models, supervisors and managers, they can lead with intention in creating a culture of acceptance and support to employees facing these challenges.

To have a committed management team, it would be beneficial to provide support and training. It is important to make sure employees receive consistent support and messaging throughout the organization. Start by educating yourself and your team, then your managers and leaders, and then consider offering it to employees.

## Create an Action Plan

- 1** How to identify when an employee is in need. Signs and what to look for.

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- 2** Conducting difficult and sensitive conversations. Employees need to know they are in a safe environment.

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- 3** How to be supportive and empathic.

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- 4** Fostering an environment where employees feel comfortable to talk.

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- 5** Acting as ambassadors of the organization's mental health program.



TIP: Consider providing **Mental Health First Aid Training** to your leadership team. For more information, contact Innovative Workplace Wellness: [wellness@ibpllc.com](mailto:wellness@ibpllc.com)

# Putting your Mental Health Strategy into Action

## Create an Action Plan

Documenting your goals and strategies as an organization can be helpful for both leadership and employees. Being transparent about your ideas and mission will help foster understanding and support for new initiatives. When creating a wellness or mental health plan, the plan should be positive, strategic, comprehensive, goal supportive, and needs supportive.

## What should you consider when creating a mental health plan?

- 1** Your plan should incorporate your operational needs and your organizational values.
- 2** Make sure your plan aligns with your company culture and future vision.
- 3** Share your plan and ask for feedback and support.
- 4** Be patient with the planning process, you may need to reassess and reevaluate.
- 5** Be prepared to answer questions.

## Components to consider when creating your plan



Lay out a timeline



Specific and measurable goals



A team with roles and responsibilities



Marketing strategy



Clear communication



Budget



Re-evaluation meetings

Mental health challenges can be prevalent in day-to-day life and can be related to work, personal issues, lack of support, and so many other key factors. As an organization, it is necessary to recognize when employees may be struggling and be that vital source they need to be empowered and get help. Innovative Workplace Wellness is here to support you with any initiatives or to help provide you with some additional guidance. Getting started is the best first step towards creating an environment that promotes positive well-being.





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