

Fostering a Mentally Healthy Workplace



Mental Health and America's Workers

One in five American adults experiences a mental health condition each year, the vast majority of whom are working age. During the pandemic, there was a marked increase in reported symptoms of anxiety and depression among U.S. adults, [rising from 11% in 2019 to 41.1% in January 2021](#). For employees with multiple marginalized identities, who experience ongoing systemic inequality and discrimination, many of these strains are even more acute. In addition, one [study](#) found that within 6 months of contracting COVID-19, one third of the patients had been diagnosed with neurological or psychiatric conditions, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and psychosis.

Working is an important part of recovery, and the key to helping individuals with mental health conditions succeed on the job is an inclusive, supportive workplace. As the workforce returns to the workplace, many employees are experiencing [fear and anxiety](#). Thus, mental health and workplace wellbeing should be at the forefront of every employer's planning. Through collaboration, employers can create supportive, inclusive workplaces for all workers. Research indicates that a mentally and emotionally supported employee is more productive, has fewer absences, and experiences greater longevity on the job.



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Mental Health and Workplace Wellbeing

The challenges of the past two years, along with general increased understanding, have prompted many employers to consider strategies to support their employees' mental health and workplace wellbeing. Such strategies demonstrate an organization's commitment to inclusion and offering all workers what they need to maintain their mental health. They also benefit employers by empowering employees to deliver their best on the job, today and in the years ahead. For more information about fostering a mentally healthy workplace, please explore the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)-funded Employer Assistance and Resource Network's (EARN) [Mental Health Toolkit](#) and the [Checklist for a Mentally Healthy Workplace](#). These resources are built around a policy framework called the "4 A's" of a mental health-friendly workplace:

- Build Awareness and a Supportive Culture
- Provide Accommodations to Employees
- Offer Employee Assistance
- Ensure Access to Treatment

Leadership for an Inclusive, Supportive Workplace

Commitment at all levels of an organization is critical to creating and maintaining a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and supportive work environment, including for workers with mental health conditions. Establishing an inclusive business culture begins with leadership at the highest levels, including the heads of companies and agencies. Managers, supervisors, human resources staff, and other personnel involved in hiring decisions must also understand the role they play in facilitating an inclusive and equitable environment. To learn more about creating a more disability-inclusive workplace, please explore EARN's [Inclusion@Work Framework](#).

Workplace Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations enable people with disabilities, including people with mental health conditions, to perform the essential functions of a job effectively and productively. When it comes to accommodating people with mental health conditions, not all needed accommodations are tangible products or physical changes. Common examples include flexible work arrangements and scheduling to assist in accessing treatment. The key is to consider how the condition affects a person's job performance. That said, not all employees with mental health conditions need accommodations, especially if they are in a flexible, supportive workplace. To learn more about accommodating people with mental health conditions in the workplace, please explore the DOL-funded [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#).

Mental Health Media Resources

All of us have a role to play in promoting a mental health-friendly workplace. That's the message behind the "Mental Health at Work: What Can I Do?" public education campaign, which was launched by the DOL-funded Campaign for Disability Employment this year. This campaign centers on a powerful public service announcement that addresses the role all people in an organization play in promoting workplace wellbeing. To access the accessible public service announcement and toolkit, go to the [Mental Health at Work: What Can I Do? Campaign webpage](#).



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