Walton Healthy Worksites
Mental Health & Stress Management Activity Toolkit

Mental health refers to the comprehensive way people meet the demands of life. It's a key component in overall health and well-being. Mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression are common, and are routinely listed as top concerns in employee health surveys.

When the healthy choice is an easier choice, people are more likely to feel better. Worksites can play a role in supporting employees by making it easier for employees to seek and receive mental health assessment, referral and treatment.

RESOURCES & STRATEGIES

The policy example and graph provided on the following pages can be used as your best practices framework for developing sustainable policy, system or environmental (PSE) changes regarding issues related to physical activity:

1. What policy changes would need to be changed or added?
2. What system changes need to be addressed?
3. What issues within your work environment needs to be added or revised?
4. What are the steps to accomplish the PSE change?
5. What is the timeline and who is responsible for following through?

After answering these critical questions, determine if you have any remaining ideas that personalizes the strategy to fit your own work place.

BENEFITS

Employers that focus on mental health and stress management helps:

- Create an environment that fosters better relationships among co-workers
- Improve employee's contribution of work to organization's business goals
- Advance employee's meaningfulness of the job
- Provide opportunities to use skills/abilities
- Improve the relationship with immediate supervisor

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Florida Department of Health
http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and services/prevention/stress/index.html

Mental Health America
http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/workplace-wellness

AmeriHealth
https://www.amerihealth.com/worksite_wellness/employer_toolkits/stress_awareness.html

American Psychiatric Association Center for Workplace Mental Health
http://workplacementalhealth.org/Mental-Health-Topics/Workplace-Stress

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SAMPLE MENTAL HEALTH ACTIVITY POLICY #1

Purpose
Our Mental Health policy outlines our provisions to prevent and address mental health issues among our employees. Mental health is just as important as physical health. Mental illness may be detrimental to a person, as it impacts happiness, productivity and collaboration. Mental health issues may affect companies, in the form of:
- Turnover
- Absenteeism
- Poor employee performance
- Employee substance abuse
- Work-related accidents
- Workplace violence or harassment

With this policy, we aim to support our employees and create a healthy and happy workplace. We want everyone to feel appreciated and be treated fairly.

Scope
This policy applies to all our employees. {HR/ Mental Wellness Committee} is primarily responsible for communicating this policy and overseeing its implementation. Our policy starts by seeking input from all stakeholders. {Company} will consult employees, senior management and mental health professionals to develop and revise our policy.

Policy elements

What are mental health issues?
Mental health issues in the workplace are any conditions that affect employees' state of mind. These conditions may include mild depression, stress and severe anxiety which may result in burnout. Substance abuse may also perpetuate mental health issues.

Mental health problems manifest in different ways. Some employees may suffer with no physical side effects, while others may experience physical symptoms (e.g. increased blood pressure, lethargy, changes in eating habits.)

Factors that cause mental health issues
Employees may experience mental health issues for various reasons that an employer cannot control (e.g. hereditary, family conflicts, general health.) But, there are also work-related reasons for mental health problems, including:
- Job insecurity
- Excessive pressure
- Work-life imbalance
- Lack of appreciation
- Hostile workplace conditions
- Unsatisfactory job or workload
- Unpleasant relationships with colleagues or managers

To every extent possible, our company's leaders aim to recognize and address cases of workplace pressures that contribute to mental health issues.

Company Actions
We aim to:
- Treat mental illness seriously
- Identify issues proactively and resolve them
- Support employees who face mental health problems
- Create pleasant workplaces in collaboration with managers, employees, unions and health experts

Internal Policies
As a way to prevent employee distress, we will set up policies for: {List any already established policies that parallel with mental health and stress management. Examples include
- Anti-retaliation
- Anti-discrimination
- Workplace violence
- Open communication
- Work from home/ Flexible hours
- Parental leave/ Short-term disability leave}

This list isn't exhaustive. These policies aim to preserve a harmonious workplace where employees can enjoy their work and balance their jobs with their personal lives.

{Add any other programs that assists with mental health and stress management. Example: Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which includes confidential health assessments, counseling and a 24-hour hotline for personal crises}.

Mental health awareness
{Company} wants to raise mental health awareness and combat the stigmas associated with them. To do this, we will:
- Host information sessions. {Company} will schedule {quarterly, annual, etc.} workshops for managers and employees explaining important elements of mental health.
- Keep employees informed. {Company} will organize an event or process to present updates to this policy to all employees whenever the policy is modified.
- Compile helpful resources. {Company} will establish a repository of articles, videos, infographics, and community resources about mental health

Job-related issues
Issues related to work, compensation, job insecurity and work-life balance can heavily burden our employees. In these cases, {Company} encourages our employees to speak to our mental health professional about how to handle their individual situations better.

Additionally, {Company} encourages open communication between employees and managers. If employees have a work-related problem, they should speak openly to their managers. Managers are in turn obliged to listen to their employees and should search for a mutually satisfying solution together.

Managers' responsibilities
Managers should also proactively identify mental health issues among their employees. If they perceive that an employee is in a state of emotional or psychological distress, they should reach out to them. Here are some tips on how managers can address an employee who suffers from mental health issues in common situations:

- If an employee has work-related problems, managers should come up with a solution with the employee's input.

- If an employee has issues collaborating with colleagues, managers should meet with concerned employees and serve as mediators. If the problem is severe (e.g. violence, harassment, victimization), the problem should be elevated to Human Resources or Senior Management.
- If an employee's problems are personal or the employee refuses to discuss them, managers should encourage them to contact a local mental health professional.

Employee recognition and development

One way to prevent our employees from excessive stress is to recognize their work and invest in their personal growth. For this reason, {Company} will establish:

- Recognition programs
- Mentorship programs
- Learning and development programs

Compliance with the law

The law protects employees who suffer from medical conditions (e.g. clinical depression) or mental disorders (e.g. schizophrenia.) Consistent with our non-discrimination practices, we will treat these employees fairly and we won't oblige anyone to disclose their condition or other medical information. Instead, we will attempt to support employees who come to us with mental health issues and establish strategies that apply to everyone.

Also, {Company} will make reasonable accommodations for people with mental disabilities (e.g. flexible work hours.)

Evaluating outcomes

This policy's provisions are not restrictive. We will test its elements to find out what works and what doesn't. {Company} should continuously research mental health topics and evaluate the results of our policy with managers' help. {Company} encourage all employees to share their ideas and concerns.

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Best Practice Worksheet

Use the following graph to organize your plan to address nutrition in the workplace. Use the columns to assess your organization's current PSE.

Strategy	System Change	Environment Change	Policy Change	Steps	Timeline	Responsible Party	Notes
Provide mental health and mental illness materials and messages through various means: brochures, fact sheets, paycheck stuffers and electronic communications		X					
Offer confidential screenings for depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse	X						
Encourage the use of telephone help lines	X	X					
Offer stress reduction presentations on varied topics: conflict resolution, managing multiple priorities, project planning, personal finance planning, etc.	X						
Provide flexible scheduling during work for training, meditation, physical activity, etc.	X		X				
Support a mental health-friendly work environment that provides family/employee-friendly accommodations for medical appointments, etc.	X	X	X				
Sponsor presentations and trainings on mental health issues and suicide prevention awareness for supervisors, business leadership team or management	X						

Teach supervisors how to recognize, intervene, refer and supervise employees with mental health issues	X						
Review policies and practices concerning employee privacy, return to work and HIPPA, accommodation and ADA guidelines	X		X				
Provide employee assistance program (EAP)	X						
Provide and maintain comprehensive health coverage, including mental health and substance abuse benefits	X						
Offer health insurance coverage with referral mechanisms to connect employees easily to mental health and substance abuse services	X						
Promote parenting classes or other community resources	X	X					
Provide interactive food opportunities such as taste testing, food preparation skills, and peer-to-peer modeling	X	X					