

Mental Health and Wellness in the Workplace

Why is Workplace Mental Health Important?

THE FACTS:

- **An estimated 26%** of American adults experience a diagnosable mental health condition each year.¹
- **Depression** is the leading cause of disability worldwide², and mental health conditions are the number one cause of disability in the U.S.³
- **Less than one-third** of adults with a mental health condition seek help for it.⁴
- **Up to 90%** of those who do seek help for mental health conditions are able to significantly reduce symptoms and improve their quality of life.⁵
- **More than 80%** of employees treated for mental health conditions report improved levels of efficiency and satisfaction at work.⁶

The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with an increased understanding of the prevalence of mental health conditions, has prompted many employers to consider implementing strategies to support their employees' mental health. These strategies are good for employees and employers, demonstrating an organization's commitment to inclusion and offering workers the support they need, thereby empowering employees to deliver their best on the job.



The 4 A's of a Mental Health-Friendly Workplace



1 [Stamp Out Stigma](#)

2 [World Health Organization](#)

3 [HealthyPeople.gov](#)

4 [Stamp Out Stigma](#)

5 [Stamp Out Stigma](#)

6 [American Psychiatric Association Center for Workplace Mental Health](#)

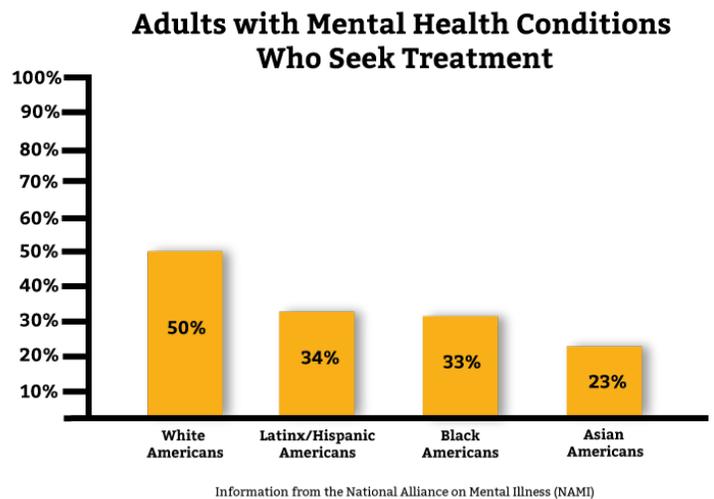
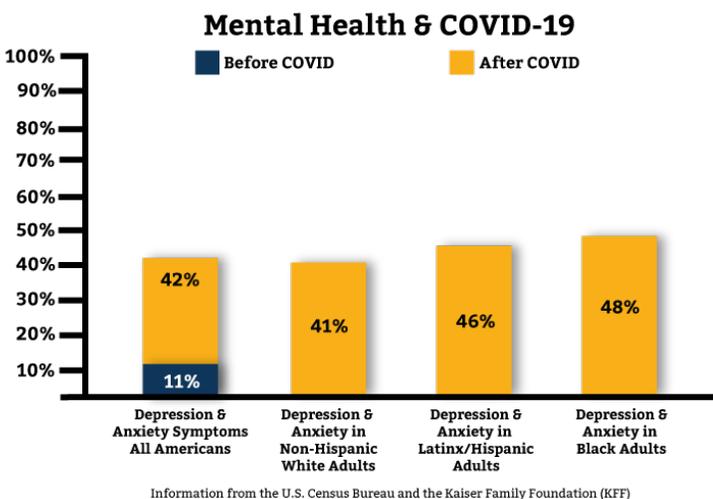
To help employers learn how to cultivate a welcoming and supportive work environment for employees with mental health conditions, the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) developed a Mental Health Toolkit that offers an easy-to-follow framework built around the “4 A’s” of a mental health-friendly workplace: Awareness, Accommodations, Assistance, and Access. The toolkit provides strategies for implementing each of the 4 A’s as well as summaries of research and descriptions of related initiatives implemented by employers of varying sizes and industries. Access the toolkit at AskEARN.org/mentalhealth.

Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Workplace Mental Health Initiatives

Events over the past year have prompted many employers to assess their policies and practices addressing mental health to ensure they are equitable and inclusive. Thus, mental health initiatives should employ a wide variety of approaches and offer multiple avenues for seeking assistance and support so that they are readily available to all employees, including those from different racial and cultural backgrounds.

THE FACTS:

- The number of people experiencing anxiety and depression symptoms has **more than tripled since 2019**, with Black Americans shouldering the heaviest burden.⁷
- **More than 42%** of people surveyed by the U.S. Census Bureau in December 2020 reported symptoms of anxiety or depression that month, an increase from 11% the previous year.⁸
- People of color have disproportionately been impacted by mental health challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, **48% of Black adults and 46% of Hispanic/Latinx adults** reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression, compared to 41% of Non-Hispanic White adults.⁹
- **50% of White American adults** with a mental health diagnosis received treatment in the past year, compared to 23% for Asian Americans, 33% for Black Americans, and 34% for Hispanic/Latinx Americans.¹⁰
- When it comes to mental health, **race comes into play** due to a number of factors, including cultural norms, implicit bias, increased likelihood of prior health conditions, and working in essential work and service jobs.¹¹



7 [American Psychiatric Association Center for Workplace Mental Health](#)
 8 [U.S. Census Bureau, as reported in Nature \(February 3, 2021\)](#)
 9 [Kaiser Family Foundation](#)
 10 [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)
 11 [Mental Health America](#)

Merck's Mind Well Program

In 2018, Merck held a global webcast entitled “Reducing the Stigma of Mental Health” with Christine Moutier, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to increase awareness of the prevalence and importance of mental health. The level of employee engagement and feedback following the webcast indicated a great deal of interest in mental health within Merck’s workforce. Based on previous analysis and the desire for more mental health education, the company developed a taskforce on mental health awareness, which resulted in the creation of the [Mind Well program](#). Through this program, employee volunteers called “Mind Well Champions” make a commitment to helping to create an inclusive and supportive work environment that values employee health and addresses emotional wellbeing and mental health with compassion. Starting as a grassroots effort by employees taking the [Mental Health First Aid](#) training course, Mind Well Champions evolved into a highly engaged group of ambassadors who expanded Merck’s ability to support an emotionally safe work environment and a sense of inclusion for those dealing with mental health issues.

Resources

- [Center for Workplace Mental Health](#)
 - [Notice.Talk.Act.® at Work](#)
 - [ICU Workplace Mental Health Program](#)
 - [Right Direction Workplace Mental Health Program](#)
- [Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy Mental Health Webpage](#)
- [International Employee Assistance Professionals Association](#)
- [Mental Health America: Mental Illness and Work Webpage](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness Succeeding at Work Webpage](#)

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