

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

HR Managers' guide to measuring, managing
and monitoring workplace mental health

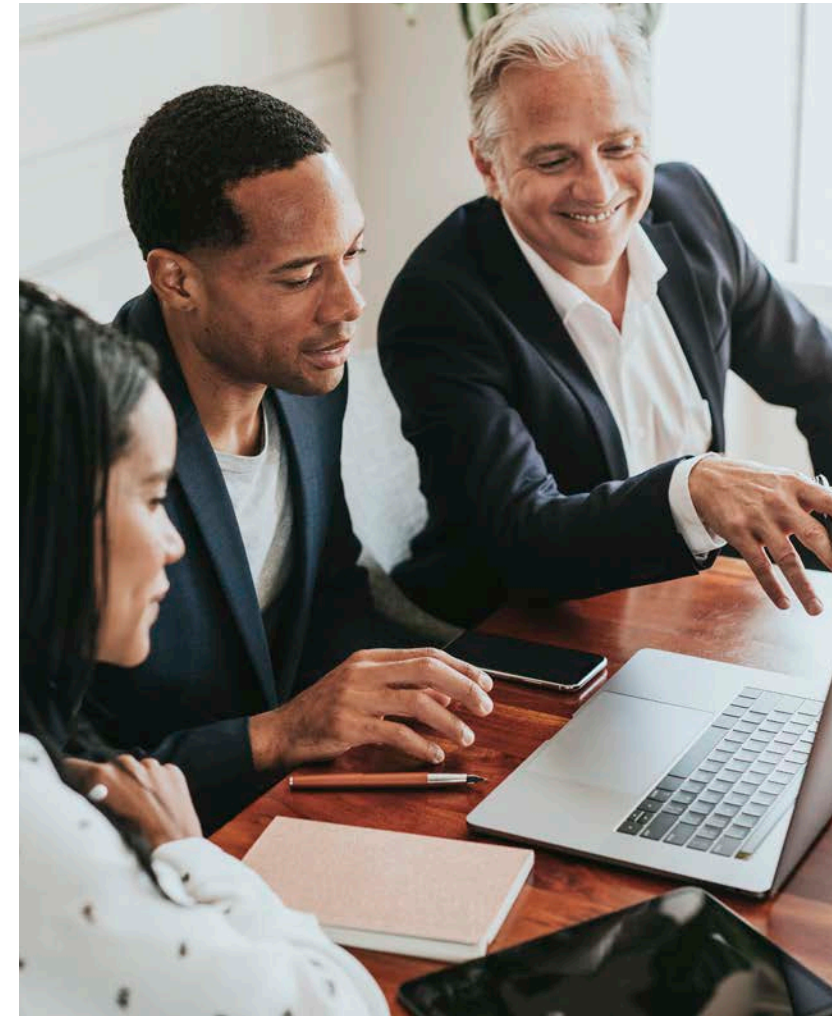
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The mental wellbeing of people at work is good for everyone and enhances personal and organisational resilience, and success. Everyone has a role to play, both in looking after their own mental health and creating a mentally healthy workplace.

- Heads Up in collaboration with beyond blue

Every workplace is different: It has its own set of challenges and difficulties to maneuver through. Maintaining a positive and uplifting workplace for your employees is therefore, also different and unique to your company.

It's important to understand your employees unique needs and how they fit into your company culture and policies. In any one year, 1 in 5 (20%) of us will experience a diagnosable mental illness. This statistic shows us that mental illness is something that can happen to any one of us. The best thing you can do as a manager is to ensure that you provide your employees with the right support by being there for them when they need you most - create a mental health first aid for your organisation.





One size doesn't fit all with EAP services. People feel better when they can reach out to specialist services that suit their individual needs.

Career Money Life can help you create a holistic mental health and wellbeing program for your organisation that adds value. We empower our clients and their employees with flexibility and choice.

Right from training courses for managers and leaders, to help them manage workplace mental health to well-rounded support tools and access to expert psychologists and counsellors in the industry.

Delivering emotional, mental and general psychological support is a critical part of the employer relationship. This guide will take you through some strategies that HR can implement to create a more positive and healthy workplace: by monitoring, managing and measuring employee workplace mental health.

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Mental illness is now the leading cause of sickness absence and long-term disability worldwide, including Australia. Within Australia, it is estimated that depression alone costs the economy more than AUD 12 billion each year, mainly due to lost productivity and worker turnover.

- Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry

Measuring

What is mental health, what are the signs and symptoms, how do they appear in a work context?

Creating an atmosphere of positivity and building a culture where people feel safe and secure is essential for creating a mentally healthy workplace. It's important for managers to take a pause once every few months to check in with their team and to assess the level of workplace mental health. Let's start with the basics.

What is mental health?

A state of well-being and happiness in which –

- ✓ A person has positive relationships
- ✓ Every individual realizes his or her own potential
- ✓ Can cope with the normal stresses of life
- ✓ Can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community

A mental illness/injury is a diagnosable condition that:

- ✓ causes major changes to thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- ✓ impairs functioning and
- ✓ is persistent over time

Signs and symptoms that can appear in the work, that may indicate that your employees are struggling:



Missed
deadlines



Frequent
fatigue



Lack of
cooperation



Increased
accidents/
incidents



Frequent
complaints
& criticism



Poor
concentration/
memory



Decreased
productivity



Decreased
involvement



Increased
lateness
/absence



Take a minute to understand this for yourself, as leaders you will need to spread awareness, provide the right support and lead by example. Have a conversation with your team and try to identify whether any of them need more support. The next section will guide you on how you can provide this support in an impactful way.

Managing

Strategies and actions to providing the right support for mental health concerns

After having measured the level of workplace mental health, it's time for action. It starts with looking inward, into your company's policies and practices and then about providing support and reaching outward to employees that need your help.

Create a plan

Sit down with some of the key decision makers and create a mental health framework to practice within the organisation. Here are some of the strategies to consider:

Designing a work culture that minimises harm

Take a look at the work culture, the job roles and the general system the company operates with.

Has the work been designed to minimise stress and harm to an employee's mental health? For example, do you allow flexible working hours?

Do your employees have enough resources to do the job well?

Have you involved your employees in certain operational decisions affecting them?



Here are some small steps you can take to address potential workplace stressors in your company:

- ✓ Regularly reviewing workloads, timelines and resources
- ✓ Improve role clarity by ensuring your staff have well-defined roles and the expectations of them are clear
- ✓ Provide adequate resources and training to your staff so they are able to perform their role confidently and competently
- ✓ Involve employees in operational decisions that affect them directly

Educate and Communicate

Talk about mental health openly and spread awareness. If your employees are trained and educated about the different symptoms and issues that can occur with mental illness, they will be better equipped to identify signs early on. It can also give them the skills and confidence to approach someone when they need help or to have a conversation with someone they're worried about.

Here are some small steps you can take to spread awareness:

- ✓ **Management Training (MAP)** - Career Money Life's Manager Support Program takes managers through a structured module, explaining the different mental health issues people face, how to identify them and how best to approach and handle the situation.
- ✓ **Resources** - Providing educational information and/or posters in the workplace, delivering short webinars or e-books. (Career Money Life's EAP programs provides your employees with all of the above and more, get in touch to learn more.)
- ✓ **Talk openly and encourage others to do the same** - Sharing any personal experiences about mental health can make a real difference in making work a safe place to share. Be open and encourage others to do the same and when they do, ensure that you listen and understand.

Support and tools

Awareness is a great first step, early help-seeking can minimise the effects of mental illnesses. After identification, it is also important to provide your employees with the right support and tools to help them recover and return to work - happier and healthier.

Mental health support or EAPs are very important for someone going through a tough time, and can mean the difference between that person being able to stay in their role or leaving the workplace. Supporting someone to stay at work has a number of benefits, for both the employee and the business.

Here are some support tools you can provide for your employees to help support them:

- ✓ **Counselling services** - Provide counselling sessions for impacted employees, allow them to choose the counsellor that they are most comfortable with
- ✓ **Well-being checks/health screenings** - Conduct bi-monthly or quarterly well-being checks for your employees



- ✓ **Focus on the work environment** - Making small changes with simple things like increasing natural light, having plants in the office, standing desk options, social meeting spaces, providing healthy food options etc.
- ✓ **Access to speak with experts** - For some employees, counselling may not be enough, they may need help from an accredited psychiatrist to help them with their issues.
- ✓ **Online and Offline Support** - Support works differently for different individuals, some people may prefer face-to-face options while some people prefer self-paced, online solutions. It's a good practice to offer both and let the employee choose what they're comfortable with.



When every person's experiences are unique, flexibility and choice is essential to make a meaningful impact.

Employees have a personalised, choice-driven experience in their lives these days and expect this from their employer too. Don't disappoint them with "old school" approaches to employee assistance programs when there's a cost-effective contemporary solution.

With Career Money Life's EAP program, your people can easily create a unique experience to meet their personal needs and circumstances with our range of contemporary EAP services and eap counselling support tools.

Monitoring

Maintaining and sustaining healthy mental health practices

After you have clearly identified the level of workplace wellness, strategised on some initiatives to help execute and manage workplace mental health, it is essential to keep monitoring and maintaining this culture of positivity within the company. One of the best ways to do this is to appoint a mental health officer for your company.

Mental Health First Aider

What is it?

Just as you might have appointed an employee to undertake a First Aid course to learn CPR, or encourage designated fire wardens to take a course in fire safety, Mental Health First Aid courses are short training programmes which can help train an individual to be better equipped to handle workplace mental health initiatives.



Sometimes it can be difficult for your employees to reach out. They may not feel confident or may even have difficulties identifying the signs of illness. A Mental Health First Aider can be trained to recognise the warning signs and symptoms of certain mental ill-health issues and create a safe space for your employees to speak up.

What do they do?

An Accredited Mental Health First Aider will be appointed in your workplace to:

- ✓ Provide mental health first aid within your worksite as needed, at their level of competence and training
- ✓ Escalate any matters if required in a prompt and appropriate fashion according to your relevant organisational policies and procedures.
- ✓ Improve awareness and knowledge of mental illnesses, treatments and first aid actions
- ✓ Decreasing stigmatising attitudes, encouraging people to speak freely when needed

It is the responsibility of the MHFA Officer to:

- ✓ Maintain their MHFAider accreditation
- ✓ Complete available refresher training as directed/required

Providing training in this area means that someone on your team can offer valuable support to employees that need it. They will be the go-to person in the office that people can reach out to for support. Your employees will feel safer and more secure knowing they have someone they can speak to and HR managers are also at ease, knowing that there is someone in charge looking out for their people.

Here are some of the skills an employee would need to be a good Mental Health First Aider:

- ✓ Active Listening, good listener
- ✓ Empathy, high EQ
- ✓ Compassionate, ability to understand
- ✓ Confidence, able to encourage others
- ✓ Good interpersonal skills, someone who is easy to talk to



Career Money Life in collaboration with Inspire Learning provides Mental Health First Aid training courses for employees.

We provide both virtual and in-person training courses that are delivered by certified experts in the field. Get in touch to learn more.

The way you support your people during their “moments of truth” impacts them, you and your employer brand.

Creating a safe space for your people shows them how much you value them and their contribution. When employees are happy and feel supported at work, it directly impacts their commitment and dedication to the job.

Offering an EAP can help employees balance work, family and personal life and ultimately help make the workplace one that allows people to be their best.

Partnering with Career Money Life means you are providing your people with the power of choice, something we know that employees highly value and often find absent from their EAP programs. In addition, we empower them with a wide range of tools, support and advice to help them make the right choice for their needs.

We know that one size doesn't fit all with EAP, and people do better when they can reach out to specialist services that suit them.

Our unique approach to EAP helps you provide your employees with support that helps.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

If you are thinking about how to better meet the needs of your workforce, and looking for a different approach, reach out to us.

BOOK A DEMO



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