



# Mental Health at Work: What Can *I* Do?

A Workplace Guide



OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

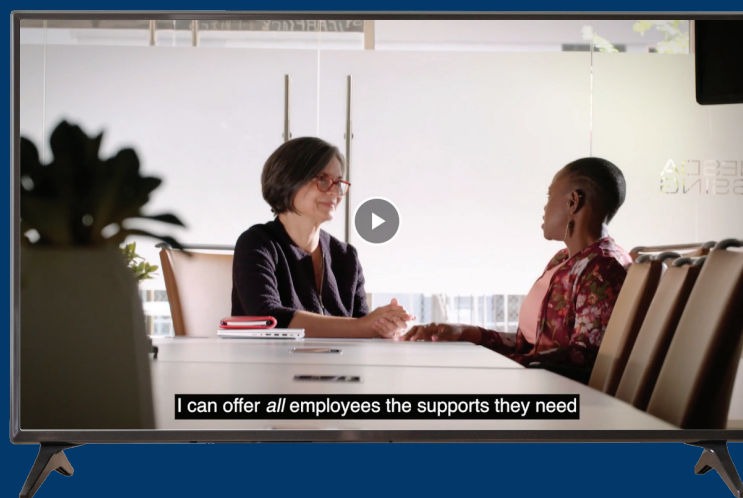
What can  
**YOU** do?  
THE CAMPAIGN FOR  
DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT

# What Can *I* Do to Promote a Mental Health-Friendly Workplace?

We *all* have a role to play in promoting wellbeing at work—whether we’re a company leader, manager, co-worker or someone with a mental health condition.

That’s the message at the heart of the Campaign for Disability Employment’s “Mental Health at Work: What Can *I* Do?” public service announcement (PSA).

This Workplace Guide—a companion resource to the PSA—shares more about this important issue and outlines things we can *all* do to promote a mental health-friendly workplace. Organizational leaders, employee resource groups (ERGs) and others are encouraged to use it to raise awareness about mental health in their own workplaces and/or facilitate discussions about collaborative approaches to workplace wellbeing.



To access the PSA, printable versions of the strategies outlined in this guide and additional resources on workplace mental health best practices, visit [WhatCanYouDoCampaign.org](https://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org).



## As a CEO/Company Leader: What Can I Do?

*“I can set the tone for a supportive culture.”*



**As a CEO or other company leader, you can set the tone for a mental health-friendly work culture—and taking steps to do so is smart business.**

One in five American adults experiences a mental health condition each year.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of these individuals are of working age, and the key to helping them—and all employees—thrive is an inclusive, supportive workplace.

**To promote such an environment, employers can follow the “4 A’s” framework:**

1

### **Awareness:**

Educating workers about mental health issues and taking action to foster a supportive workplace culture.

2

### **Accommodations:**

Providing employees with mental health conditions the supports they need to perform their best.

3

### **Assistance:**

Supporting employees who have, or may develop, a mental health condition. Some employers do this through employee assistance programs (EAPs).

4

### **Access:**

Assessing employer-sponsored healthcare plans to ensure coverage for behavioral/mental health treatment.

The “4 A’s” framework is a key part of the Mental Health Toolkit, a resource for employers developed by the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN). In addition to specific strategies for implementing the “4 A’s,” this toolkit provides background and resources on workplace mental health and examples of related initiatives implemented by a variety of companies. To access it, visit [AskEARN.org/MentalHealth](https://www.earn.org/MentalHealth).

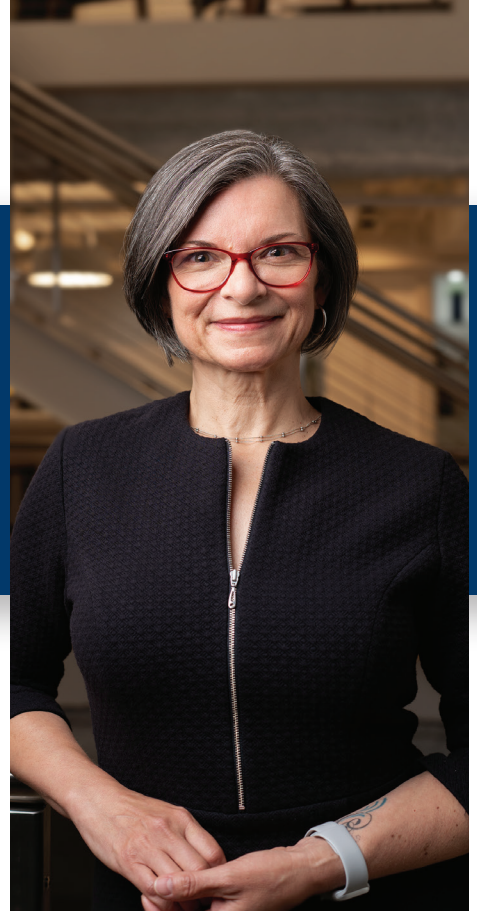
<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Mental Health



As a Manager:

# What Can I Do?

*“I can offer assistance and accommodations.”*



**As a manager or supervisor, you can ensure your company's commitment to a mental health-friendly workplace is carried out at the ground level.**

One key to this is ensuring all employees have the right tools and work environment to perform their best. For certain employees, including some employees with mental health conditions, this might involve making a reasonable accommodation, when requested.

Not all accommodations are tangible products or physical changes, and that is often the case when it comes to accommodations for people with mental health conditions. Furthermore, not all employees with a mental health condition will need an accommodation. For those who do, common examples include flexible work arrangements and scheduling, leave to assist in accessing treatment, a workplace mentor, more frequent breaks and other strategies, such as allowing food or drink at workstations to help with potential side effects of medication.

You can also refer employees seeking additional support to

any employee assistance program (EAP) services. EAPs assist employees and family members experiencing personal difficulties, including but not limited to mental health conditions, that might be impacting their job performance. Even if your organization does not offer formal EAP services, you can take steps to make all employees aware of mental health service providers in their communities.

It is important to note that it is not your job to diagnose or ask or speculate about an employee's mental health. Rather, it is to supervise and ensure employees meet performance requirements—and address problems when they do not. Providing support and referring employees to assistance for underlying issues is an important strategy for doing so.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a reasonable accommodation is considered any modification to the work environment, or the way a job is done, that enables someone with a disability to apply for or perform a job. When requested, employers covered by the ADA are required to provide such reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities, absent undue hardship.

As a Co-Worker:

# What Can I Do?

*“I can listen and be a source of support to my colleagues.”*



**As a co-worker, you can do a lot to help promote a mental health-friendly workplace, regardless of your position or level within the organization.**

To start, if a co-worker shares information with you about a mental health condition or is having problems at work that you feel might be a result of stress, anxiety or other mental health conditions, you can encourage them to seek help. If your company offers an employee assistance program (EAP), that is a good place to start. EAPs assist employees, including those with mental health conditions, and family members experiencing personal difficulties that might be impacting their job performance.

If your organization does not offer an EAP, you might suggest your co-worker seek assistance outside of the workplace, for instance, through a community mental health services provider. While it is not your role to provide solutions, such a suggestion may serve as a first step in someone getting needed support.

You can also remind co-workers that they may be able to request a reasonable accommodation to assist in managing a mental health condition, if they are open to talking to their manager or someone in the company’s Human Resources or Equal Employment Opportunity office about it.

On a broader level, you can play an important role in creating a supportive, inclusive culture—both at work and in your community—by how you speak about mental health. Words matter. Discourage others from perpetuating stereotypes or using derogatory terms to describe people with mental health conditions. Also know that information about a person’s disability should always be held in confidence.

Finally, all people have mental health needs, so remember to take care of your own and access support and resources, if needed.

It is important to note that it is not your role to diagnose or ask or speculate about a co-worker’s mental health. But, by understanding more about mental health conditions and resources available to help people experiencing them, you may be able to help.

## As a Person with a Mental Health Condition: What Can I Do?

*“I can ask for what I need to perform my best.”*



**If you're a person with a mental health condition, you can ask for what you need to perform your best at work.**

Sometimes, this might mean requesting a reasonable accommodation. Common examples of accommodations for people with mental health conditions include flexible work arrangements and/or schedules.

While employers covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are required to provide reasonable accommodations, it's your responsibility to request them. When doing so, you do not need to specify your condition. You also do not need to mention the ADA or use the word "accommodation." You should, however, note that you are having a challenge at work and that it is related to a medical condition or disability. You don't have to talk to your supervisor to request an accommodation; you may prefer to go to someone in the company's Human Resources or Equal Employment Opportunity office first.

An employer may request documentation from a healthcare

professional. This documentation also does not need to note a specific diagnosis. Rather, the documentation needs to establish that you have a covered disability and the extent to which this limits your ability to perform your job. Also know that, by law, this information must be kept confidential and separate from your personnel file.

Depending on your employment situation, your employer may invite you to self-identify (via a form) as a person with a disability. Just as with deciding whether to request an accommodation, choosing to self-identify is a personal choice. Such questions are permissible only when being asked for affirmative action purposes, and the information must be kept confidential and separate from regular personnel files, in a similar manner to a disclosure and request for accommodation. But such data can help companies understand and respond to the needs of their workforce better.

Finally, you may be in a position to educate others about mental health conditions. This requires comfort disclosing, which again is a personal choice. But, even without disclosing, avenues for advocacy might exist through an employee resource group (ERG) or workplace activities around mental health and general disability awareness.

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**YOU** do?

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[WhatCanYouDoCampaign.org](http://WhatCanYouDoCampaign.org)

# Workplace Mental Health Resources

## **Center for Workplace Mental Health**

### **WorkplaceMentalHealth.org**

The Center for Workplace Mental Health offers a range of tools to help employers create a more supportive workplace environment and advance mental health policies at their organizations. Resources include ready-to-use trainings and case studies of workplace mental health initiatives in action.

## **Employee Assistance Professionals**

### **Association (EAPA)**

#### **EAPassn.org**

EAPA is a membership organization that provides education and services to employee assistance professionals and others interested in behavioral health and employee wellbeing. As part of this, it also helps employers understand employee assistance program (EAP) services and options for offering them.

## **Employer Assistance and Resource Network on**

### **Disability Inclusion (EARN)**

#### **AskEARN.org**

EARN helps employers recruit, hire, retain and advance qualified people with disabilities and build disability-inclusive workplace cultures. Among its resources is a Mental Health Toolkit, which outlines best practices and examples of mental health initiatives implemented by a variety of companies. EARN is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy.

## **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**

### **AskJAN.org**

JAN is the leading source of free, expert and confidential guidance on job accommodations. It offers a range of resources on its website as well as one-on-one assistance to both employers and individuals with a range of disabilities, including mental health conditions. JAN is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy.

## **Mental Health America**

### **MHANational.org**

Mental Health America promotes mental health through advocacy, education, research and services to individuals with mental health conditions and their families, including through peer support. It also offers a range of resources for use in the workplace, including the Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health recognition program for employers.

## **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

### **NAMI.org**

NAMI works to build better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental health conditions. It has hundreds of local affiliates across the U.S. that raise awareness and provide support to individuals and families. Through its "StigmaFree Company" program, businesses can pledge to create an accepting and mentally healthy work culture and access resources to assist in doing so.

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services**

### **Administration**

#### **SAMHSA.gov**

SAMHSA is a federal agency that works to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental health conditions on America's communities. It offers a variety of materials employers can use to educate employees about substance abuse and mental health, including treatment locators to help employees access help for themselves or their families.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, free and confidential 24-hour support is available. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or call or text 988.





“Mental Health at Work: What Can I Do?” is a production of the Campaign for Disability Employment (CDE), a collaborative effort among several disability and business organizations that showcases supportive, inclusive workplaces for all workers. It is the fifth in a series of PSAs exploring different facets of disability employment, all of which also have accompanying workplace guides.

**To access these resources or learn more about the CDE, visit [WhatCanYouDoCampaign.org](http://WhatCanYouDoCampaign.org).**



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