AXIOMMEDICAL

7 Steps for Making Workplace Mental Health Work

The data is staggering, we know more than 20% of our workforce at any given moment has a diagnosable mental condition like depression or anxiety. These are diagnoses...what about the employees who are stressed, starting to feel anxious, disengaged, or tired and burned out. How do we keep them engaged and productive in the workplace?

The average turnover rate in the US continues to steadily climb, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it's 47.2% across all industries. Turnover has real costs to organizations, to continuously hire, train, and replace employees, not to mention institutional knowledge and innovation opportunities walking out of the company. This has become a major concern of enlightened employers without a whole lot of direction on how to make real and lasting changes. The status quo doesn't work but what does?

1. Ask Your Employees

One of the best ways to get a pulse of your organization is to ask! At Axiom, we do this in a few ways. We have our employees complete a quarterly eNPS Survey, we ask them how they are doing with their work environment via formal surveys, informal conversations, and continuous communication. Employees will tell you how you can best address mental health in the workplace, especially if you have created a culture of psychological safety and support.

2. Train in Mental Health First Aid

We often hear from HR leaders and employers that they are very uncomfortable addressing emotional or mental health in the workplace. They think they must be a therapist or have similar training in order to have these conversations. Mental Health First Aid training should be standard for managers and HR leaders in all organizations. (I might argue with all employees if you are able to.) It provides you the tools to be able to ask, "How are you doing?" and be genuinely interested in the answer, with the ability to do something if an employee isn't doing well. It was some of the best training I have completed in 16 years of managing employees. I completed the training and felt like I had a better understanding of how to make a real difference with my teams especially as remote work continues.

There is specific Mental Health First Aid training for the workplace and teams looking to start a cultural change within their organization, reduce the stigma around mental health challenges, and build an environment of psychological safety.

### 3. Implement a Way to Measure Employee Resilience

Resilience as a tool for measurement is a validated way to understand the population risks of your employees. Like a good wellness program, employees and leadership should know their resilience number. If you know your blood pressure, weight, and height, resilience should be a standard number all employees know. A resilience screening tool will help the individual employee but more importantly will provide aggregated population data for HR and Management. This heat map approach can help predict the risk of turnover, associated costs, and productivity losses within an organization. Axiom has an employee resilience tool that employers are utilizing for this exact population health approach. Get a baseline, continuously measure, and begin predicting key metrics like turnover.

4. Have a Better Plan for Employees BEFORE They Are in Crisis

Most employers when asked about what they have in place for employee mental health reference their Employee Assistance Programs. When designed, EAPs were great in theory. In practice, they are underutilized and typically have misaligned incentives through their revenue model to provide the best quality service and outcomes. In the US, EAPs utilization hovers between 3-5% leaving a large gap of employees unsupported. One of the fundamental flaws of EAPs is that they are typically used after the employee is in a major struggle or crisis. What if employers implemented a model that helped predict or got employee resources before they are in crisis? Axiom's model of injury case management and contagious illness screenings relies upon early intervention and proactive management of employee health care. What if we could use this same method in supporting employee mental health? By rolling out resilience screening and a supportive case management approach (as well as steps 1 and 2), employers can be proactive in providing resources and helping employees identify a concern before it reaches a crisis level.

5. Psychiatric Nurse Case Management Support Makes All the Difference

Once you have identified that an employee may need support, having a team of psychiatric Nurse Case Managers on your side highly improves outcomes. Nurse Case Managers are trained to listen to an employee's concerns, provide education, communication, additional resources, and most importantly, follow up continuously to make sure an employee is getting appropriate care. If the nurse and the employee determine that the case should be handled beyond mental health first aid, the nurse ensures the employee gets in to see a suitable clinical provider. The nurse case manager then follows up with the employee as they are getting treatment to make sure they are getting the right treatment and help make any changes if needed. The relationship between work and recovery is well documented. Employees who feel connected to their peers and communities (including their work community), tend to have improved outcomes.
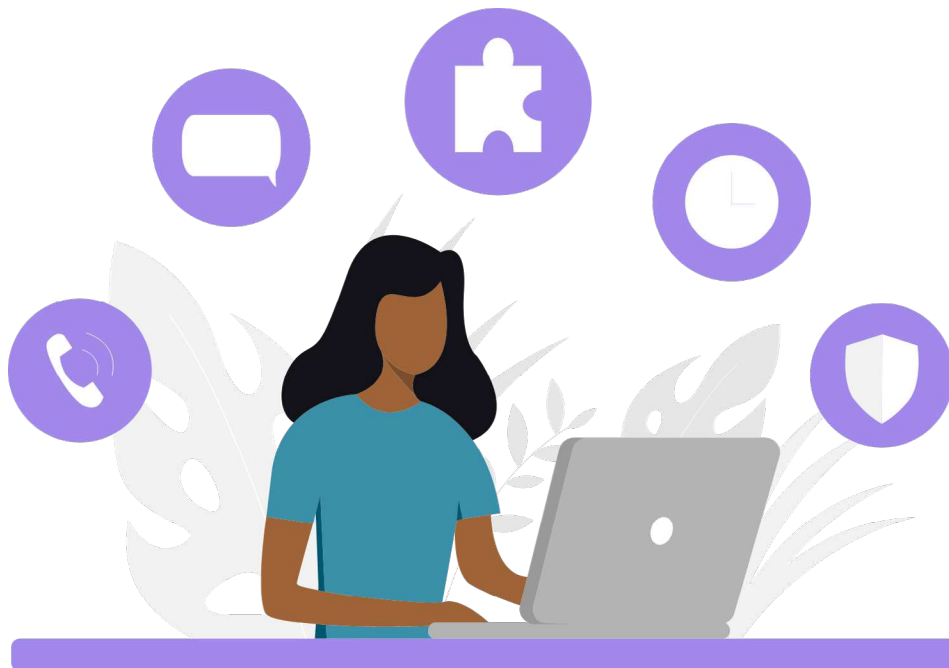
6. Build a Better Network of Providers

To build the best program, a quality network of referral partners and clinical providers is necessary. In Axiom's model, a workplace-focused referral partnership is critical to our success and long-term outcomes for employees and employers. This cycle helps employees feel productive at work, able to cope and stay resilient which in turn is a major benefit to employers. In the occupational health model of physical workplace health, it was discovered years ago that to have the best outcomes, clinics and doctors needed to understand the workplace impact of how they handled work-related injuries. This created an entire industry around occupational health clinics. The same needs to happen with mental and behavioral health clinical providers.

7. Test, Measure, Communicate, and Repeat!

The most important aspects of instituting a real and lasting change in workplace mental health programs are being able to test, measure, communicate successes or learning opportunities, and build a sustainable as well as scalable program. Beginning with baseline resilience scores and turnover rates, a company will be able to determine and predict its workforce optimization over time. In a time of concern over business continuity and risks, making these changes is a critical success factor for all businesses.

Are you ready to change?

Axiom Medical Is Here Help!

**axiomllc.com
(877) 502-9466**

Does your organization need assistance with **Workplace Mental and Behavioral Health**? Axiom Medical can help. With two decades of experience in employee total health program and population health management, we can help your organization with any workplace healthcare needs. Contact us today to learn more!