

Workplace Wellbeing Hub

Workplace Mental Health Benefits: Quick Guide for Safety Professionals

EAP Mental Health Benefits Overview

[Research](#) has shown that giving mental health the same attention as physical safety not only boosts morale and retention but also strengthens overall safety outcomes. When employees feel psychologically supported, they are more engaged and more likely to speak up about risks, reducing the chance of preventable incidents. This guide aims to help safety professionals understand common workplace mental health benefits, how to access them, tips to promote these resources and how to build a mentally healthy safety culture. Considerations specific to construction, transportation, and manufacturing are also highlighted, where needs and norms may differ.



Common Workplace Mental Health Benefits

- **Comprehensive Insurance Coverage:** Partner with HR to ensure health plans provide equitable, evidence-based mental health and substance use disorder coverage, matching the breadth and depth of physical health coverage. This includes access to psychotherapy, medication management, and specialized care as needed.
- **Onsite or Virtual Counseling:** Offer drop-in or scheduled counseling options for employees, especially in high-stress environments like construction or manufacturing.
- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** EAPs should cover confidential counseling, substance use treatment, and referrals to qualified providers. Ensure these services are high quality and actively promoted within the workforce.
- **Supplemental Counseling Services:** Provide employees with access to additional counseling and treatment options beyond the standard EAP sessions ensuring continuous and flexible support for varying levels of need. Providers like [Youturn Health](#) offer additional support to employees and their families beyond EAPs.
- **Peer Support & Resource Groups:** Facilitate worker-led groups for social connection, peer support, and stigma reduction, which encourages employees to seek help and builds resilience. [Research](#) shows peer-based programs reduce depression, improve coping skills, and increase employee engagement.
- **Regular Screening & Care Navigation:** Implement regular mental health screening and navigation ensuring early identification and connection to appropriate resources, optimizing outcomes for employees.
- **Education & Mental Health Literacy:** Provide training for all staff and management on mental health literacy, stigma reduction, and crisis intervention. These create a culture where help-seeking is normalized. Training supervisors improves their ability to recognize signs of distress and guide employees toward help.

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- **Family & Caregiver Supports:** Provide resources to manage childcare, eldercare, and household caregiving responsibilities.
- **Flexible Leave and Flexible Work Arrangements:** Allow employees to adjust schedules to accommodate family and personal needs. Create policies allowing employees to take mental health days without stigma. Offer paid family and medical leave plus return-to-work accommodations, or structured reentry plans, for employees in recovery from mental health or substance use conditions.
- **Leadership Engagement:** Encourage leaders to share their mental health journeys and model healthy behaviors, which can foster openness and normalize mental health discussions at work

EAP Benefits

Employee Assistance Programs are employer-sponsored programs that offer free, confidential support to employees facing personal or work-related challenges. Key mental health benefits typically provided through EAPs include:

- ✓ **Counseling Services:** Provide access to confidential assessment and short-term counseling with licensed professionals to help with stress, anxiety, grief, or other personal issues. Counselors can also provide referrals to long-term or specialized care as needed.
- ✓ **Crisis Intervention:** EAPs usually have hotlines and on-call counselors to assist during emergencies or traumatic incidents. EAPs operate 24/7 for emergencies and can deploy counselors for [Critical Incident Stress Debriefing](#) after events like workplace incidents or a colleague's death. They provide trauma counseling, suicide prevention, and urgent help to stabilize situations.
- ✓ **Work-Life Services:** Offer help with issues beyond mental health that affect well-being. This often includes legal and financial consultations, caregiving resources, and other work-life balance support. Such services help employees manage stressors like financial planning or eldercare, which can otherwise impact mental health.
- ✓ **Substance Use Support and Referrals:** EAPs also address substance misuse by providing assessments and referrals to treatment programs, along with workplace education to reduce stigma around seeking help. The EAP can help coordinate care and often follows up to ensure the employee accessed help.

Ensure EAP information is readily available to all employees (e.g. wallet cards, break-room posters, internal websites). Encourage workers to save the EAP phone number in their phones. Remind everyone that EAP services are free to them, costs are covered by the employer as a benefit.

Accessing and Activating EAP Services

EAP benefits are designed to be easy to access for both employees and managers. Here's how you can activate and use these resources:

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Know Your EAP: Get familiar with your company's EAP mental health offerings. Identify the EAP provider's contact (website, 1-800 hotline, or app) and the range of services they offer. Be sure to check how many sessions are covered by your EAP, most EAPs cover 6-8 sessions. Share these details visibly (posters, wallet cards, intranet).

Confidential 24/7 Access: Reassure employees that using any of these mental health benefits will *not* jeopardize their job or privacy. EAPs do not disclose personal information to the employer, except [in rare cases of legal obligation](#) (e.g. risk of harm). Employees (and often their immediate family/household members) can reach out 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and immediately speak to a professional counselor. No manager is notified when someone uses the EAP. This anonymity is [protected by law](#) and is crucial to encourage use.

Supervisory Referral & Consultation: You can suggest the EAP to an employee who is struggling or even make a formal referral in consultation with HR. Managers can also call the EAP for advice: EAPs offer management consultation, where counselors coach supervisors on handling sensitive situations or employee mental health concerns.

Critical Incident Activation: In the aftermath of a workplace incident, fatality, or crisis, contact the EAP ASAP. EAP professionals are experienced in [post-incident response](#), they can arrange on-site counseling, group debriefing sessions, or stress management resources for your team. Safety leads should have a plan with the EAP for critical incidents. Don't hesitate to activate this benefit, it can significantly help employees process trauma and return to work safely.

Communicating Benefits and Reducing Stigma

Even the best EAP is ineffective if employees are reluctant to use it. Unfortunately, [research](#) confirms that stigma and lack of awareness are key reasons employees underutilize EAPs and mental health benefits. In fact, [Mental Health America](#) found while 98% of mid- to large-sized U.S. companies offer an EAP, only about 4% of employees use these programs each year. For safety professionals, who are often trusted frontline messengers, this presents a unique opportunity to promote awareness, reduce stigma, and normalize the use of mental health resources all while reinforcing that *psychological safety supports physical safety*.

Consider the following communication strategies:

- **Raise Awareness Regularly:** Ensure employees know what services are available and how to access them. Use multiple channels: onboarding orientations, safety briefings, emails, newsletters, and posters to remind staff that the EAP exists and describe the help it offers.
 - Integrate mental health benefits into safety briefings, toolbox talks, and onboarding
 - Provide clear instructions on how to access the EAP or other mental health resources
- **Emphasize Confidentiality and Normalize Use:** Many employees fear that using mental health benefits will signal personal weakness or be reported to management. Clearly communicate that EAP counseling is confidential by law and that *seeking help is a sign of strength* in managing one's well-being. Frame mental health care as routine maintenance, just like physical safety equipment.
- **Combat Stigma through Education:** Incorporate mental health into your safety training and safety culture. Just as you train on hazard communication or PPE, provide brief trainings or toolbox talks on topics like stress management, burnout prevention or how to approach a co-worker who may be in distress. Normalize conversations about mental wellbeing. Consider sharing statistics that make clear how common these issues are

Leadership should openly endorse the EAP, for example, a manager might say, "I wouldn't hesitate to use our EAP if I needed to, and I encourage you to do the same". This kind of top-down support can greatly reduce fear of judgment.

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to dispel the myth that seeking help is unusual.

- **Supervisor Involvement:** Train supervisors and safety leads on how to recognize signs of distress and how to encourage EAP use in a supportive way. Supervisors should know the EAP and mental health resources in detail so they can confidently refer team members if concerns arise. Emphasize that any such referrals or suggestions should be done with empathy and privacy.
- **Promote Psychological Safety:** Encourage peer support networks and open dialogue about mental health during team check-ins. Integrate mental health into overall safety culture by adopting the mindset that a mentally healthy worker is a safer worker. You might start meetings with a brief check-in, mentioning that resources are available if anyone feels overwhelmed.
- **Pre-incident Planning:** Train teams in [Critical Incident Stress Management \(CISM\)](#) or similar frameworks before trauma occurs. Structured response models reduce confusion and psychological impact when incidents happen.

Addressing mental distress effectively requires alignment across leadership, HR, managers, safety professionals, and workers:

- Audit work design, culture and conditions to identify stressors that elevate risk
- Engage leaders and managers in actively supporting mental wellbeing, modeling empathy, and reducing stigma
- Ensure HR policies are clear, compassionate, and actionable covering prevention, accommodations, confidentiality and recovery pathways
- Raise awareness through training on wellbeing, stress management and available supports like EAPs or internal programs
- Promote early access to assistance and tools with 24/7 support platforms and behavioral health benefits

Industry-Specific Considerations

Different industries face unique mental health challenges and cultural attitudes. Safety professionals should tailor their approach accordingly:



Construction: [Research](#) has shown the construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates of any sector, about four times higher than the general population. It's crucial to break the silence in this industry. Emphasize that mental health is as important as physical safety: some organizations have started initiatives like "[Suicide Prevention Stand-Downs](#)" or posting crisis line information at job sites. As a safety professional in construction, you might leverage respected figures (e.g. veteran crew leaders) to champion the message that it's okay to ask for help. Reducing stigma here can truly save lives.

Remember, reducing stigma is an ongoing effort. Consider partnering with HR or using campaigns (e.g. Mental Health Awareness Month) to run anti-stigma initiatives. Simple actions like sharing mental health fact sheets or posting the crisis line (988) alongside safety emergency numbers can signal that your workplace treats mental health on par with

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Transportation (Trucking and Transit): Drivers and transportation workers often work long hours in isolating conditions, which can take a heavy toll on mental health. [Studies](#) show high levels of loneliness (28% of long-haul truckers) and depression (27%) among truck drivers. The nature of the job means support must be delivered in a flexible, accessible way. Make sure EAP materials and counseling are easily accessible remotely via phone or online. Emphasize how mental strain (like fatigue or distraction from personal issues) can affect driving safety, linking the importance of mental health to the core priority of accident prevention.



Manufacturing: Manufacturing is typically a high-pressure, male-dominated environment where a “tough” mentality may deter employees from voicing personal struggles. According to the [Manufacturers Alliance](#), many manufacturing workers resist seeking help because they don’t want to be seen as “weak” or “incompetent”. To counter this, leadership must actively show that employee wellbeing is a priority. Bringing in an EAP orientation or stress management workshop to the plant floor can start conversations. Train line supervisors to share information about the EAP during pre-shift meetings or one-on-ones. [Mental Health America](#) suggests normalizing using EAP by maybe reframing it as a “Work-Life Assistance Program” if the term “mental health” is stigmatized and highlight that EAP offers practical help (financial advice, family caregiving help) in addition to counseling. By framing EAP services as another resource to help workers do their jobs safely and effectively, you can gradually chip away at cultural resistance

Employers in other high-risk industries such as healthcare, emergency response, finance and customer service should also recognize that mental health challenges can vary widely by sector and should tailor communication and support strategies to fit their workforce.

Take Action and Learn More

To take more specific action, explore the tools, templates and resources available in the [NSC Workplace Wellbeing Hub](#), designed to help organizations implement evidence-based mental health support and workplace strategies.

A few to consider:

- [Examples of Flexible Work Arrangements](#) or [Flexible Work Template](#)
- [Workplace Benefits Checklist](#)