

# INSURICA HEALTHCARE TIMES

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## The Impact of Employee Mental Health and Well-being on Workplaces

Employee well-being refers to the overall state of employees’ physical, mental, social and financial health, which can often be influenced by various workplace dynamics (e.g., workload, connections with co-workers and available resources).

While employee well-being plays a key role in employee retention, it also has a significant impact on business performance. As a result, it is vital for organizations to take employee well-being seriously and do what they can to foster a culture that promotes well-being.

## The Important Role of Mental Health in Employee Well-being

Over the years, many organizations have attempted to promote employee well-being by offering workplace solutions aimed solely at maintaining physical health. These solutions may include serving nutritious meal options on-site, offering smoking cessation programs or providing discounted memberships to local gyms.

While such solutions can certainly help employees make healthier lifestyle choices and reduce their risk of chronic illnesses, promoting employee well-being requires organizations to develop initiatives that address all aspects of workers’ overall health and happiness. Specifically, employees’ mental health must be considered.

Mental health consists of individuals’ emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how individuals communicate, form relationships, contribute to their communities and cope with adversity. In times of distress, individuals may suffer from poor mental health. Emotions associated with poor mental health include grief, stress, sadness or anxiousness.

It’s important to note that mental health differs from mental illness. In particular, emotions stemming from poor mental health are not diagnosable conditions but rather temporary feelings. On the other

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hand, mental illnesses pertain to a wide range of clinical mental health disorders (e.g., anxiety and depression). These disorders are chronic and affect how individuals think, behave and function in their daily lives. Yet, individuals who experience prolonged periods of poor mental health may eventually develop mental illnesses.

In any case, mental health is a key factor in determining employees' well-being—one that organizations can't afford to ignore. In fact, recent research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that nearly three-quarters (71%) of U.S. adults experience at least one adverse symptom of stress (e.g., feeling overwhelmed or anxious) each year. Furthermore, mental health can make a difference in employees' physical health. According to the CDC, poor mental health can increase individuals' likelihood of developing a range of chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Considering these findings, it's clear that employers must account for employees' mental health when addressing their overall well-being.

## How Employee Well-being Impacts the Workplace

Employees' mental health and well-being can impact employers in various ways. Here are some key business objectives that may be influenced by overall workplace well-being:

- **Business performance** — Employee well-being can make all the difference in business performance. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), mental health concerns in the workplace can contribute to increased absenteeism rates, lost productivity, decreased customer satisfaction and reduced profits. In addition, the NCBI reported that work-related stress is a leading cause of poor job performance among employees, negatively affecting employers as a whole.
- **Stakeholder perception** — Apart from business performance, employee well-being can also impact stakeholder perception. According to a recent report from the Harvard Business Review, the vast majority

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## NEWS BRIEF !

### U.S. Drug Overdose Deaths Hit Record High in 2021

According to new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, an estimated 107,622 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2021, a 15% increase from the previous year. Fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid, was involved in the most deaths.

*Read full article at [INSURICA.com](https://www.insurica.com)*

## Keeping **U** In Mind

### May is Mental Health Awareness Month

May is designated as Mental Health Awareness Month in the United States. Mental health problems and substance use disorders sometimes co-occur. This month is a reminder to check in with yourself and others living with mental health conditions and facing substance abuse. If you have concerns, reach out to a doctor or use the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline by calling 800-662-HELP (4357).

(91%) of working adults believe that a company's culture should support mental health. As such, employers who disregard their employees' mental health and well-being are more likely to be perceived poorly by stakeholders, resulting in reduced workplace morale, reputational damages and lost business. Such negative stakeholder perception could have lasting impacts on an employer's brand, limiting its ability to attract top talent and remain profitable for the foreseeable future.

- **Workplace safety** —If organizations encounter employee mental health and well-being concerns on-site, workplace accidents and related injuries are likely to follow suit. According to the National Safety Council, instances of both moderate and severe mental health distress have been linked to a greater risk of workplace accidents. This is likely because employees facing mental health concerns are often less focused, engaged and aware of potential safety hazards, resulting in poor decision making and unnecessary risk-taking. According to research conducted by Eastern Kentucky University, between 60% and 80% of workplace accidents stem from workers experiencing stress-related distractions or fatigue on the job. These accidents not only lead to injured employees but also contribute to higher workers' compensation costs for employers.

Evidently, ignoring employees' mental health and well-being can result in significant consequences for organizations. That's why it's crucial for employers to adopt effective workplace well-being initiatives.

## Steps Employers Can Take

In order to promote employees' mental health and well-being, organizations should consider implementing the following measures:

- Foster a supportive workplace culture. First and foremost, it is critical for employers to promote a company culture that prioritizes employees' mental health and well-being. In doing so, employers will be able to show their employees that they value them beyond their work contributions and are invested in their overall health and happiness. Having a supportive workplace culture in place will also help employers lead by example within their workforce, highlighting the importance of maintaining work-life balance and establishing a more open dialogue surrounding mental health topics.
- Establish a long-term strategy. In addition to fostering a supportive workplace culture, employers need to have long-term strategies for promoting employees' mental health and well-being. Such strategies should be well-documented and clearly outline the steps organizations are taking to keep their workers healthy and happy. They should also list the specific objectives employers are trying to accomplish through their well-being initiatives. By having long-term strategies in place, organizations will be able to better identify the effectiveness of their well-being initiatives, calculate the return on investment for these initiatives and determine when initiatives need to be updated or changed.

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# Telemedicine: The Hidden Risks

## Telemedicine Defined

Telemedicine, which the American Telemedicine Association defines as “the use of medical information exchanged from one site to another via electronic communications to improve a patient’s clinical health status,” promises to transform the landscape of health care. Due to the growing population of the elderly, the increasing demand for health care services and the rapid advances in telecommunications technology, a roaring market demand for telemedicine has been created along with the means of satisfying it.

Telemedicine promises to become even more widespread in the coming years—erasing geographic barriers to place general practitioners and world-class specialists in the same virtual room. However, new opportunities present new risks, and some are less obvious than others.

## Protecting Patient Privacy

Patient privacy is of paramount concern for all health care providers, and telemedicine only makes that concern more important. Telemedicine is contingent upon the quick and reliable transmission of electronic health records (EHR), which creates an inherent risk of a patient privacy breach.

Patient privacy needs to be secured at every point of access. Consider the following individuals who may have access to your network:

- Doctors, nurses and other employees who use telecommunications equipment
- Employees responsible for moving, storing and servicing telecommunications equipment
- IT personnel—either in-house or contracted out—who perform service or maintenance on networks, systems and equipment
- Guests and patients who are provided with Wi-Fi access

Administrators should work with in-house personnel to ensure every precaution has been taken to secure sensitive patient information. It is important to remember that these points of access exist at both the originating and distant site, and that both sites will have to work in conjunction to ensure that every effort has been made to protect patient privacy.



## Technical Support

In addition to a data breach, employers need to consider the problems posed by the technology itself. Telemedicine requires real-time communication between the originating and distant site, and any interruption of service between the end points could result in a host of problems. Equipment malfunction could result in miscommunication or misdiagnosis, and if a third party is responsible for the equipment or the transmission of data, servicing malfunctioning equipment could result in delays that compound costs or even jeopardize patient health.

One of the best ways to mitigate this risk is to establish processes that reduce the threat of technical problems or equipment failure:

- Develop policies and processes for reviewing current technology and for implementing new technology.
- Establish a maintenance schedule; regularly service technology as needed and make sure that all software and hardware is functioning as it should be.
- Make sure all staff is properly trained and understands how to use the equipment.
- Devise sufficient controls, like passwords and PIN numbers, to restrict access to sensitive patient information.

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## OSHA's Most Frequently Cited Standards in 2021

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) keeps records not only of the most frequently cited standards overall, but also within particular industries. The most recent statistics from OSHA reveal the top standards cited in the fiscal year 2021 for the health care and social assistance industry. This top 10 list comprises establishments providing health care and social assistance for individuals. The sector includes both health care and social assistance because it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the boundaries of these two activities. The industries in this sector are arranged on a continuum starting with those establishments providing medical care exclusively, continuing with those providing health care and social assistance and finishing with those providing only social assistance.

[View the violations on our blog](#)

## BUILDING BETTER RISK PROGRAMS

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