

DEVELOPING A MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING ACTION PLAN

A Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Plan refers to a coordinated and comprehensive set of strategies which include programs, policies, benefits, environmental supports, and links to resources designed to meet the mental health and well-being needs of all personnel.¹

The systematic process of building a Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Plan emphasizes four main steps:

- Step 1 – Workplace Assessment
- Step 2 – Planning
- Step 3 – Implementing
- Step 4 – Determine Impact through Evaluation



Step 1- Workplace Assessment

In the first step, data is collected to assist organizations to decide where to focus resources. There are four data collection levels to consider which cover the key areas of people, programs, and initial funding. Ideally, assessment team members should include people with lived experience.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/model/index.html>

- Interpersonal – elements of personnel's workplace network which includes relationships with managers and coworkers.
- Organizational – elements of the workplace structure, culture, practices and policies such as benefits, health promotion programs, work organization, and leadership and management support for workplace well-being initiatives
- Environmental – elements of the physical workplace such as facilities and settings where employees work as well as access and opportunities for health promotion provided by the surrounding duty station.

Data sources for this assessment may include, but are not limited to: psychosocial assessment tool, sick leave data, use of EAP or counseling services by topic, job satisfaction surveys, UN-Wide Health Survey, internal data collection methods (surveys, questionnaires, personnel inputs)

Step 2- Planning

During this phase resources are identified based on the priorities identified in step one. These resources may include:

- Senior leadership- individuals who will serve as a role models, communication leaders and champions within management.
- A workplace health coordinator or working group to oversee the plan.
- Dedicating the financial resources necessary to execute the plan.
- Creating a communications strategy to inform all personnel about priorities, resources, and how to join the effort.

Step 3 – Implementing the Plan

It is important for Mental Health and Well-being Plans to contain a combination of individual and organizational level interventions. These may include:

1. Mental Health and Well-being programs – opportunities available to personnel to begin, change or maintain behaviors supportive of their mental health and well-being goals. This may include access to counseling services- either internal or external- educational programming, online well-being tools, and training opportunities such as the Lead and Learn Program.
2. Mental Health and Well-being related policies – formal or informal written statements that are designed to protect or promote the mental health and well-being of personnel. Supportive policies affect large groups of personnel simultaneously and make adopting healthy behaviors easier. Examples may include return-to-work policies for those coming back after experiencing a mental health condition, SOP's for reasonable accommodations, and policies that allow

for greater autonomy for workload management, telecommuting, and work-life harmony.

Step 4 – Determine Impact through Evaluation

The evaluation stage of the project is important for two reasons. First, it allows for information to be gathered on ways in which the plan can be improved over time. Second, the evaluation is a way to define the value of the plan to senior management.

There are 6 key areas for inclusion in your evaluation, which are based on the Priority Actions outlined in the Mental Health and Well-being Strategy. The following areas can be used in all stages of the project including to inform initial data collection, assist with creating the plan and finally implementation and evaluation.

PRIORITY ACTION 1 – Psychosocial support

Resource and distribute psychosocial support and mental health services to enable all United Nations staff who need it, especially those at higher risk, to have universal and equitable access to these services within 18 months of endorsement.

Action Plan (potential items for inclusion in initial assessment/ planning):

- Review of currently available service delivery options (internal counsellors, external access, peer support specialists, etc.) (Tool provided)
- Review of return-to-work policies through a mental health and well-being perspective.
- Review practices in place to facilitate reasonable accommodation for personnel with a mental health condition (educating managers, informing staff of their rights, case management in place).
- Assess wait times for access to mental health professional through internal resources or an external provider

Reporting –indicators listed in Scorecard section.

PRIORITY ACTION 2- Stigma Reduction

Implement stigma reduction and health promotion approaches over the five-year period, to strengthen the knowledge, skills and behavior of all United Nations staff members with regard to staying psychologically fit and healthy and to ensure that concerns about stigma, anticipated and/or experienced, are not a barrier to achieving good mental health and well-being.

Action Plan (potential items for inclusion in initial assessment/ planning):

- Review of currently available stigma reduction tools such as language guides, educational material for individuals and managers, communications materials.
- Review of return-to-work policies through a mental health and well-being perspective with an emphasis on perceived or actual stigma people may experience.

- Assess if practices are in place for those who are experiencing stigma to be able to seek help through official (reporting) or unofficial (counseling) channels.
- Check current levels of perceived or actual stigma using the UN-Health Survey or other organizationally pertinent surveys.

Reporting - indicators listed in Scorecard section.

PRIORITY ACTION 3 and 4 - A Healthy Workplace (Prevention and Well-being)

Initiate a suite of prevention interventions, informed by best practice and shown to influence positively the protective factors associated with good mental health and well-being, as well as avert or minimize harm from known risk factors, directly and indirectly for the staff member, and/or from the environment in which they work.

Establish a workplace well-being programme, with an agreed charter, practical support, training and recognition awards for teams and managers that enables the achievement of respectful, resilient, psychologically safe and healthy United Nations workplaces over a five-year timescale.

Action Plan (potential items for inclusion in initial assessment/ planning):

- Psychosocial Risk Assessment and eventual mitigation plan
- Implementation of recommendations from the Future of Work report.
- Review work policies to ensure staff have autonomy and flexibility within policy limits (tele-commuting, right to disconnect, workload management, work-life harmony, etc.)
- Potential creation of a well-being working group

Reporting - indicators listed in Scorecard section.

PRIORITY ACTION 5 – Insurance

Complete a review of United Nations Health Insurance provision, and United Nations social protection schemes (for disability and compensation) within two years, to achieve equity of coverage for mental health, and ensure that provision is adequate, acceptable and appropriate.

Action Plan (items for inclusion in initial assessment/ planning):

- Decide on contract modalities that will receive mental health coverage
- Review of your organization's existing insurance provisions for mental health and social protection. (Tool provided)
- Identify gaps in coverage and/or access and take steps to reach basic minimum standards
- Create insurance review working groups with membership including those with lived experience

Reporting - indicators listed in Scorecard section.

PRIORITY ACTION 6 – Quality Control

Create systems to enable and oversee the safety and quality of psychosocial support programmes.

Action Plan (items for inclusion in initial assessment/ planning):

- Review of psychosocial support personnel and their existing licensure/ accreditation/ organizational membership status. This may include personnel from professional specialty groups which are employed as counsellors.²
- Identify deficits in professional status' and ensure line-managers have created plans with the staff member to reach basic minimum standards as outlined in UNSSCG Guidance document. (Tool provided)

Reporting - indicators listed in Scorecard section.

² UNSSCG Guidance on Professional Standards for UN Counsellors, v.1.5