



# The UN System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for 2024 and beyond - an explainer

October 2024



## What is the UN System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for 2024 and beyond?

The **UN System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for 2024 and beyond** (hereafter, 'the Strategy') provides a road map for creating an inclusive, sustainable work environment where mental health and well-being are embedded in the organizational culture and systems.

The Strategy aims to provide effective tools and processes to the UN System to:

- prevent mental health risks at work;
- protect and promote mental health at work;
- and support workers with mental health conditions.

## How is the Strategy being implemented across the UN system and who is leading this process?

A small global team based in the Mental Health Hub in Bonn, Germany, and made up of mental health, programme and communications professionals, is guiding the roll-out of the Strategy across the UN, together with representatives from every UN agency. In parallel, a small team of mental health professionals is supporting the roll-out of the Strategy at the UN Secretariat level.

Through several working groups, the team does this by:

- identifying internal processes that may contribute to poor mental health;
- identifying best practices that some UN agencies already use to address internal processes impacting negatively on mental health and well-being; and
- scaling up best practices across the UN.

The focus is on expanding best practices to enhance well-being in areas such as: psychosocial risk management; mental health literacy training; quality psychosocial support, Family Support initiatives; stigma reduction, and staff well-being related policy & practice review.

## What is expected to come out of the Strategy?

Practical tools and effective processes that all UN agencies can use, such as:

- Practical resources to support staff well-being;
- A model for understanding occupational hazards and how to mitigate risks to support a healthier work environment;
- A centralized repository for mental health literacy resources;
- A Family Liaison Support model for the UN system including a scalable model for WFP's Family Liaison Outreach Community- with or without Kids (FLOCK) psychosocial program for all UN agencies.

Ultimately, these tools and processes will help create a working environment that is conducive to good mental health and that ensures that support is available when it is needed.



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## What is expected to come out of the Strategy? (continued)

For the long term, the UN System Mental Health Strategy team aims to create tools and processes that integrate mental health and well-being into corporate frameworks and enterprise risk management models, and embed mental health considerations at the highest levels of UN management.

## When will these tools and processes become available?

Some in the next few months, others, gradually, over the next 1-3 years.

## How did the Strategy come about?

Launched at the end of 2023, the Strategy builds on work spanning a decade. In the initial phase, this work focused on the UN agencies' responsibilities and their duty of care towards staff. Over time, the focus evolved into developing a mental health strategy that all UN agencies would support. Now that this is done, the focus is on putting the strategy into practice across the UN system.

## What is the biggest challenge and opportunity when it comes to getting buy-in for and putting into practice the Strategy?

Efforts to improve mental health in the workplace are not new. This is why we are not looking to reinvent the wheel; we are building on existing good work. The challenge is to scale up this work and at speed. That said, the Strategy was launched last year and the progress over one year is tangible.

As for the opportunity, this is straightforward. We know that by improving systems, we improve mental health. This translates into higher staff engagement, productivity and morale. Ultimately, this work helps us deliver on our mandate—this needs to be understood at the highest levels of our organization.

## How can staff, managers and organizations get involved?

The Strategy is public and available online. It includes various components, such as risk assessment policies, mainstreaming mental health practices, manager training, and activities for stigma reduction.

The Strategy and the supporting resources have something for everyone -whether you are a staff member, a manager or represent an organization.

Every UN agency has a representative on the Strategy's Implementation Board, which is guiding the roll-out of the Strategy. Staff's participation, through the Board, is vital to ensuring that the Strategy is put into practice across the UN System. Staff members specialised in areas such as psychosocial risk management, mental health literacy, family support, stigma and discrimination reduction through a human rights perspective, are welcome to inquire through their organizations if they could support the working groups' efforts.

## The Strategy & other resources:

<https://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce/strategy>

<https://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce/resources> (strategy & supporting documents)