

# Best Practices in Mental Health in the Workplace

***2023 Chesapeake AIHA & ASSP Educational Seminar***

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# Agenda

## Introduction

## State of Mental Health in the Workplace

## Literature Reviews

- Psychosocial, Organizational and Environmental Stressors, Interventions, and Expected Outcomes
  - POE Measurement and Evaluation Framework
- Best Practices Domains in Mental Health in the Workplace
  - Carolyn C. Mattingly Award in Mental Health in the Workplace
  - Award Winning Programs: Case Studies



# Institute for Health and Productivity Studies

MISSION: To bridge the gap between academia, the business community, and healthcare policy world by leveraging scientific research to inform day-to-day business decisions.

- Empirical research focused on the relationship between employee health and well-being, healthcare utilization and cost, and work-related productivity.
- Studies examining the impact of workplace health and well-being strategic initiatives on both individual health and organizational outcomes.

# Why the Workplace? Rationale and Evidence Base

- A large proportion of diseases and disorders is preventable. Modifiable health risk factors are precursors to many diseases and disorders and to premature death (*Amler & Dull, 1987, Breslow, 1993, McGinnis & Foegen, 1993, Mokdad et al., 2004, Healthy People 2000, 2010*)
- Many modifiable health risks are associated with increased health care costs and diminished worker productivity (*Milliman & Robinson, 1987, Yen et al., 1992, Bertera, 1991, Goetzel, et al., 1998, Pronk, 1999, Anderson et al., 2000, Goetzel et al. 2012*)
- Modifiable health risks can be improved through evidence-based workplace health promotion and disease prevention programs (*Wilson et al., 1996, Heaney & Goetzel, 1997, Pelletier, 1991, 1993, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2011, Soler et al., 2010*)
- Improvements in the health risk profile of workers can lead to reductions in poor health outcomes, healthcare costs, increased productivity, and positive business results (*Goetzel et al., 1999, Edington et al., 2001, Carls et al., 2011, Henke et al. 2019*)
- Workplace health promotion and disease prevention strategic initiatives have the potential to generate a positive return-on-investment (ROI) and value-on-investment (VOI) (*Dupont 1990, Bank of America 1993, California Public Retirement System 1994, Procter and Gamble 1998, Chevron 1998, Johnson & Johnson 2002, Citibank 1999-2000, Highmark, 2008, Johnson & Johnson, 2011, Goetzel et al. 2019*)

# Mental Health in the Workplace

Peak prevalence for most mental and behavioral conditions is among people **between 20-60 years old** – prime working age

- Work-related stress is a leading contributor to people's overall state of mental health
- Stress and anxiety, along with other mental health problems, are related to higher absenteeism, lower productivity and poorer engagement
- Range of stressors increased during pandemic – and more visible and talked about



# The State of Mental Health in the U.S.

## KEY FINDINGS

21%

of adults are experiencing a mental illness. Equivalent to over 50 million Americans.

15%

of adults had a substance use disorder in the past year.

93.5%

did not receive treatment.

The percentage of adults reporting serious thoughts of suicide is

4.8%

– over 12.1 million adults.

11%

of adults who identified with two or more races reported serious thoughts of suicide.

16%

of youth report suffering from at least one major depressive episode in the past year.

More than 2.7 million youth are experiencing severe major depression.

55%

of adults with a mental illness receive no treatment – over 28 million individuals.

11%

(over 5.5 million) of adults with a mental illness are uninsured.

60%

of youth with major depression do not receive mental health treatment.

# Mental Health of Workers in Healthcare Systems



- Occupational stress and burnout are high among clinicians, nurses, and allied professionals (rate of 35% to 54%)
- Healthcare system workers disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Survey findings showed that most respondents reported feeling overwhelmed (75%) exhausted and burnt out (76%), frustrated (77%), anxious (86%), and stressed (93%)
- Burnout and poor work-life balance exact a high cost to individuals' health, but also leads to impacts on:
  - Patient outcomes
  - Health system costs
  - Worker healthcare costs
  - High turnover
  - Lost productivity

#### Sources:

- National Academies of Sciences E, and Medicine; National Academy of Medicine; Committee on Systems Approaches to Improve Patient Care by Supporting Clinician Well-Being. Taking Action Against Clinician Burnout: A Systems Approach to Professional Well-Being 2019. doi: 10.17226/25521. PubMed PMID:31940160.
- America MH. The Mental Health of Healthcare Workers in COVID-19: Mental Health America; 2021 [01/25/21]. Available from: <https://mhanational.org/mental-health-healthcare-workers-covid-19>



**Literature Review #1: Psychosocial,  
Organizational and Environmental Stressors,  
Interventions, and Expected Outcomes**



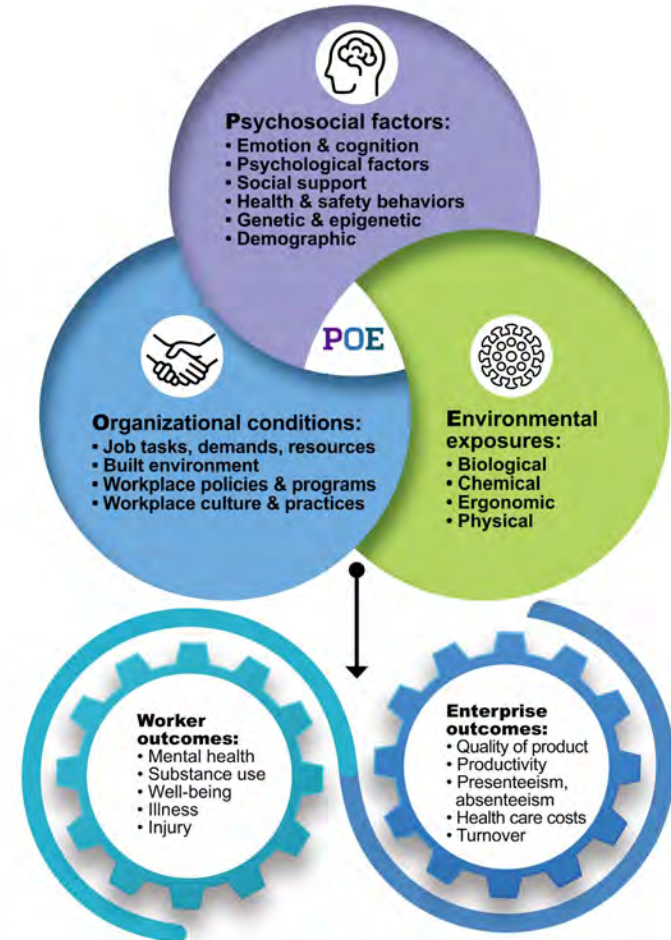


Psychosocial  
Organizational  
Environmental

Johns Hopkins POE  
Total Worker Health  
Center in Mental Health

### Target Workforce:

- Healthcare workers
- Allied professionals
- Agricultural workers
- Remote workers
- Vulnerable workers
- Other essential workers



# POE Framework

## Addressing Workplace Stressors Emerging from the Pandemic

Ying Zhang, MsPH<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth H. Woods, MsPH<sup>1</sup>, Enid Chung Roemer, PhD<sup>2</sup>, Karen B. Kent, MPH<sup>2</sup>, and Ron Z. Goetzel, PhD<sup>2</sup>

### Keywords

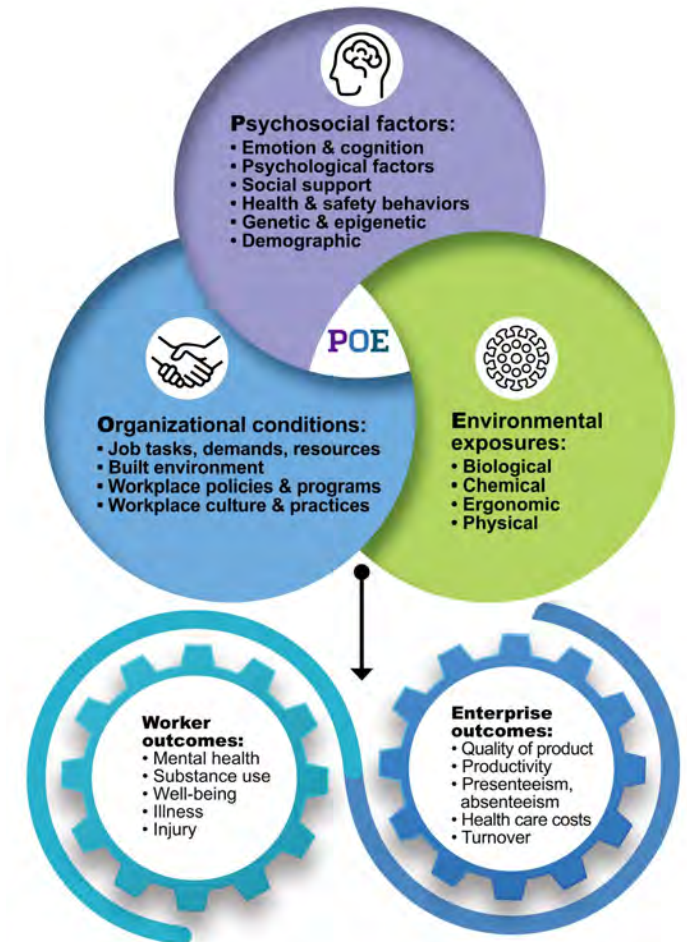
workplace, wellbeing, mental health, Corona Virus-2019, stressors

### Introduction

Faced with new and exacerbated stressors on workers due to COVID-19, employers are asking what they can do to support employees' mental health and wellbeing and rebuild a resilient workforce. To serve as a guide, this paper reviews workplace interventions aimed at improving workers' mental health and wellbeing. The review was developed with support from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Total Worker Health<sup>®</sup> Centers of Excellence as part of a broader program to design, implement, and evaluate large-scale initiatives focused on mental

home-life boundaries, especially for women who are often expected to take on a larger share of family and childcare responsibilities in addition to their paying jobs.<sup>10,11</sup>

Fear of COVID-19 exposure and infection was another psychosocial stressor. For months, the novel nature of the virus and limited treatment options fostered intense anxiety among workers who were unable to limit contact to infected individuals. Some workers were faced with the dilemma of protecting the health of members of their household or keeping a job that provided needed income. For workers who were able to limit physical contact with others, social isolation took a heavy toll on their sense of connect-



# Measurement & Evaluation Framework

Stressors

Interventions

Expected  
Outcomes

Structure



Process

- Intervention fidelity and dose delivered
- Dose received (e.g., program satisfaction)
- Reach (i.e., participation rate/completion)

Outcomes

- Worker mental health & wellbeing
- Engagement, job satisfaction & productivity
- Infection & injuries

# Psychosocial



## Stressors

- Work-life conflict
- Fear of Covid-19 exposure & infection
- Social isolation
- Lack of social support

## Interventions

- Self-care
- Employee empowerment
- Social support & connectedness
- Mental health resources, training & services

## Expected Outcomes

- Decrease in:
  - Psychological stress, distress, and anxiety
  - Burnout
  - Stigma and feelings of isolation
  - Post-traumatic and other stress disorders
  - Insomnia
  - Anger and cynicism
  - Behavioral deviance

# Psychosocial

- **Sample Program:** Digital Psychological Wellbeing Support Package for Healthcare Workers
- **Intervention:** Healthcare workers used an interactive e-learning package to locate information and resources on COVID-19-related psychological impacts, psychologically supportive teams, communication, social support, self-care, managing emotions, etc.
- **Results:** High participation & satisfaction. Accessed 17,633 times within 7 days of release. High satisfaction. Recruited healthcare workers and students (n = 55) assessed the package and reported high content quality, intervention practicality, and package usability.



# Organizational



## Stressors

- Increased workload
- Poor human resource management (e.g., staffing shortages, irregular shifts, unclear workplace policies)
- Economic/job insecurity (e.g., low wages)
- Lack of employer-sponsored benefits

## Interventions

- Assistance programs providing concrete support (e.g., emergency, financial, flextime benefits)
- Supportive leadership & management practices
- Regular, clear, and coordinated communication

## Expected Outcomes

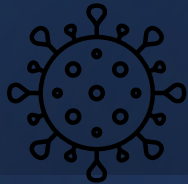
- Decrease in:
  - Employee turnover rates and voluntary resignations
  - Inability to fill job vacancies
  - Poor employee performance

# Organizational

- **Sample Program:** Inclusive Leadership Style
- **Intervention:** Managers are visible, accessible, and available to employees; invites and appreciates others' contributions
- **Results:** High Satisfaction. Inclusive leadership negatively correlated to psychological distress and positively correlated to work engagement. Created an open and engaging environment for healthcare workers. Reduced psychological distress significantly and sustainably.



# Environmental



## Stressors

- Physical environment conducive to virus transmission
- Frequent face-to-face interactions
- Loosely enforced safety protocols
- Limited access to personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Unclear regulatory guidance and communication

## Interventions

- Reinforcing infection control measures
- Providing PPE and clear instructions on use
- Adding safety trainings and workshops
- Reaching out directly to employees regarding environmental interventions
- Ensuring workspaces are well-ventilated, accommodate social distancing, and installing appropriate physical barriers


## Expected Outcomes

- Decrease in:
  - Risk of contracting COVID-19
  - Risk of sustaining an injury
  - Substance and alcohol use
  - All-cause mortality





# Environmental

- **Sample Program:** Universal Masking Policy
  - **Intervention:** Requirement of mask-wearing for all healthcare workers at the workplace
  - **Results:** Universal masking was associated with a decreasing COVID-19 incidence trend among healthcare workers, while the infection rate continued to rise in the surrounding community.
- 

# Summary



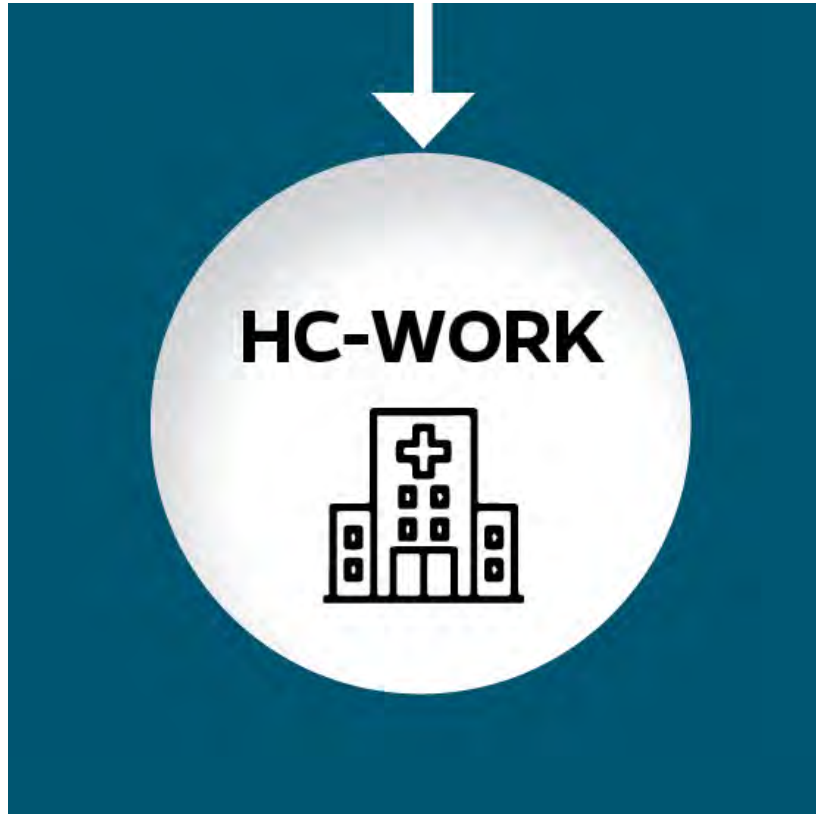
The COVID-19 pandemic has forced organization to quickly adapt to the stressors negatively impacting the health and wellbeing of workers.



Evidence-based interventions are available to employers within POE framework that are effective when applied with best practice strategies.



Lessons learned to be better prepared to address psychosocial, organizational, and environmental stressors to improve worker mental health and wellbeing.



## Next Steps

- **Study Population:**
  - Healthcare workers and allied professionals
- **Goal:** Enhance culture of health
- **Objectives:** Support psychosocial needs/concerns through organizational strategies and environmental supports
- **Intervention Study:**
  - Augmented Peer Support/Champion Program with Leadership Training



**Literature Review #2:  
Best Practices Domains**

# A Call to Action

## Organizational Best Practices Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace

Ashley Wu, MHS, Enid Chung Roemer, PhD, Karen B. Kent, MPH,  
David W. Ballard, PsyD, MBA, and Ron Z. Goetzel, PhD

**Objective:** To provide a narrative review of best and promising practices for achieving exemplary mental health in the workplace as the foundation for the inaugural *Carolyn C. Mattingly Award for Mental Health in the Workplace*.  
**Methods:** Research was drawn from peer-reviewed articles using the search terms associated with workplace mental health. **Results:** Eight categories of best practices were identified: (1) culture, (2) robust mental health benefits, (3) mental health resources, (4) workplace policies and practices, (5) healthy work environment, (6) leadership support, (7) outcomes measurement, and (8) innovation. **Conclusion:** The review provided the scientific backing to support criteria developed for the *Carolyn C. Mattingly Award for Mental Health in the Workplace*. By recognizing organizations that apply evidence-based practices in their health and well-being programs, the *Mattingly Award* may inspire employers to adopt best practices.

amplifying its economic burden on employers and healthcare systems. Around 60% of the cost of depression is directed at treating comorbid conditions like cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.<sup>6</sup> The predominantly adult population in the workforce has also been shown to develop higher rates of anxiety, substance use, and mood disorders in comparison to other demographic groups.<sup>7</sup> Work is one of the leading causes of stress for adults in the United States<sup>8</sup> and job-related stress is linked to poor mental health. These workplace stressors, including long working hours, poor social support, and unclear management and work roles, are connected to increased risk for various negative mental health outcomes.<sup>9</sup>

The debilitating effects of poor mental health go beyond the direct costs of treatment and include even larger indirect costs related to lost productivity, such as through absenteeism and

## BACKGROUND

- 2016 Mental Health in the Workplace Summit
- Consortium Recommendations:
  - Developing a quantitative scorecard for measuring mental health in the workplace
  - Shaping workplace cultures to value mental health and well-being
  - Enhancing the dissemination and accessibility of workplace mental health information
  - **Establishing an award to recognize exemplary programs and incentivize employer participation in mental health initiatives**

# Best Practices Domains

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

# 1. Culture

- Positive organizational culture that supports employee mental health
  - Human capital strategy
  - Governance and leadership
  - Social and physical environmental supports



## 2. Robust Mental Health Benefits

- Affordable access to a broad range of services
- Accessibility considers quality of care, availability of an adequate provider network, and reasonableness of any service limits





# 3. Employer-sponsored Mental Health Resources



Strong Employee Assistance Programs

Stress Management Programs

Mental Health Training

## 4. Workplace Policies and Practices



- Safety/Ergonomics
  - Sexual Harassment
  - Racism and discrimination
  - Workplace Violence
  - Bullying / Incivility
  - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Written/formal
  - Communicated
  - Actively supported

# 5. Healthy Work Environment



OPPORTUNITIES  
TO MENTALLY  
RECHARGE

OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR SOCIAL  
CONNECTEDNESS  
AND INCLUSION



SUPPORTING  
POSITIVE HEALTH  
BEHAVIORS AND  
SELF-CARE



## 6. Leadership Support

- Management-specific training
- Modeling healthy behaviors
- Utilizing effective and supportive management tools and techniques
- Managing work- and job-related factors that can affect mental health



## 7. Outcomes

- Establishment/enhancement of best-practices for a healthy culture
- Engagement in programs/policies/environmental supports
- Improvements on psychological wellbeing indicators/reduction of incidences of mental health problems
- Engagement/satisfaction with job and work



## 8. Innovation

- Novel solutions that increase awareness and access to care resources, and enhances mental health outcomes for workers

# Foundation for Award Criteria

## Best Practices Domains

1. Culture
2. Robust mental health benefits
3. Employer-sponsored mental health resources
4. Workplace policies and practices
5. Healthy work environment
6. Leadership support
7. Outcomes evaluation
8. Innovation



# An Employer Recognition Program

## The Carolyn C. Mattingly Award for **MENTAL HEALTH** **IN THE WORKPLACE**



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of PUBLIC HEALTH

**THE LUVU PROJECT.**  
In Memory of Carolyn C. Mattingly

The Carolyn C. Mattingly Award for Mental health in the Workplace recognizes and celebrates exemplary organizations that advance the mental health and well-being of their workforce, while also serving as role models for other employers.



# 2022 Inaugural Recipients

- WINNERS
  - Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
  - Metro Nashville Public Schools
  - University of Virginia
- HONORABLE MENTIONS
  - Associated Bank
  - Franklin County Cooperative
  - General Electric



The Carolyn C. Mattingly Award for  
**MENTAL HEALTH  
IN THE WORKPLACE**



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# University of Virginia – Bridging Workforce needs with Technology



## UVA's Approach to Post-COVID Workplace Mental Health



- Expansion of childcare and Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) benefits;



- Increased availability and accessibility to evidence-based mental health resources, programming, and treatment across various platforms;



- Establishment of an Emergency Assistance Fund and Employee Assistance Funds;



- Remote work and flexible hours; and



- Education of managers to help sustain a healthy workplace culture.



Hoos  
Well



# Metro Nashville Public Schools – Removing Barriers to Mental Health Care



## MNSP's comprehensive approach to increasing access and removing barriers

- Healthcare centers placed strategically in regions with high need
- Screening practices standardized to benefit employees who are disproportionately impacted by inaccessible resources
- Mental health benefits include:
  - \$0 copay for mental health visits
  - No limits to services nor any spending caps
  - Virtual appointments
- Free apps for employees and families to engage in:
  - On-site and virtual counseling
  - Mental health and wellbeing programming
  - Pharmacy services with same-day responsiveness for emergencies
  - Telehealth appointments where teachers can access care during their breaks, before or after school





METRO  
NASHVILLE  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS

Be  
Smart,  
Live  
Well

# Akin Gump – “Meet them where they are”

**Akin Gump**  
STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP

## Akin Gump’s holistic approach to addressing mental health in the workplace

- Destigmatizing mental health by creating open space for discussion on mental health with leadership engagement and modeling
- Increasing accessibility for all employees and their families with free, supplementary, 24/7 access to various services, tools, and programs
  - Coaching
  - Mental health awareness training
  - Mental wellbeing and mindfulness webinars
  - Mindfulness apps
  - Mental health advisor program
  - Parental support
- Flexible work schedules, hours, and options for hybrid work



*be*  
Well

2023

Application  
Cycle now  
open

The Carolyn C. Mattingly Award for

# **MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE**

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In Memory of Carolyn C. Mattingly

Learn more & apply at:

<https://theluvuproject.org/workplaceaward/>



Questions?



# Acknowledgements

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- David Ballard, PhD, Founder and Principal, GhostNote Consulting; Scientific Advisor for Workforce Mental Health, Health Enhancement Research Organization
- C. Richard Mattingly, Founder & President, The Luv u Project
- Christin Lewis, Co-Founder, The Luv u Project
- Elizabeth H. Woods, MsPH '23, Former Research Assistant, IHPS
- Ashley Wu, MHS '20, Former Research Assistant, IHPS
- Ying Zhang, MsPH '23, Research Assistant, IHPS

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/08901171221112488b>

# Thank You!

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Protecting Health,  
Saving Lives—  
*Millions at a Time*



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