MENTAL HEALTH
COLORADO

Promoting Well-Being in the Workplace

Introduction

Work is a cornerstone of our lives, occupying nearly one-third of our lifetime. It's how we spend the majority of our waking hours, shaping not only our livelihoods but also our well-being. In recognition of this, workplaces have increasingly become focal points for promoting health and overall well-being. Substantial research shows that investments in employee well-being benefit both individuals and organizations.

Mental Health Colorado has developed this Workplace Well-Being Toolkit for better supporting health and well-being and reducing harm from substance use, including practical steps organizations and co-workers can take to contribute to a healthful work environment.

Prioritizing workplace well-being is good for the work, good for the people, and good for the broader community. By prioritizing well-being and implementing these strategies, organizations can improve productivity, retain talent, reduce absenteeism, and create a workplace where people who are thriving can spend the better part of their day gainfully, usefully, and otherwise well.

Healthy workplaces support health across the lifespan.

About Mental Health Colorado

Mental Health Colorado advocates for every Coloradan. Founded in 1953, we engage policymakers, providers, the public, and the press to promote well-being, ensure equitable access to mental health and substance use care, and end discrimination. Our efforts range from the Capitol to the classroom. We are Colorado's leading non-profit; non-partisan organization working to pass laws, change practices, and build a movement — to create healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans.

Setting the Stage: Health in the Workplace

Mental Health Conditions in the Workplace

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is an individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being – influencing how a person thinks, feels, and acts. [1] A person's mental health helps determine how they handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.

Mental health conditions are common:

More than 1 in 5 U.S. adults live with a mental health condition. [2]

About 1 in 25 U.S. adults live with a serious mental health condition, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression. [3]

In 2023, 66.5 % or 38.8 million adults who have a mental health condition are in recovery. [4]

In 2023, Mental Health America ranked Colorado 45th overall in adult mental health due to the state's higher prevalence of mental health conditions and lower rates of access to care. [5]

Myth vs Fact

"Individuals with mental health conditions never recover."

Millions of individuals with mental health conditions enter or are in sustained recovery each year. [6] Recovery is a process in which people can live, work, learn, and fully participate in their community. For some, recovery can mean reducing the severity of symptoms. With the appropriate and accessible support and resources, individuals with mental health conditions can thrive.

"Individuals with mental health conditions cannot work in stressful or demanding jobs."

Individuals with mental health conditions are as productive as any other employee, especially with barrier-free access to resources and services to meet their health needs, such as insurance, medication, therapy, and other community-based supports. Mental health impacts on an individual can vary considerably, and there is no "one size fits all" approach. Implementing flexible policies and procedures that support the whole employee is essential.

"Mental health conditions are a result of personality weaknesses or character flaws. People can 'snap out of it' if they try."

Mental health conditions should be treated like any other health condition – free from discrimination. A mental health condition can be a result of many factors, such as biological factors, life experiences, family health history, and much more. It is certainly not a weakness or a character flaw.

Substance Use Conditions in the Workplace

What Are Substance Use Conditions?

Substance use conditions are treatable, chronic diseases characterized by a compulsive pattern of using a substance or substances, which can include legal substances like alcohol, prescription opioids, tobacco, or illegal substances. [7] Experiencing a substance use condition can result in impairments in health, social function, and control over substance use.
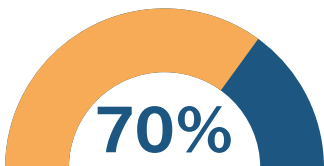
Having a substance use condition is common:

Nearly 1 in 7 Americans report experiencing a substance use condition. [8]

72% **or 20.9 million U.S. adults who have experienced a substance use condition are in recovery in 2023. [10]**

70% **or 13.6 million U.S. adults with a substance use condition are employed. [9]**

The City of Denver saw 522 fatal overdoses in 2023, a 15% increase from 2022 and a record high. [12]

According to provisional 2023 state data, there were 1,822 deaths related to overdose, a slight uptick from 2022 in Colorado. [11]

Myth vs Fact

"Individuals with substance use conditions cannot recover."

Millions of individuals enter and are in sustained recovery from substance use conditions each year. [13] The journey to recovery is not the same for everybody; it can be long and include challenges like relapsing. It is important to remember that a substance use condition is a health condition – not a moral failing – and a condition that is challenging to beat without access to resources.

"Substance use does not impact our industry."

Anyone can experience a substance use condition, regardless of education level, income, profession, or any other demographic.

"Addiction is a choice."

Substance use conditions change a person's brain chemistry. Several factors contribute to when and if a person develops a substance use condition, including biological, sociological, and psychological factors. Individuals experiencing substance use conditions are not "bad people;" they have a health condition that "willpower" cannot simply make them overcome.

The Bottom Line

Mental health and substance use conditions are health conditions – they should be treated as such.

Every workplace likely has individuals leading healthy and productive lives with these conditions. Yet, discrimination continues to be a burden on individuals with lived experience. Building and fostering an environment at work that promotes acceptance, inclusivity, and support is essential to ending discrimination of these conditions in the workplace.

Benefits of Promoting Health & Well-Being in the Workplace

For the average person, work is central to their daily life throughout their lifetime. It is said that a person spends 90,000 hours, or a third of their lifetime, at work. [14] Ensuring health, well-being, and inclusivity are promoted and prioritized in the workplace is vital to overall health outcomes.

Research has shown the myriad benefits to both employees *and* employers of investing in support and resources for all employees, regardless of health condition.

- **Attracting New Talent:** According to the American Psychological Association's 2023 Work in America Survey, 92% of workers highlighted the significance of working for a company that values emotional and psychological health. [15] Additionally, 60% of the newest generation of employees view mental health support as very important in selecting an employer. [16]

- **Retaining Employees**: According to the National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans, employers focused on well-being experience an 11% lower turnover rate than employers who do little to prioritize employee well-being. [17] A 2021 survey found that 57% of employees said mental health support was important when deciding to stay with an employer. [18]

- **Curbing Burnout:** Employee burnout impacts workplaces across industries. One in four employees has reported symptoms of burnout, which is associated with reduced productivity, less innovation, and a greater likelihood of making errors. [19] Research showed that to reach a 7% reduction in burnout rates, changes in behavior from leadership and systematic change were more effective in addressing burnout than simply having resources available. [20]

- **Increased Productivity and Performance**: ·A Gallup survey found that highly engaged teams experienced a 21% increase in profitability and productivity. [21] A strong organizational culture is associated with a 25% growth in the workforce, an 85% net profit increase, and a 138% improvement in financial support. [22]

- **Reducing Costs:** Investing in policies, programs, and procedures that support employee well-being not only creates happier, healthier employees—but can also contribute to cost savings. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, productivity loss related to health problems costs U.S. employers more than $225 billion yearly—indirect costs such as absenteeism, disability, and reduced work output are even more significant. [23] One study found that for every dollar spent on wellness programs, medical costs fell by about $3.27, and absenteeism costs fell by $2.73. [24]

The Bottom Line

Workplace well-being is vital to employee health and organizational success and has a positive return on investment. Implementing policies that focus on health can increase productivity, improve retention, reduce absenteeism, and result in cost savings. Promoting employee health is a key strategy to optimize an organization's long-term success and sustainability.

Actionable Steps to Promote Health and Well-Being in the Workplace

Understanding practical strategies to support mental health and reduce harm from substance use is vital to addressing and ending health-based discrimination in the workplace. Here are actionable steps — big and small — organizations and leaders can take to ensure all employees are positioned for success in the workplace.

1. Prioritize Trust

Trust is a defining foundation of most successful organizations. [25] It can be defined as a belief in another person's abilities, integrity, and character. Employees at high-trust organizations feel psychologically safe to take risks, share ideas, express themselves freely, and innovate. Employees at high-trust organizations report 74% less stress, 106% more energy, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction in their lives, and 40% less burnout. [26] Creating trust takes time and starts with leadership.

Opportunities to Consider

Schedule 1:1 time with co-workers, implement regular team calls to brainstorm, and plan opportunities outside the workplace, such as a hike, a volunteer day, or a sports event.

Lead with transparency. When strategically sensible, communicate with employees clearly about organizational developments, challenges, reasons behind decisions, upcoming events, and other updates. When done consistently and thoughtfully, information sharing can lead to improved productivity and collaboration.

Cultivate teamwork, appreciation, and respect by recognizing employee contributions, accomplishments, and hard work in real-time. Announce achievements, email staff after a big event, celebrate employment anniversaries, and acknowledge and give credit to employees' ideas to show they are valued.

Community Spotlight: Vail Resorts

The Epic Wellness program, implemented by Vail Resorts, addresses mental health challenges prevalent in mountain communities by focusing on prevention and comprehensive support. [27] The program offers employees and their families access to quality treatment through a broad provider network and community partnerships. At no cost, they offer six confidential therapy sessions annually to all employees, their dependents, and household members. In addition, they provide wellness coaching and mindfulness apps. With a clinical utilization rate of over 12%, Epic Wellness aims to foster a culture where team members feel comfortable supporting each other's mental health. Vail Resorts' commitment to mental health has been recognized by Mental Health Colorado, showcasing its leadership in supporting mental health in mountain communities. [28]

2. Provide Access to Resources & Support

Employers have a unique role in supporting employees' health needs. To demonstrate their commitment to employee growth and well-being, employers may offer a range of resources, such as a comprehensive benefits package, employee assistance programs, and professional growth opportunities. Ensuring easy access to these resources is essential to encourage participation.

Opportunities to Consider

- Offer comprehensive health benefits to support all employees. Federal laws such as the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA) and the Affordable Care Act are in place to ensure there is parity between mental health or substance use benefits and medical/surgical benefits for most health plans. Consider expanding beyond what is required and include benefits such as reimbursement programs for services such as therapy, yoga classes, gym memberships, and mindfulness apps to help promote well-being.
- Establish an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a voluntary program that offers free and confidential services to employees on personal issues that may affect their job performance, such as financial and social challenges or mental health and substance use concerns. [29] EAPs can offer services like employee education, assessments, referrals to treatment, and short-term counseling.
- Create an Employee Resource Group (ERG), an internal community of employees with shared interests or identities. [30] When established with a clear purpose and priority, ERGs can be very effective in building connections, promoting inclusion, increasing engagement, serving the needs of employees, and strengthening communication across the organization.
- Host mental health training to give your employees tools to support their mental health and the well-being of their peers.

Community Spotlight: Absolute Caulking & Waterproofing

Absolute Caulking & Waterproofing strongly emphasizes safety and ethical practices within the construction sector across Colorado and Wyoming. [31] The Wheat Ridge-based construction company integrates health and safety into its core values and operations, enhancing its programs through self-assessment and action planning. [32] This approach has led to improved communication regarding health benefits and normalized discussions about mental health in the workplace. Providing resources such as an employee assistance program, 24/7 mental health services, addiction counseling, marriage counseling, and regular mental health check-ins, Absolute Caulking & Waterproofing has cultivated an environment where employees feel supported and encouraged to prioritize their well-being.

3. Promote Awareness and Education

Investing in resources is the first step in promoting health and well-being among employees; however, clear communication about what is available is paramount to facilitating uptake. In a 2021 study, 87% of employees had access to well-being offerings, but only 23% used the resources. [33] Utilizing a variety of channels to communicate to employees about available resources and support can empower employees to take proactive steps toward their health. Additionally, a regular cadence of communications will signal to staff that health and well-being are a priority at the organization.

Opportunities to Consider

Mention available resources when interviewing potential candidates and onboarding new employees to foster an environment of open communication regarding health.

Take time to acknowledge health-oriented observances such as LGBTQ Health Awareness Week (March), National Mental Health Awareness Month (May), National Recovery Month (September), or World Suicide Prevention Day (September) as a vehicle to jumpstart conversations about these topics.

Regularly remind employees about services that are available through internal communications.

Community Spotlight: Encore Electric

Encore Electric is a prominent electrical contractor in Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. [34] Their workforce checks all of the boxes to be at an elevated risk of suicide and mental health conditions. Recognizing this, leaders at the company decided to take an upstream approach to focus on the direct impact of mental health on the productivity and safety of employees.

The company implemented a comprehensive support program for its employees, including unlimited in-person mental health visits covered by medical insurance and access to TalkSpace, a virtual counseling service for them and their families. Communication about mental health benefits is prioritized through various channels, including physical mailers, newsletters, and discussions during safety meetings and 1:1 check-ins with supervisors. All full-time employees have access to paid short- and long-term disability leave. This approach is integral to the company culture, where supporting colleagues in times of need is expected and modeled by leadership. [35]

4. Provide Training to Managers

Building and sustaining a supportive workplace is not the sole responsibility of leaders at the top. Managers play a key role in implementing and ensuring the work environment serves employees' health and well-being. Managers are on the frontlines, working directly with employees, helping streamline processes, and pushing internal teams to meet organizational goals. Managers play an important role in staying aware, remaining curious, and acting responsively to employee challenges. Equipping managers with tools to best support their team and their needs will reinforce the values of a supportive workplace.

Opportunities to Consider

Invest in the professional development of managers with access to resources to strengthen leadership and emotional intelligence skills, learn how to prevent burnout, and navigate and respond to accommodation requests.

Support professional growth opportunities by encouraging managers to attend conferences, webinars, training, and speaking opportunities.

Familiarize managers with the range of health benefits and programs, leave options, and resources offered by the organization.

Create a mentorship program between seasoned and new employees to foster a sense of belonging and allow for the transfer of institutional knowledge.

Community Spotlight: Colorado School of Public Health

The Center for Health, Work & Environment at the Colorado School of Public Health and the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention lead initiatives to advance worker health, safety, and well-being, including the Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) InitiativeTM. [36] The Initiative works with partners and employers to address mental health challenges facing workforces and communities, including depression, suicide, and substance use disorders. [37] The statewide RFW acknowledges employers' role in uplifting the importance of mental health in the workplace and helps equip employers with resources to support and retain employees experiencing these conditions effectively. [38] Recently, nine employers in Routt County participated in the program. [39] Participating employers pledge to prioritize mental health, addiction, prevention, treatment, and recovery support for all employees and to create workplaces where it is safe to have uncomfortable and difficult conversations. [40] Additionally, they developed a comprehensive resource for interested employers called the Colorado Recovery Friendly Workplace Toolkit. [41] As a result of the successful passage of CO SB24-048, the Initiative will certify Colorado employers as Recovery Friendly Workplaces starting in late 2024/early 2025. [42]

5. Promote Work-Life Balance

Encouraging and embodying work-life balance is fundamental to a supportive work environment. Leading by example is key to its success, whether by the CEO, Vice President, Assistant Vice President, Associate, or Intern. "Talking the talk" and "walking the walk" from all organizational levels will ensure all staff feel comfortable making decisions to help protect their health without fear of retaliation.

Opportunities to Consider

- Respect each other's time by leaving work on time, considering employee's schedules when arranging meetings, and avoiding over-scheduling.
- Encourage employees to take paid time off and disconnect during this personal time.
- Allow employees to have an automatic "out-of-office" email, set the expectation that communication should be limited with the employee, and let employees know they deserve to take time off.
- Encourage employees to get outside during the workday or to take regular breaks. Just 5 minutes of movement can help boost mood, increase productivity, and offset the harms of sitting for long hours. [43] Offer a 1:1 meeting on a walk instead of in the office.
- Support employees with children and accommodate school calendars and breaks.

Community Spotlight: Gary Community Ventures

Gary Community Ventures is a philanthropic organization that combines the power of business, policy, and philanthropy to increase opportunities for Colorado's kids and families. [44] As of 2024, Gary earned the Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health from Mental Health America, a certification acknowledging an employer's dedication to mental well-being with a supportive and healthy work environment. [45] The platinum status results from the organization's benefits package, including fully funded healthcare plans that contain an employee assistance program with on-demand counseling services and an internal wellness program called BeWell. [46] Additionally, Gary has multiple restoration weeks throughout the year, where they close their office to rest and recuperate. [47]

6. Establish Flexible Work Arrangement Policies

Flexible work arrangements can look different and may not work for all organizations, but this approach may be an effective tool to promote work-life balance. Research has shown that flexibility policies can be a powerful tool that organizations can harness to improve job satisfaction, reduce stress, and attract and retain diverse talent while increasing productivity. [48] According to a 2022 study, when people have the chance to work flexibly, 87% take advantage of the opportunity. [49] Additionally, job seekers highly value this working policy and rank it 3rd as a motivator for finding a new job. [50] Replace the traditional 9-to-5, 40-hour work week whenever possible with this low-cost benefit focused on employee flexibility and autonomy.

Opportunities to Consider

- Allow employees to work remotely at home or from other locations full-time or part-time.
- Permit employees to work on a hybrid schedule, working from home some days and from the office on the others.
- Explore a company-wide schedule shift like a 4-day workweek or "Summer Fridays" to allow employees to leave early or not work on Fridays during the summer or other slow periods.

Community Spotlight: City of Golden

In July 2023, the City of Golden launched "The Best for Golden," a 6-month compressed workweek pilot with the Golden Police Department. [51] During the experiment, employees worked four days a week while receiving the same benefits and pay. After the initial six months, the city and department reported decreased overtime costs by 79.3%, increasing efficiency and employee well-being without impacting public safety. The first phase also resulted in about $115,000 in cost savings and a 50% reduction in resignations and retirements. [52] The pilot was extended for six months but plans to make permanent changes will not be decided until 2025.

7. Promote Respect, Appreciation, and an Understanding of Health Equity

Discussing and focusing on respect, appreciation, and health equity will help employees understand the commonality of health conditions and the meaning of equitable access to prevention and support practices. This shared understanding will help employees feel a sense of belonging and enhance co-worker contributions to a healthy workplace. Share policies and procedures that encourage the representation and participation of all employees. [53] Include all voices in efforts to improve internal policies that benefit all employee health and well-being. Taking a multi-faceted approach that fits unique organizational needs can reduce discrimination in the workplace.

Opportunities to Consider

Create an internal committee to determine what is needed explicitly at the organization to support well-being and to identify and address what is necessary to serve the organization's unique needs. Be sure to include people with lived experience.

Examine internal language because words matter and impact on people's experience of well-being. Consider inviting people to share their pronouns or spoken languages in their signatures, using person-first language, and distributing a guidebook on how to discuss mental health or substance use needs (i.e., not using discriminatory language like "junkie" or "psycho").

Evaluate hiring practices and create more inclusive conditions of work as business imperatives allow. Update hiring processes by removing requirements for college degrees when not required for job duties, commit to policies that are supportive of workers with care provider responsibilities, leverage strategic recruitment partners that represent underrepresented communities, and create diverse interview panels. [54]
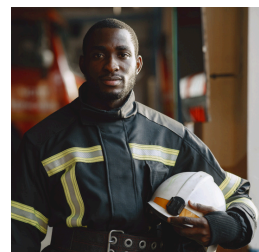
7. Promote Respect, Appreciation, and an Understanding of Health Equity

Become a Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health certified workplace. [55] Mental Health America leads this national certification program recognizing employers committed to creating healthy workplaces.

Become a recovery-friendly workplace that has policies supporting individuals in or seeking recovery. [56] Policies may include ensuring access to services such as treatment and recovery support, educating all levels of the organization on substance use conditions and recovery, and allowing flexible schedules to accommodate appointments to support treatment and recovery.

Be open to second chance hiring, a practice of hiring individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system. [57] Research shows that interacting with the criminal justice system disproportionately impacts individuals of color and individuals living with mental health or substance use conditions. [58] [59] [60] Implementing this practice has demonstrated lower turnover rates and cost savings with the proper support.

## Community Spotlight: The State of Colorado

The State of Colorado has taken several steps to support and enhance opportunities for individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system as they enter the workforce. The Colorado General Assembly passed HB19-1025 Limits On Job Applicant Criminal History Inquiries, the State's "Ban the Box proposal." [61] This law prohibits all private employers from requiring applicants to disclose and inquire about an applicant's criminal history on the initial employment application. [62] In 2021, Colorado's Attorney General announced a $1.1 million initiative with the Colorado Department of Corrections and community-based organizations to support individuals leaving the prison system. [63] This initiative aims to invest resources to expand the impact of reentry service providers, develop a network of employers, and support the development of approaches to pre-release, mentoring, and transitional working experiences. [64] The following year, the Colorado Legislature also passed SB22-099: Sealing Criminal Records, the State's Clean Slate Law, to automate record-sealing processes for certain offenses on specific timelines. [65]

8. Monitor and Evaluate

With any intervention, evaluation is crucial to ensuring the strategies improve employee outcomes. [66] Research has found that 48% of employees who lack involvement in decisions experience more stress; however, when employees feel like they have a voice, they are more likely to remain in those jobs. [67] Feedback can help leaders gain valuable insight into how the organization can grow and evolve.

Opportunities to Consider

- Establish a baseline by deploying a workplace well-being survey before and after implementing any initiative.
- Be present for difficult conversations by silencing distractions, actively listening, asking constructive questions, and pausing before responding.
- Create a safe space for employees to share ideas through regular strategic planning sessions, implementing an annual anonymized survey, or hosting a staff-wide retreat.
- Meaningfully incorporate feedback by creating a follow-up plan and communicating it to employees.
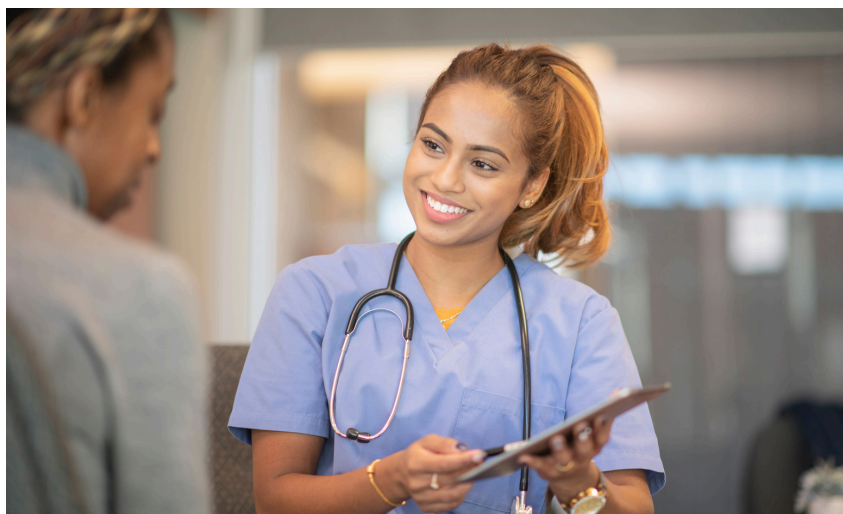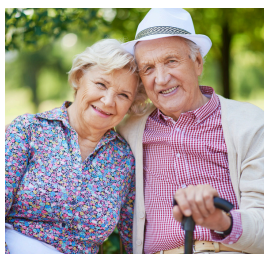
The Bottom Line

Any organization in any industry can implement one or more of these actionable steps to improve well-being in the workplace. Improving workplace well-being is not only about investing in support and resources but also examining how leaders can spearhead the shift. While it may take resources and changing habits, these steps can help ensure the workplace supports all employees better and ends health-based discrimination.

Legal Protections for Employees with Health Conditions

Employers and employees need to know and understand the legal protections to end health-based discrimination. These laws uphold the fundamental rights and dignity of all individuals – regardless of their health conditions. Knowledge and open communication about these legal safeguards are essential to promoting the health and well-being of employees while contributing to the elimination of discrimination in the workplace.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment. The ADA defines a person with a disability as a person: [68]

- who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (i.e., a person with bipolar disorder, diabetes, or alcohol use disorder);
- who has a history or record of such an impairment (i.e., a person in recovery from opioid use disorder or a person who is in remission from cancer);
- who is perceived by others as having such an impairment (such as a person who has scars from a severe burn).

Employment Rights under the ADA

Title 1 of the ADA, which governs employment, applies to employers with more than 15 employees and permits employees to the following rights. [69]

- **Maintain a right of privacy:** Employers may not ask job applicants about the existence, nature, or severity of a condition. Applicants may be asked about their ability to perform specific job functions. A job offer may be conditioned on the results of a medical examination, but only if the examination is required for all employees entering similar jobs.
- **Ask for reasonable accommodations:** however, this requires the employee to disclose their disability, which is a choice (i.e., a flexible schedule to allow for appointments, more frequent breaks for medication, a schedule change, allowing the use of white noise headphones). [70]

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Mental Health Conditions	The ADA defines a disability to include mental impairment, meaning an individual with a mental health condition is subject to the ADA's protections in the workplace. The ADA prohibits discrimination against individuals who have a history or are regarded as having a mental health condition. Employers cannot require applicants or employees to disclose their conditions; for the most part, the decision to disclose is a legally protected choice, not a requirement. [71]
Substance Use Conditions	The ADA generally considers substance use as a disability because it impairs the brain and is subject to the protections in place; however, there are a few circumstances in which protections do not apply. [72] The ADA treats alcohol use and illegal use of substances differently. Alcohol use is generally considered a disability in the present or the past. The ADA does NOT protect individuals who are currently using substances illegally (opioids or illicit substances) but extends protections against discrimination for individuals in recovery from substance use. This means individuals who are no longer engaging in using substances or actively participating in a treatment program are protected, including medication for opioid use disorder or medication-assisted treatment. [73] The ADA prohibits employers from asking individuals about the existence, nature, or severity of a condition. If accommodation is requested, disclosure is required.

Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act

Another important federal law is The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA). [74] This law aims to ensure that health insurance plans provide equivalent coverage for mental health and substance use disorder treatment and medical and surgical treatments. It applies to individual, small, and large group health insurance plans, private employer-sponsored plans with 51 or more employees, Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) but not Medicare. Under the MHPAEA, these plans must provide parity between mental health/substance use disorder benefits and medical/surgical benefits in terms of financial requirements (such as copayments, coinsurance, and deductibles) and treatment limitations (such as visit limits or prior authorization requirements). [75]

Colorado Law
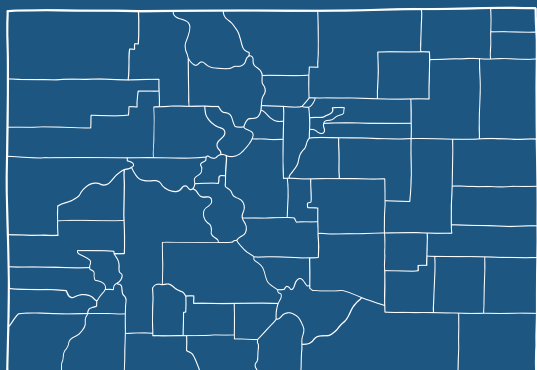
HB19-1269 Behavioral Health Care Coverage Modernization Act updated behavioral health insurance coverage laws to align with federal law and closed many existing loopholes to ensure parity. [76] This bill required the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing to ensure that Medicaid covers mental health, and substance use disorder services and establish a reimbursement procedure when a managed care entity denies coverage. The bill also includes parity reforms for both private carriers and Colorado's Medicaid program.

For more information and resources, please visit:

- Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies: https://doi.colorado.gov/insurance-products/health-insurance/consumer-resources/mental/behavioral-health-and-insurance
- Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing: https://hcpf.colorado.gov/parity

The Family and Medical Leave Act

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a federal law that provides unpaid, job-protected leave for family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage. FMLA allows eligible employees of covered employers up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave for protected circumstances. [77]

Covered employers include private-sector employers who employ 50 or more employees in 20 or more workweeks in either the current calendar year or the previous calendar year, public agencies, and local educational agencies. Eligible employees have worked at the covered employer for at least 12 months, have at least 1,250 hours of service, and work at a location where the employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles. Protected circumstances include:

- the birth of a child or placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- the care for a child, spouse, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to work; and
- reasons related to a family member's service in the military.

Colorado Program

On November 3, 2020, Colorado voters approved a measure to create a paid Family & Medical Leave program. FAMLI benefits officially became available on January 1, 2024. [78] Covered Colorado workers may receive up to twelve weeks of leave per year to:

- bond with a new child, including adopted and fostered children;
- care for themselves if they have a serious health condition;
- care for a family member's serious health condition.
- make arrangements for a family member's military deployment;
- address the immediate safety needs and impact of domestic violence and/or sexual assault; or
- manage pregnancy or childbirth complications (persons with these complications may receive an additional four weeks for a total of 16 weeks per year).

For more information, please visit the Colorado Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (FAMLI): https://famli.colorado.gov/

In Closing

In today's rapidly evolving world, the significance of fostering health and well-being in the workplace cannot be overstated. From attracting top talent to reducing turnover rates and enhancing productivity, the benefits impact every aspect of the workplace.

By prioritizing trust, providing access to resources, promoting awareness, and embracing diversity and flexibility, organizations can create environments where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to bring their best selves to work each day. But creating a thriving workplace isn't a one-time effort; it's an ongoing commitment. It requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation to ensure that the initiatives put in place are effective and responsive to the evolving needs of employees.

Promoting health and well-being in the workplace isn't just about ticking boxes or meeting quotas. It's about fundamentally reshaping the way we work and interact, with the understanding that a healthy, inclusive, and supportive workplace isn't just good for employees—it's essential for the long-term success and sustainability of organizations.

By embracing these actionable steps, any organization, regardless of size or industry, can create a workplace where all employees can thrive, grow, and contribute to a brighter future. Together, let's build environments that prioritize health and well-being, setting the stage for more prosperous and fulfilling workplaces for all.

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