




A Field Guide for **MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUR WORKPLACE:** FROM EVALUATION TO ACTION



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“ If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask. Once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes. ”

- Albert Einstein

**“ I don't need another toolkit.
I'm drowning in toolkits.
I need to know where to start. ”**

- HR Professional on Mental Health

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A Note from the SHRM Foundation

Founded in 1966, the SHRM Foundation serves as the philanthropic arm of the largest professional society for HR professionals in the world. Every day, the SHRM Foundation works to leverage the experience and reach of more than 300,000 professionals worldwide to enact social change among 115 million workers and their families, impacting their lives in ways both large and small.

Workplace mental health is a vital element of our mission and one that is only gaining urgency. Workplace mental health has become a foremost priority among HR professionals, people managers, small business owners, and C-suite executives. It is a question of productivity and inclusivity; of attracting and retaining talent; of succeeding in a post-COVID-19 world. The drive for better workplace mental health is no passing phenomenon. It is a long-simmering challenge that has reached a boiling point.

HR must step up.

However, the task is complex. HR leaders tell us, time and again, that they've been asked to "fix" workplace mental health – and then left to find and implement solutions on their own. This will not do. We applaud the wealth of toolkits, white papers, case studies, and surveys on workplace mental health. We embrace the growing volume of the conversation. Yet we also think a key piece is missing.

This Field Guide is designed to equip HR leaders – as well as people managers, business owners, and executives – with a powerful, practical place to start. It is designed not to give you all the answers, but to help you ask the right questions. It is meant to help you assess your unique needs, opportunities, and first steps in developing a mental health strategy for your workplace.

We hope that you will share your insights and experiences with us and others as you undertake this journey. The SHRM Foundation would be honored to be your partner as we work together to advance mental health in the workplace.



Wendi Safstrom
President, SHRM Foundation



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Additionally, you can find a full, annotated resource list we referenced to create the Field Guide in the [Appendix](#).



Introduction:

Asking the Right Questions to Guide Your Strategy

Introduction: Asking the Right Questions to Guide Your Strategy

The need is clear. In a recent SHRM Foundation survey, **one-in-three** workers said they would sacrifice higher pay for a workplace that provides increased mental health benefits.^[1] In the same survey, **86 percent** of HR professionals in the U.S. indicated that employee retention can be improved by offering mental health resources.^[2]



There are abundant resources focused on this need: program options, benefits consultants, educational programs, toolkits, and messaging guides. There seems to be a seminar, roundtable, or conference on workplace mental health every week.

Yet despite this abundance – and perhaps in part because of it – HR professionals often struggle to get started. In a 2022 survey, more than 20 percent of HR professionals reported feeling unsure about which mental health benefits to provide.^[3]

Why, in this active environment, do HR professionals feel stuck, confused, and even disoriented?

The collective learning opportunities on workplace mental health are overwhelming. The sheer quantity of material – of inconsistent quality – is paralyzing HR. The more we create, the more we seem to end up stuck.

With this Field Guide, we hope to offer a remedy by prioritizing not checklists or fact sheets, but questions. While each workplace is unique and needs a unique approach, we believe every HR leader will be able to shape an effective strategy by engaging with the questions on the following pages.

This Field Guide is designed to help HR leaders assess, strategize, and act. It can be referenced in all phases of developing and implementing a mental health strategy, from the first days of planning to the latter days of evaluation.

By following this guide, HR professionals will have guidance to get started immediately – and an ongoing reference going forward.

We hope these questions and guidelines help you navigate your journey to a workplace where mental health is a top priority.

^[1] SHRM. 2022, June 15. *Improving mental health means working at it every day.* SHRM.

^[2] SHRM. 2022, May. *Mental Health in America: A 2022 Workplace Report.* SHRM.

^[3] SHRM. 2022, May. *Mental Health in America: A 2022 Workplace Report.* SHRM.

Introduction: Getting Started with Mental Health in Your Workplace

We created this Field Guide with your busy schedule in mind. As you use it, here are some suggestions that may help you advance efficiently and productively:

Pick what matters most:

Not everything in the pages that follow will apply to you and your workplace. Pick what matters most to the team you serve. Use the sections and sub-sections to focus your energy and time.

Some is better than none:

Some progress is better than no progress. Can't work through the entire Field Guide? That's okay! Do what you can. Progress is progress.

Start where you are:

The Field Guide can work as a comprehensive resource from start to finish – or you can jump to the middle to address your current priorities. Use your expertise to determine your starting point.

Don't do it alone:

The Field Guide is built around asking the right questions – some to yourself, but many to your colleagues, leadership, and employees. Use these questions to create collaboration, consensus, and community.

The annotated resource list is your friend:

If you Google "workplace mental health solutions," you will see nearly 80,000,000 results. What's good? What's not? The annotated resource list highlights resources endorsed by the SHRM Foundation's expert collaborators. As you work through the questions in this Field Guide, trust these resources to shape solutions.

Make the journey right for you:

This Field Guide is for you and your workplace. Make it fit your needs.

We welcome your thoughts and feedback as you begin with evaluation and move to action.