



Ohio Chamber Workplace Mental Health: Full Implementation Guide

I. Introduction: The Business Imperative

In Ohio, more than two million adults manage a diagnosable mental health condition. As an employer, you have the power to bridge the gap in care while strengthening your bottom line. Mentally healthy employees have fewer absences, incur lower medical costs, and demonstrate higher productivity.

- **The Multiplier:** Every **\$1** invested in workplace mental health returns **\$1.62 to \$5+**.
- **The Cost of Inaction:** Presenteeism (reduced capacity while at work) accounts for **81%** of lost productivity time.

II. The 4-Step Implementation Roadmap

Step 1: Build the Foundation

The most effective programs start with a clear, visible commitment from leadership.

- **Establish Your Vision:** Create a written policy that treats mental health with the same priority as physical health and safety.
- **Form a Wellness Committee:** Secure employee input early by forming a committee to help design and implement the program.
- **Assess Your Needs:** Use anonymous surveys to measure staff wellness and identify common workplace stressors.

Step 2: Implement the "4 A's" Strategy

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) provides four pillars to "bring your A-game" to workplace mental health:

1. **Awareness:** Host educational workshops and use internal communications to reduce the stigma of mental illness and substance use.
2. **Accommodations:** Provide flexible work schedules, designated quiet spaces for mindfulness, or allow administrative leave for recovery.
3. **Assistance:** Offer and promote an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that includes support for family and parenting issues.
4. **Access:** Ensure your health insurance plan provides equal coverage for mental and physical health.



Step 3: Support Parents and Caregivers

1.7 million Ohioans juggle work and unpaid care; 64% of these caregivers have missed work due to these responsibilities.

- **Provide Flexibility:** Allow for "no-questions-asked" mental health days or flexible hours for a child's therapy appointments.
- **Curate Specialized Resources:** Share information about **OhioRISE** (managed care for youth) and **Nationwide Children's Bloom** (free digital curriculum for working parents).
- **Foster Community:** Establish Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) where parents can share lived experiences and build peer support networks.

Step 4: Train Your Managers

Managers are your "first responders". Equip them with tools to:

- **Recognize Signs:** Identify symptoms of burnout, withdrawal, or unusual irritability in their team members.
- **Lead Supportive Conversations:** Use "I statements" and active listening to check in with employees without overstepping legal boundaries.
- **Normalize Help-Seeking:** Ensure managers are comfortable sharing available company benefits and community resources.

III. Small Business Focus (1–50 Employees)

Small businesses can achieve a major impact with low-cost, high-impact strategies and free Ohio resources.

- **Establish an "Open Door Policy":** Ensure employees feel safe seeking assistance without fear of reprisal .
- **Designate a Wellness Space:** Identify a quiet room or corner where employees can take a "mental reset" to recharge.
- **Utilize Free Training:** Use the **Recovery Friendly Employer** modules to train leadership at no cost.

IV. Legal Compliance & Protection

Ohio employers must navigate essential laws that protect both the organization and the employee .

- **ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act):** Requires providing reasonable accommodations for qualified employees with disabilities, including mental health conditions.



- **FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act):** Provides job-protected leave for an employee's own serious health condition or to care for a family member.
- **Mental Health Parity:** Ohio employers are responsible for ensuring their health plans treat mental health benefits in the same manner as medical/surgical benefits.

V. Tools & Templates

Inclusive Language Guide

Replace stigmatizing terms in your company communications to foster a culture of safety.

Instead of...	Use...
Addict / User	Person with substance use disorder
Mentally Ill	Person managing a mental health condition
Committed Suicide	Died by suicide

Manager Check-in Checklist

Use these questions during regular 1-on-1 sessions:

- Do you feel like you can balance your well-being and job on a daily basis?
- How do you feel you manage your stress levels at work?
- Are you aware of the resources available to you?
- What can I do to help you feel supported?

VI. Ohio-Specific Resources

- **Ohio Dept. of Insurance (MHIA):** Help navigating insurance parity at **855-GET-MHIA**.
- **Ohio CareLine:** 24/7 confidential emotional support at **1-800-720-9616**.
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text **988** for immediate support.
- **BWC Wellness Grants (WWGP):** State-funded grants to de-risk your initial wellness investments.