

# Roadmap to Mental Wellness in the Workplace

**WORKPLACE INCLUSION**

## About

Disability:IN's **Inclusion Works (IW)** is a three-year program that provides participating companies with unlimited disability inclusion consulting and connections to an exclusive community of corporations. The program is supported by Disability:IN subject matter experts who are recognized leaders in disability inclusion.

**We provide customized disability inclusion consulting for corporations and connect them to their peers.**

**Participating companies improved their Disability Equality Index (DEI) scores, from an average of 68% in 2015 to an average of 92% in 2019.**

Funding for Disability:IN's IW is provided in part by grants from the May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust and the Poses Family Foundation.

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**With the assistance of the Inclusion Works team from 2014 to 2019, Inclusion Works companies hired over 40,000 new employees with disabilities.**



# Introduction

The goal of Disability:IN's Roadmap to Mental Wellness in the Workplace is to inspire action, improve workplace productivity, and impact the well-being of millions of employees and their families around the world.

By 2020, mental and substance use disorders will surpass all physical disease as the major causes of disability worldwide (NIH). Many of your employees and their families are impacted by mental illness and this may adversely affect productivity, increase absenteeism, and disrupt teamwork.

Today 1 in 4 American adults has a diagnosable mental health condition in a given year (NIMH), yet only 1 in 3 will seek treatment. The most common mental health conditions in the workplace are anxiety and depression. Panic disorders, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and Post Traumatic Stress round out the list.

**Treatment for the most common conditions is effective 80 percent of the time and yet only one-third of those who need treatment will seek it. The stigma associated with the illness is as great a challenge as the disease itself.**

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Some of the Leadership teams that take part in Disability:IN's Disability Equality Index (DEI) report that behavioral healthcare wasn't a top priority a decade ago. That may be because there was no clear connection between behavioral health and business value. Today, mental wellness is seen as an imperative to business strategy.

Based on the premise that business responds to their peers, this publication offers a roadmap of proven best practices by featuring four companies' mental wellness initiatives.

## Part 1: Prevalence in the Workplace

When research shows that up to 25% of the workforce is affected by mental health issues, it puts significant pressure on business at all levels. But solving the problem requires thinking less about numbers and more about people, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Understanding the Epidemic](#).

Barbara Harvey, Managing Director – Accenture Research & United Kingdom Mental Health Sponsor, says that when she hears the common statistic that 1 in 4 people is affected by a mental illness during their lifetime, she is positive that the number must be higher. "Mental health challenges affect all of us," Harvey said. "And there's so much secrecy and stigma around it. We conducted research across the U.K. and found that 9 in 10 people are touched by mental health challenges, either personally or through someone close to them."

**"Ninety percent of workers have been touched by mental health challenges, either personally or through someone they are close to. When employers recognize this and create a culture that supports workers' mental health, workers are more likely to speak openly, to know where to go for help or advice and are more than twice as likely to love their job."**

**Source: *It's Not 1 in 4; It's All of Us*, 2018 Accenture Report Authored by Barbara Harvey, Managing Director, Accenture Research and UK Mental Health Sponsor, for "This Can Happen," a Workplace Mental Health Conference.**

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Substance use disorders in general, including the use of heroin, prescription pain relievers and alcohol, often require long-term treatment, resulting in higher health care costs, turnover in the workforce and a lack of productivity. Most of us may think the effect of depression and anxiety disorders couldn't possibly be on the level as the opioid crisis. But they are the most common debilitating mental illnesses worldwide. Depression is the single largest contributor to global disability, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) [WHO Depression & Other Common Mental Disorders, Global Health Estimates](#).

This makes the business case for lowering the number of people affected by mental illness abundantly clear. A World Economic Forum report, *Investing in Mental Health: Evidence for Action*, warns that "the numbers estimated mark mental health out as a highly significant concern not only for public health but also for economic development and societal welfare."

In large part it is not that the business community has turned its back on the problem; it's much more likely that the stigma associated with the illness keeps people from talking about it or seeking help. Employees impacted by mental illness say stigma and the adverse effect disclosure may have on their careers/promotions prevents them from asking for assistance or support because of a deep-rooted fear of being discriminated against. Many employees who could benefit from peer support and company resources such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and Business/Employee Resource Groups (B/ERGs) are fearful of others knowing they or someone in their family has a mental health condition. To add to the problem, most mental health conditions are non-apparent. Just as success has a ripple effect, so does silence and here's the problem: if a large number of employees remain silent about mental illness for fear of stigma in the workplace, how can leaders create and promote programs that are most responsive to their employees' needs?

**"Companies that have a supportive culture around employees' mental health enable workers to be more open and seek help. Employees in supportive companies are also more motivated and loyal."**

Source: *Thriving at Work – The Stevenson-Farmer Review of Mental Health and Employees*.

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## GET A SMART START

For the most part, this will not be the first time your company and several department leaders and executives have discussed the need for a mental wellness program at your company. But it may be the first time you are organizing and assigning roles and securing executive support. Depending on the size and scope, the road to launch could take one or several months. The process will likely seem overwhelming until you have the right team in place. Collaborative plans often have the best chance of success; this is not a one-person job.

Although you may start with a pilot program, it's best to plan a wellness program that will have a positive impact across the company. "Gaining the buy-in of business leaders and ensuring you know how to support employees when they start to seek help are two of the most important success factors in launching a program," says Accenture's Harvey. "At the end of the day, what really matters is to get the conversation around mental health started."

### To start a Mental Wellness Program, Accenture recommends four elements:

- 1.** Secure the buy-in of leaders. Build their understanding of the business and human case for supporting healthy minds in the workplace.
- 2.** Establish how you will support individuals who seek help for their mental health. This might be raising awareness of company resources, e.g., Employee Assistance Program, insurers or other sources of advice/support. Once you raise the topic of mental health, individuals are more likely to understand they need help and feel safe to seek it.
- 3.** Start the conversation in the workplace to end the stigma around mental health by storytelling and sharing so that people realize they are not alone, and the discussion begins to feel more normal.
- 4.** Build awareness through training programs. Many organizations create a network of Mental Health First Aiders or Allies to act as ambassadors and support individuals in the workplace.

Conduct research to determine whether there is existing data to inform your decisions. For example, request aggregate data on the prescriptions used by your employees. One company requested these data and discovered that medication for major depression and anxiety was the most frequently prescribed medication by far. It is also useful to determine the utilization rate of the mental health services offered by your company's Employee Assistance Program.

# Part 2: Impact on the Workplace

**“The economic costs of mental illness will be more than cancer, diabetes and respiratory ailments put together.”**

– Thomas Insel, Former Director, National Institute of Mental Health, USA

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## USING STATISTICS TO TELL YOUR IMPACT STORY

Impact occurs on two levels—there’s the big picture in which the statistics paint a picture and then there is the work that happens one-to-one, often via peer interaction. By employing both statistics and stories, employers can play a key role in creating awareness and educating people. From a business standpoint, sorting through the numbers and seeing their impact on a particular workforce are essential to making the case for investing in the mental health care of all employees. In taking a deep dive into the data (yours or an external source), you’ll see common themes bubble to the top:

- Health care expenditures at high-pressure companies are nearly 50% greater than at other organizations (APA).
- Depression and anxiety disorders cost the global economy an estimated \$1 trillion each year in lost productivity (WHO-led study).
- Depression is also the leading cause of absenteeism in the U.S. (NIMH).
- Stress is at the root of 80% of doctors’ visits and 60 to 80% of workplace accidents (NIMH).
- High-stress environments have a 50% greater rate of voluntary turnover (HBR).
- Suicides in the U.S. increased 30% to 45,000 annually in 2016 (CDC).
- Opioid overdoses accounted for more than 42,000 U.S. deaths in 2016, more than any previous year on record. An estimated 40% of opioid overdose deaths involved a prescription opioid (HHS).

## USING STORYTELLING TO SHOW PERSONAL IMPACT

Numbers are convincing, but they can also make your eyes glaze over. Inclusive brands will want to align their business goals with impact through storytelling. Personal stories are the ones we remember. Whether you are giving voice to a young assistant or a managing director, of any age, ethnicity, sexual or gender identity, it doesn’t matter as much as the fact that it is a story. “It’s not clinical or scary or hidden,” says Harvey. “You must provide a safe space for people to talk about issues without fear of repercussions—employees’ greatest fear in the workplace is how it will affect their careers.”

Here is a story that had more than double the impact anyone might have expected. It involved two colleagues; one had experienced Post-Traumatic Stress and the other was under strain as a result of caring for his partner who had developed anorexia nervosa. The two men agreed to share their stories on stage when the organization celebrated diversity on International Women’s Day. On stage, Harvey borrowed the idea of the “Friendship Bench” (a simple idea that originated from Zimbabwe to help combat depression) and the two young men talked informally about their feelings. The story was one of pain, but also of resilience. It also opened up conversations about mental health throughout the offices and raised awareness of Accenture’s Mental Health Allies program. The man who experienced PTSD? Today he is a ‘reverse mentor’ to a director at the company who had been experiencing depression. And the other man now leads a network for others who are ‘carers’. The Mental Health Allies program at Accenture has trained more than 2,000 employees in mental health awareness and advocacy over the last five years.

# Part 3: Solutions & Success

The opioid crisis, widespread depression and increasing levels of suicide deaths have received national attention. Because we often hear the negative side of the story, Disability:IN asked businesses participating in the DEI to share stories of success.

In this section, corporate subject matter experts from American Airlines, Aetna, Accenture and PNC Financial Services Group share their companies' experiences and offer one or two strategies and solutions everyone can use. Using their examples, your company can begin to create an impactful mental wellness program.

## 1. AMERICAN AIRLINES



### Don't Underestimate the Power of Peer-to-Peer Caring Programs

**Susan Campbell, Ph.D., Wellness Strategist, American Airlines,** "Peers caring for other team members is one of the hallmarks of American Airlines. Our peer-assisted mental health programs work with pilots, flight attendants and ground personnel who often feel that there are few people who understand the type of stressful situations they experience. Having a trained peer who understands the day-to-day experiences—some quite traumatic—and serves as your co-pilot through critical incidents is powerful. They are able to bring hope, healing and compassion at a time when we most need it."

**American Airlines' Strategy:** After the horrors of Sept 11th, American Airlines in concert with our unions began training team members to support their peers. Their job is to work through the emotions of a traumatic event and to connect the individual to the proper level of care. In addition to our peer support volunteers, the company has 100+ trained volunteers called the CARE TEAM. If there is an incident, accident or trauma in the workplace, the CARE TEAM is there to help. These are colleagues who know that the life of a pilot, ticket agent or flight attendant is filled with stressors. There is a lot of anxiety involved. It's important to note that the stressors of each of our work groups is different. We all have the challenge of leaving our feelings and concerns at home, putting on our best face and getting the aircraft safely in and out and on time. The big plan for us going forward is the focus around building our culture of caring. How do you create a culture where everyone can thrive? Where people can be themselves? Magic things happen when it comes to mental health, if we are getting the support we need. People are more able to open-up and have a positive response.

**What Success Looks Like at American Airlines:** Each employee has a clear support system. Benefits helps in one way; a peer support volunteer can help in another. Colleagues can offer social support and reduce loneliness. Together we form a workplace support system.



## 2. AETNA



**“We must not only align the culture—we must sustain culture.”**

– Dr. Hyong Un, Aetna

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**Listen and help employees make sound benefit choices.**

**Hyong Un, M.D., Chief Psychiatric Officer and Head of EAP, Aetna Behavioral Health:** “It is common for people to experience more than one condition at a time. For example, an employee living with chronic back pain may need reminding that at some point, many people with chronic pain experience depression and will want mental health coverage. This doesn’t necessarily mean that having the right benefits in your HR package is enough though, since most people do not know what is in their plan. Instead, I support the development of a behavioral health care strategy and care management programs for employers to help lead in educating each person on what they might need in terms of care and support.”

**Aetna’s Strategy:** A national survey of employers showed that their single highest priority is expanding benefit choices in the next three years. Aetna has already begun to do this through community partnerships, pharmacies and doctors’ networks. In the study, just over half of the same companies (54%) had an effective listening strategy to understand the needs and wants of their employees. (Source: 2019 Willis Towers Watson Survey)

No matter how much energy you put behind launching a wellness initiative, the most important part is listening to employees’ concerns and helping them solve problems without facing stigma.

Aetna has added wellness clinics and mental health counseling to on-site walk-in-clinics, as well as several digital tools, making it possible for more people to conveniently get treatment.

**What Success Looks Like at Aetna:** At Aetna, we are providing employers with a detailed plan on steps being taken to expand the provider network. This informs employers on network adequacy and helps employees overcome problems with access to care. We are doing this because we know there is a shortage of mental health counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists across the country. When people realize this, it can cause a lot of fear or frustration. We do everything to make sure that employees know how to get care.

## 3. ACCENTURE



**Engage Your Employees’ Passion Around Mental Health.**

**Barbara Harvey, Managing Director Accenture Research and UK Mental Health Sponsor:** “Five years ago in the U.K., Accenture started an Allies program to help reduce the stigma of mental illness and make getting advice more comfortable for people. Allies come from all levels of our business – from leadership to the newest recruit.”

**Train Line Managers to Know the Signs of Mental Illness:** It is important to engage line managers about mental health and signs of deteriorating mental health. They are on the frontlines. They see everything and are often confused about what to do when someone on their team is experiencing issues with their mental health.

**Accenture’s Strategy:** We continue to emphasize the need to think of mental health as something that affects us all; 66% of us experienced a mental health challenge and 85% of people know someone close to them who has been impacted. When we combine these figures, we find that the likelihood that you are going to be touched by mental health challenges in some way is 9 in 10. Showing how mental health should be everyone’s concern is so important. Saying this to an employer, “Hey, this is your whole workforce,” changes the way you approach mental health as an employer.



**What Success Looks Like at Accenture:** In the U.K., we measure success in a number of ways. We track the number of allies (19%) and are close to our 2020 target of having 20 percent of the workforce trained as allies. We track our progress towards having all of our workforce mental health aware and carry out a survey every two years to see, for example, how safe people feel to talk about their mental health at work. We are also working hard to roll out our program across the globe. All our people now have access to a support via an EAP line and our program has reached more than 20 countries (80% of our workforce and rising every day).

**“Companies have resources and can get leadership to buy in to the business reasons to have a mental health program. But what really holds a program together? Managers. The managers in the middle who are Allies are magic.”**

– Barbara Harvey, Accenture

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On behalf of “This Can Happen”, Accenture recently conducted a survey of 2170 working men and women across the UK to understand more about how mental health touches peoples’ lives.

Sixty-six percent of the employees who participated in our survey reported having personally experienced mental health challenges. These individuals either reported three or more signs of poor or declining mental health, told us directly that they have experienced or are currently experiencing mental health challenges, or said that they have had suicidal thoughts or feelings.

Eighty-five percent said someone close to them had experienced a mental health challenge. These individuals knew of a close friend, a colleague, or a family member who had experienced mental health challenges, or had attempted or died of suicide.

And overall? **Nine in 10 people who participated in our survey had been touched by mental health challenges in some way.** Among Millennials, that figure rose to 93 percent.

**Source: *It’s Not 1 in 4; It’s All of Us*, 2018 Accenture Report**

## 4. PNC FINANCIAL SERVICES GROUP



### Reduce Stigma by Expanding the Awareness of Programs. Educate Everyone!

**Liz Harrington, VP, Health/Wellness Benefits Manager, PNC Financial Services Group:** “At PNC, we have ramped up the materials we offer to all employees to talk about mental health as a spectrum. We do a lot of training around mental health as something that affects everyone. You may not have any symptoms of mental illness now but that may change overnight. That can’t be anticipated. We laid the groundwork at first by offering general information on common mental health disorders. What is Major Depressive Disorder? What is Bipolar? How treatable are they? This way people didn’t make assumptions about mental illness; they learned the facts.”

**PNC’s Strategy:** Our goal was to help educate our employees and provide them with at least one resource they feel comfortable using, as it’s best to know what your options are before you need to use them. PNC offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the option of telemedicine with a psychologist or psychiatrist. PNC also plans to offer computerized cognitive behavior therapy.

In addition, PNC strategically educated its managers, so they were comfortable helping and directing employees

around them who may need help. The company wanted every manager and every colleague to feel supported. To that end, PNC hosted a panel discussion for managers that reviewed the signs to look for if someone is struggling with mental health, the appropriate way to support employees in the workplace, and how to help employees connect with the right resource. A simple guide was also created to suggest simple things to say and things not to say (see page 9). The idea was to offer as much education to as many people as possible. We know that saying nothing is not the answer, so we wanted people to have a clear idea of what they could say to be supportive and helpful.

## Tips & Resources

### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE

Source: *It's Not 1 in 4; It's All of Us*, 2018 Accenture Report

We measured workers' agreement to a series of statements around their employer's attitudes and approach to mental health. Overall, 10 percent of employees indicated that their employer was performing well in every area.

At these organizations:

- People have a work-life balance that supports good mental health;
- People who are going through a challenging time with their mental health are supported;
- People feel safe to raise concerns about their mental health;
- People do not feel they must hide mental health challenges;
- Mental health challenges are not considered to be a weakness;
- People feel that disclosing mental health challenges would not impact their career/stop them from getting a promotion.



## EASY TIPS ON WHAT TO SAY/NOT TO SAY

This is a list created in conjunction with PNC's Employee Assistance Program provider, ComPsych GuidanceResources. Adapted from the following sources: GuidanceResources; mentalhealth.gov; National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

### Say This

- You don't seem like yourself. Do you want to talk about it?
- It seems like you're going through a tough time. How can I help?
- I'm worried about you. Can we talk about what's going on?
- Are you comfortable talking about this? If not, is there someone else you can talk to?
- How can I/we support you?
- Do you know where you can go for help?
- Are you thinking about harming yourself? Do you have a plan to harm yourself? (Yes, it's OK to ask. You won't put the idea in someone's head, and asking is actually the first step to prevention.)

### Avoid Saying This

- You just need to cheer up/change your attitude.
- Everyone feels that way sometimes.
- Just pray about it. (While prayer can be an important source of strength and comfort, it's not a replacement for treatment.)
- You should just [fill in the blank].
- Yeah, we all feel a little crazy now and then.
- Stop being so negative; just start living.
- Shake it off.
- You have the same illness as [fill in the blank].
- Why are you acting so weird?
- Nothing (Yes, it may feel awkward to start the conversation, but it can make a difference, so refer to the suggestions at left and then reach out.)

## Conclusion

By taking mental illness as seriously and talking about it as openly as physical illnesses, we reduce stigma and encourage treatment.

As leaders, we can reduce the financial and human cost of mental illness by speaking out and by supporting and encouraging coworkers, colleagues, family members and friends to seek the help they need.

