

A photograph of two women in an office environment. In the foreground, a woman with short blonde hair is smiling broadly, wearing a blue patterned top. Behind her, another woman with dark hair is also smiling, wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing office shelves.

BUILDING YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS STRATEGY

A toolkit for organizations

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OVERVIEW

WHY MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Everyone has a role to play in supporting mental health and wellness in the workplace. However, this is often a difficult topic for organizations to navigate. We know employee mental health is one of the most pressing issues facing organizations today and investing in a mentally healthy workplace matters now more than ever. Developing and offering proactive mental health programs, policies and services not only influences business productivity and impacts absenteeism but, more importantly, is integral to building a culture where your employees feel safe, valued and inspired¹.

HOW WE CAN HELP

When we interact with the organizations we support, the discussions don't often focus on "what" is impacting organizations but the question of "how" do we respond? This toolkit is your practical guide to developing and implementing a mental health and wellness strategy no matter where you are starting out. Working through our step-wise approach helps you set up or renew your strategy and build the momentum you need to action it in your organization. Through this unique process we will help you

- **accelerate** a mentally healthy culture in the workplace by building strong leadership **commitment** and investment into employee health to spark engagement, empowerment and productivity;
- **assess** where you might already be seeing traction and maximize impact where it matters most;
- **measure**, with data driven analytics, to inform the effectiveness and value of investments into mental health and wellness;
- **plan and prioritize** your approach based on what is most meaningful to your organization and what is important to achieve your goals; and
- **act**—because we recognize planning is the easy part and executing the complexities of wellness is hard.



STEP 1:
COMMIT



STEP 2:
ASSESS



STEP 3:
MEASURE



STEP 4:
PLAN AND PRIORITIZE



STEP 5:
ACT

TAKING THE FIRST STEP

We recognize that each organization's journey is unique and will begin at different stages. You can start this toolkit at the step that works best for you or join us at the beginning with step 1. Each step in the toolkit includes

1. a checklist with key actions that you can review and mark as complete along the way to track progress;
2. curated resource links and tips for success to guide your organization through implementation; and
3. an Alberta Blue Cross® case study at the end of each section with a real-world example of how we are supporting mental health in our organization, and space to pause and brainstorm your own SMART objective.



STEP 1: COMMIT



ASSESS



MEASURE



PLAN AND PRIORITIZE



ACT

COMMIT

“Leaders have a tremendous impact on company culture. They set the agenda, prioritize work, manage, lead and delegate. Strong leaders provide a sense of vision, purpose, mentorship and inspiration to those they lead”
—O.C. Tanner²

Start your journey on the right foot by establishing a commitment from your leadership team. While people at all levels play a role in building a mentally healthy workplace, leaders who are passionate about this topic can champion mental health strategy as a formal priority with dedicated resources. Advocates across the company are also instrumental in driving the culture around mental health by fostering an environment where it feels safe to bring your whole self to work.

Get started! Your checklist to commit.

ENGAGE LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS

- ✓ **Find a strategy sponsor from your senior leadership team.** This sponsor will act as an advocate as you build your strategy, communicating the value of action to your leadership team and helping secure funding and resources so you can reach your goals.

When approaching a sponsor make sure to communicate

- the changes you are proposing and why,
- what’s in it for them and the organization,
- their anticipated time commitment,
- how and when they may participate, and
- the resources needed to develop or build on the strategy.

- ✓ **Catalyze the collective voice of your company.** Having champions for mental health across your organization can signal to your senior leadership and employees that we are all in this together. Start by communicating why building a mentally healthy workplace is important and socializing this message with leaders through committees, management meetings or other leadership channels. Spend time understanding their capacity and priorities to help build wider buy-in from employees and get your strategy off the ground.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Leaders and champions in the organization can support the success of your strategy in different ways. This might look like

- creating opportunities for employees to provide their feedback on issues related to mental health in the workplace and your strategy;
- keeping employees up-to-date about the organization's efforts to address workplace mental health and wellness and the resources available to them; and
- building a culture of wellness where taking care of and speaking about mental health is supported, recognized and encouraged through role-modelling.

HARNESS YOUR PEOPLE POWER TO PLAN AND ACTION YOUR STRATEGY

Empower employees passionate about mental health or wellness to become active participants in creating and implementing a strategy. You may already have an existing wellness or organizational health committee, or you may need to recruit a new mental health-specific committee to inform your direction.

✓ ***Recruit your committee either through a formal announcement or targeted outreach to find your people power.***

Ensure representation from different levels of your organization, including

- management;
- human resources;
- occupational health and safety; and
- employees from various departments, ensuring diverse representation, considering gender, age and workstyle (for example, part-time employees, remote employees and so forth).

Looking for an example? Check out Heads Up for downloadable Word templates to help you communicate with your employees about mental health at work. Visit www.headsup.org.au/training-and-resources/getting-started-pack.

✓ ***Clarify the role.*** Create a terms of reference document outlining the purpose, key responsibilities, expected time commitment and governance of your committee. Things your committee could be responsible for include

- finding your priority areas for action and establishing your goals,
- implementation and encouraging participation in initiatives, and
- coordinating evaluations to monitor success and review the results.

- ✓ **Protect your time.** Time to attend meetings and complete committee activities should be secured—this shouldn't be work done on the run.

JUMP IN WITH BOTH FEET—INVEST IN ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

Meaningful change requires resources, whether it is protected employee time or a financial commitment. Remember with mental health in the workplace there is a rising cost to doing nothing³ so even small investments can make a big difference.

- ✓ **Build your case.** Your business case should outline to your leadership why investing in mental health is a good business decision and its value. To enhance your case consider including
- organization-specific data on health and wellness if available (refer to [step 2: assess](#)) or examples from other organizations who have experienced success;
 - personal experiences from employees both good and bad to humanize the business case and demonstrate the specific need in your organization;
 - the benefits and if available the potential Return On Investment (ROI);
 - the potential costs and risks including the risk of doing nothing; and
 - the resources you will need to support planning and implementation including direct resources, such as financial support and human resources, and indirect resources such as facilities or office space and general office supplies.

Looking for information on the ROI of workplace mental health programs? Check out Deloitte's insight report on this topic to learn more about the business costs and benefits and build your case³. Among the companies assessed, Deloitte found the median yearly ROI of mental health programs was CA\$2.18 for every dollar spent after three or more years of investments. Visit <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ca/Documents/about-deloitte/ca-en-about-blueprint-for-workplace-mental-health-final-aoda.pdf>.

- ✓ **Build your skills.** Source and schedule mental health training for all levels of leadership. Providing mental health training to all leaders is a tangible way to invest in a mentally healthy workplace. It will also equip leaders with a common level of understanding to confidently identify and respond to concerns.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

In Canada there are multiple mental health training options to meet your organization's unique needs including the following:

- The Working Mind mental health training theworkingmind.ca/working-mind.
- Mental Health First Aid mhfa.ca/.
- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) certified psychological health and safety advisor training cmha.ca/workplace/training/cmha-safety-advisor-training.
- CMHA psychological health and safety champion training cmha.ca/workplace/training.
- CMHA Mental Health and the Workplace workshop workingstronger.cmha.ca/mental-health-and-the-workplace-workshop/.

Looking for additional resources? More resources to help you build commitment can be found in the appendix.

WHAT WE DID

Based on data-driven insights, we recognized our employees were struggling with their mental and financial health, which was impacting their stress levels. To demonstrate our commitment to the promotion of mental health and wellness, Alberta Blue Cross invested in workplace mental health training. Starting in 2018, all senior leaders, managers and employees were offered mental health training with 89 per cent of our organization completing the training to-date.

Take a step forward: write a SMART objective for building commitment

A SMART objective is an objective that is **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound**. Before you take action, create your own SMART objective to guide you.

Example: the wellness committee will submit and present a business case to the senior executive team by the end of the first quarter of 2022 to secure human and financial resources for revising the mental health strategy.



COMMIT



STEP 2:
ASSESS



MEASURE



PLAN AND PRIORITIZE



ACT

ASSESS

“Mental health supports are not a one-size-fits-all solution and different people, environments and mental illnesses need different approaches”—Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.¹

How are YOU doing? We recognize that each organization is unique. Assessing the health of your employees and organization can help you to take a data-informed approach to maximize impact. It allows you to identify potential wellness opportunities and prioritize the right actions at the right time. When your approach is responsive to employee priorities it also results in better program participation, leading to meaningful health behaviour changes.

Get started! Your checklist to assess.

QUICK-WIN: START WITH THE INFORMATION YOU ALREADY HAVE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

- ✓ **What do you have?** Review information your organization already collects that can help you get started. Some data that might be readily available could be health benefits utilization, human resource statistics, employee engagement surveys and even personal feedback.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Health is holistic and interconnected. For example, your physical health can impact your mental health and vice versa. It can be valuable to assess different pillars of wellness to understand the full picture in your organization. At Alberta Blue Cross, we focus on four pillars: physical, mental, social and financial wellness.

- ✓ **What do you need to know?** If you need more information to understand what is going on with organizational and employee health, then plan an assessment. We have included different assessment options below to help fill in the gaps. Try asking yourself: what would be most meaningful to learn to help inform your strategy?

WHAT'S UNDER THE HOOD? UNDERSTANDING THE HEALTH STATUS OF YOUR EMPLOYEES

Assessing the health status of your employees can provide a more accurate snapshot of the health risk areas impacting your teams the most. Not only will it help guide your next steps, but it is also a baseline measurement you can use to see progress as you go.

- ✓ **Check your gauges.** Collect information to understand your employees' health status. A few options to consider reviewing include the following:

Health Risk Assessments (HRA): an HRA is an instrument, such as a survey or questionnaire, that collects health information on different factors that impact the health of an individual. At Alberta Blue Cross, our Balance® wellness platform includes an HRA for all of our members to complete.

Biometric screening results: a screening event that involves in-person clinical tests to measure important health factors. Conducted by health professionals, a screening can provide employees with beneficial data about their overall well-being and potential health risks.

Data and analytics from your employee health benefit plan: reach out to your benefit plan provider to see what data can be shared to include in your business case around employee health risks.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Aggregate (non-identifying) data from your employee health benefit plan can help to confidentially inform the health status of your employees. Some benefits-related metrics that can tell you about your employees' mental health include

- mental health drug benefit utilization and costs,
- psychological service utilization and costs,
- Employee and Family Assistance Plan (EFAP) utilization, and
- a comparison of benefit costs related to mental health services and other health services.

DISCOVER YOUR EMPLOYEES' WELLNESS INTERESTS AND NEEDS

What areas of wellness make your people feel empowered to act? What do they feel they need to thrive? Knowing the answers to these questions can provide helpful insight on the types of initiatives that will engage your employees and get them excited to take action.

- ☑ **What fills their cups?** Understanding employee needs can come from a variety of feedback touchpoints. A few options you can consider include the following:

Employee engagement surveys: if you have an annual employee engagement survey, think about incorporating questions to help you understand the mental health interests and needs of your employees. Remember, when you can, leverage what you already have.

Health interest survey: if you are focusing on mental health, try a tailored health interest survey to gather information on your employees' interests, needs and preferences for programming.

Focus groups or interviews:

for more in-depth insights into programming needs and changes that can help to support mental health and wellness, a focus group or interview where you can collect rich information might be the best fit.

- ☑ **Share your why.** Communicate why it is important for all employees to engage in an assessment and how their information will be used. This gives them a reason to participate and be invested in the outcomes. This is also a chance to build trust—consider having leadership share your key messages.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Multiple factors can impact participation in your assessment. To get the most engagement you should consider the following:

1. Choosing the right day and time for maximum participation. For example, we recommend not sending an assessment out on a Friday afternoon when people may be out of the office.
2. Providing an incentive. This can be as simple as being entered in a prize draw.

WHAT WE DID

To effectively assess and address mental health, we conducted a mental health survey to collect data on the psychological health of our people and organization. The survey focused on organizational factors related to psychological health and safety and was sent out before employees participated in mental health training to also serve as a baseline metric. When paired with health benefits utilization data and HRA data from our Balance wellness platform, we were able to identify our organizational strengths and opportunities.

Take a step forward: write a SMART objective to assess your organization and employees

Example: by the first quarter of the year, our organization will send out an HRA to all employees to understand their health status, aiming for a participation rate of at least 30 per cent of all employees.



COMMIT



ASSESS



STEP 3:
MEASURE



PLAN AND PRIORITIZE



ACT

MEASURE

“Performance measurement . . . is a key element of workplace mental health programs that is often overlooked. Putting in place mechanisms to measure performance can enable organizations to achieve desired program impact, improve adoption rates, and enhance decision-making”—Deloitte³

How will you know you are making an impact? When implementing a new strategy, a key step is measuring change over time. This can be one of the most important and powerful pieces of information in your toolkit. Not only will tracking outcomes help you to recognize and celebrate how far you have come, but it will also give you the data to understand when things aren't working and when you need to adapt. Remember, success doesn't happen overnight—in fact it can take up to five years of implementation to see changes in employee-level data, so don't be discouraged. If you are passionate about creating thriving workplaces, measuring what matters is a key step is to understand where you are and the direction you want to go.

Get started! Your checklist to measure.

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS—TRACK EMPLOYEE-LEVEL METRICS AND CHANGES IN DATA

To understand if you are heading in the right direction, we recommend capturing and tracking data that is meaningful to your organization. From [step 2: assess](#), you should have some insights into what employee- and organization-level data your organization is already tracking. You don't have to reinvent the wheel—remember, leverage the data sources you already have and then ask yourself what other information would be useful and realistic to understand the impact you are making.

☑ **Set your targets to understand your impact.** If you are not already tracking them, some metrics to help demonstrate success and story the impacts to your employees' lives include

- absenteeism or presenteeism rates,
- turnover rates,
- retention rates,
- Short Term Disability rates,
- Long Term Disability rates, and
- employee engagement and satisfaction results.

If you are looking for metrics that are more specific to mental health and wellness you can consider

- return to work rates and accommodation data for employees on mental health sick leave¹,
- participation rates in events or activities related to health or wellness and the number of events,
- benefit utilization information specific to mental health and wellness, and
- employees' overall sense of workplace psychological health¹.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

When collecting data and information at the employee level, it is critical to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of individuals. We recommend using aggregate data, which is organization-level data where individual statistics are not used, and a single person cannot be identified. For smaller organizations with fewer employees, privacy concerns can still be present with aggregate data. Remain mindful of what and how information is collected and shared, and by who.

WHAT WE DID

At Alberta Blue Cross, we have created a Wellness Index, which features established evaluation metrics that reflect our impact on the wellness of our Alberta Blue Cross employees. We monitor key metrics in four categories—engagement, growth, behaviour change and health outcomes—to help build a comprehensive picture of our influence. Our index reporting occurs bi-annually and demonstrates how our actions are leading to improvements in health outcomes and other metrics that are important to our workplace wellness. This evaluative analysis not only validates our impact, but also helps us to see other areas of opportunity to empower a healthy and vibrant team.

Take a step forward: write a SMART objective to measure

Example: the wellness committee will complete the initial pilot and subsequent evaluation of the Guarding Minds @ Work course offered to all employees by the end of the fourth quarter in 2022. Measurement will occur before and after employees have participated in the course.

PAUSE AND STRATEGIZE

Before moving into steps four and five, it is important to develop two key items—a strategic plan to define your vision forward and your goals, and an evaluation plan to measure your impact. Use our how-to guides below to get started.

HOW-TO: DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN

A strategic plan or strategy is a “high-level long-term [plan] that strives to affect the strategic direction of the organization”.⁶ To build out your plan, you should include high-level goals and objectives and tie them to the major actions, such as projects or programs, you will take to achieve them. As you build your strategic plan, start with a timeline that feels comfortable to you—we recommend starting with a strategic plan that spans anywhere from one to three years and revisiting it annually to see if you are moving in the right direction. Remember, you can always adapt your plan over time as you learn new information. Lean into the growth.

- ✓ **Your vision:** start with a vision or high-level guiding statement that outlines your ultimate outcome or where you want to go as an organization. Ask yourself: what is the purpose behind your strategic plan and what does success look like for your organization? A strong vision statement will be your anchor and should be short and simple.

The Government of Canada Federal Public Service Workplace Mental Health Strategy’s vision is to “create a culture that enshrines psychological health, safety and well-being in all aspects of the workplace through collaboration, inclusivity and respect; this obligation belongs to every individual in the workplace”.⁷

- ✓ **Your goals:** with your vision top of mind, your next task is to create a list of high-level strategic goals. Your goals should align with creating a healthy, mentally-well and psychologically safe workplace for all. At this stage, you should still be thinking big picture with the goals you are choosing. Once you’ve created a comprehensive list, we recommend narrowing it down to three to five key goals. A good strategic plan is focused.
- ✓ **Your objectives:** for each of your high-level strategic goals create a realistic and, most importantly, measurable objective (try to make it S.M.A.R.T like what you created in steps one to three). These objectives should include what you are trying to achieve in your organization and by when to keep your organization accountable. The how will come next.
- ✓ **Your actions:** your last step in creating a strategic plan is to choose your actions—projects, programs, resources and policies—that will help you address and achieve the mental health-related goals and objectives you have created. Think about how you can plan your actions so they build on each other and create excitement and buy-in from your employees. If you’re new to implementing and have limited resources, start small. Even small actions can cause a big ripple effect.

HOW-TO: CREATE AN EVALUATION PLAN

One important tool organizations can build into their strategy to measure progress and demonstrate the value of hard work is an evaluation plan. The evaluation plan is a foundational outline of how and when to collect data, analyze the findings and report on them in a meaningful way.

✓ **Set your vision.** Questions to ask yourself to plan your evaluation include the following:

- What are the goals and objectives of your mental health strategy?
(see [how-to: develop a strategic plan](#))
- What outcomes need to be achieved for your efforts to be considered a success?
Do you have a measurable target?
- What kinds of evidence will speak best to your decision-makers—is it quantitative data, employee stories and anecdotes or a blend of both?
- How do you want to use the lessons you learn? There are a lot of potential uses outside of just refining your strategy, such as promoting future initiatives, demonstrating value of investment, attracting partnerships, and advocating for additional organizational changes to build a healthier workplace⁴.

✓ **Set your timeline.** Your plan should detail how often you will be collecting your evaluation information and analyzing it. For example, monthly, quarterly, annually or aligned with other corporate reporting schedules. Be realistic when creating your timelines and consider what will work best for your organization. Remember, while more information can be a great thing, you also want to ensure that all the information is being used in a meaningful way.

✓ **Create feedback channels.** Communicating your evaluation results is important. Consider who you will be communicating results to (for example, your leadership team or your employees) when determining the best communication vehicles. We also encourage you to share when things don't go as expected and keep the lines of communication open for feedback. Transparency is key and showcases your commitment to continuous improvement. It's common not to get it all right on the first try and you may even find a new solution by sharing the challenges you face.

✓ **And you're off.** With your evaluation plan in hand, measure your chosen metrics at regular intervals to see how your actions impact your organization. We recommend measuring at least once per year as you begin to implement initiatives. This way you can see what ripples you have created in your workplace and adjust your strategy if you need to. Your organization will be constantly changing—evaluation is not just a one-time event.



COMMIT



ASSESS



MEASURE



**STEP 4:
PLAN AND PRIORITIZE**



ACT

PLAN AND PRIORITIZE

“Organizations that implement a strategy to promote mental health and psychological health and safety perform better on average in key categories including health, safety and shareholder returns.” —The Canadian Standards Association

Now that you’ve gathered your data and built your high-level strategic plan using the framework of the stepwise approach, it’s time to prioritize and plan your actions. When prioritizing your actions consider the areas that can have the greatest impact on your employees and what is feasible to implement at your current stage. This is an iterative and collaborative process so take the time to consult stakeholders in your organization and build consensus as you go.

Get started! Your checklist to plan and prioritize.

FIND WHAT TRULY MATTERS—PRIORITIZE THE ISSUES THAT YOU WANT TO TACKLE FIRST

- ☑ **Is there a missing link?** Build a list of all mental health-related assets currently offered by your organization including programs, resources, available health benefits and policies. With your committee, identify if there are any gaps or ‘missing links’ in your assets and offerings to implement your strategic plan based on what the data is telling you from [step 2: assess](#) and [step 3: measure](#).

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Mental health occurs on a continuum and a well-developed plan should address all stages of the mental health continuum from prevention and lifestyle management to early diagnosis, care navigation and treatment⁸. Provide various types of activities to support mental well-being, such as programs and resources, education and training, policies and guidelines and benefits⁹.

- ☑ **1,2,3 ... prioritize.** Find your first priority areas for action on mental health based on what is outlined in your strategic plan. We recommend hosting a prioritization activity using the data you have collected, also known as a ‘data party’—because who doesn’t love a party? Include relevant stakeholders, such as your wellness committee or mental health team, to rank your action areas.

What is a data party? It is an opportunity to invite stakeholders to come together and collectively interpret the data you have gathered. Also known as participatory sense-making, it can be a fun method for improving the interpretation of your data and for diverse voices to provide input into your final recommendations.⁵ Check out Community Solutions Resources for a questions and tip sheet on planning your own data party: communitysolutions.ca/web/resources-public/.

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

Just as the strategic plan is your “what to do and why” the action plan outlines “how”. An action plan requires you to plan out the details for implementing a specific project, program or initiative that will contribute to achieving your high-level strategic goals.

- ✓ **Define your action plan.** This plan will formalize all roles and responsibilities, define the key activities needed to implement your initiatives and define timelines and resources. Some project management tools that can help to support you at this stage include the following:

A Gantt chart

this chart should list all the key activities and milestones that need to be completed and the date you expect each activity to start and finish.

A budget

a project budget will help to determine how much your project might cost and track the financial resources you have available to ensure you don’t overspend.

A RACI chart

a RACI defines which stakeholders will be Responsible, Accountable, Consulted or Informed (RACI) for a corresponding activity or decision. It outlines the key roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders for different key activities.

- ✓ **Teamwork makes the dream work.** Build your internal team to support the planning and implementation of your initiative. This could include your existing wellness committee or a new working group you create just for this occasion. Either way, bringing in others to support you can help to lighten the load.
- ✓ **Host a kick-off meeting.** Use this time to introduce your team, clarify roles and scope, and ensure everyone understands what is required of them and the timeline for accomplishing your objectives.

WHAT WE DID

When we began to prioritize mental wellness at Alberta Blue Cross, we selected and built out actions based on the high level goals and objectives in our strategic plan. See one of our examples below:

Strategic goal #1: reduce the stigma and negative attitudes towards people with mental health conditions in the workplace.

Objective #1: have 100 per cent of Alberta Blue Cross employees complete mental health training by spring of 2020.

Action: integrate mandatory mental health training as part of the Alberta Blue Cross onboarding journey for new employees.

Take a step forward: write your SMART objective to help plan and prioritize

Example: the wellness committee will facilitate a two-hour prioritization activity by February 1, with a minimum of one employee stakeholder from each department and four representatives from management and leadership.



COMMIT



ASSESS



MEASURE



PLAN AND PRIORITIZE



STEP 5:
ACT

ACT

“Action is the foundational key to all success.” —Pablo Picasso.

You’ve almost reached the finish line. After successfully completing your first four steps, it’s now time to act. We know taking action can be intimidating. Just remember we all start from somewhere so work with what you have. Taking that first small step towards building a mentally healthy workplace today can make a big impact over time.

Get started! Your checklist for implementation and action.

GET YOUR EMPLOYEES PLUGGED IN: CREATE A COMMUNICATION PLAN

☑ **Communication is key.** Make sure to have a clear plan for creating awareness of upcoming initiatives and communicate your dedication to mental health. Changes can occur with mixed feelings from your employees, which is why it is important to continually communicate and seek feedback at an organizational level. Share your goals and your “why” to help build engagement and buy-in. We also encourage you to share your successes and wins to celebrate as you move the needle. This can be as easy as sharing the outcomes from a successful initiative with your organization or thanking the employees involved in planning by name and giving them some well-deserved kudos. When building a communication plan consider

- the key messages and who your audience is;
- the methods and channels for your messages;
- how often communication will happen (for example, a schedule) and who is responsible; and
- how your employees can reach out to you to ask questions and share feedback. Two-way communication is necessary to make your employees feel heard.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

There are a lot of different methods of communication you can use to deliver your message. Consider what communication methods have been effective in the past and what might work best to reach different levels of the organization. Some potential methods include

- newsletters,
- posters,
- organizational emails,
- intranet content,
- social media,
- webinars,
- in-person meetings or town halls, and
- leadership memos.

Not sure which method to choose? Ask your employees how they would prefer to be engaged and don’t forget to adapt your methods to reach everyone including in-person and remote employees.

READY, SET, ACT! IMPLEMENT AND EVALUATE YOUR STRATEGY

- ☑ **TAKE ACTION—its time to roll up our sleeves and get to work.** Collaborate with your team to work through the logistics and map out your timelines, deliverables and outputs. Then, get going.
- ☑ **Remember to re-evaluate.** The work doesn't end after you implement. Continual monitoring and evaluation of your initiatives and progress towards your strategic goals and objectives helps drive change and identifies where to pivot. Refer to your evaluation plan from [step 3: measure](#); if something isn't working take it as a lesson and not a failure—continuous improvement is part of the journey.

TEAR DOWN THE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS.

When implementing a new initiative for the first time you might find barriers to participation and access or hear about them from your employees. While this isn't ideal, it's what you do to address them that really matters. Listen to the feedback and take the time to work through how to make it easier for all employees to access them.

- ☑ **Do you know who's participating?** Evaluate the participation in your organization's current mental health initiatives to increase engagement. Don't try to read your employees' minds—it can be pretty tough. We recommend being direct and asking them for insights into uptake based on their experience.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Two common barriers that we see time and time again in organizations are a lack of time and financial support.

When implementing a mental health activity or initiative consider

- protecting time for all employees to participate to increase engagement, and
- providing financial assistance or incentives.

Take a step forward: write a SMART objective to action mental health in your workplace

Example: the committee will run a lunch and learn session on the different mental health supports and benefits available to increase awareness of resources by the end of the second quarter. The lunch and learn will aim to include 100 participants.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Mental health resources, supports and services for you



No matter where you are in your mental health, wellness or life journey, our trusted resources can help you and your organization thrive.

WE KNOW, AS YOUR DAILY LIFE SHIFTS SO DOES YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Getting the support you and your employees need will help build resiliency and capacity to face whatever life throws at you.

Below is a trusted list of supports for organizations and individuals that are both publicly available as well as exclusively for our Alberta Blue Cross customers. Mental health can fluctuate, day to day and over time—no matter where you are on the **mental health continuum**, we can provide you resources to self-assess and support you today and in the long term

Please be aware, these resources are not intended to diagnose, treat or replace professional medical advice. If you or someone you know is suffering

from a critical mental health event, call 911 immediately. The following help lines can also be accessed as additional support.

EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

ALBERTA 24-HOUR MENTAL HEALTH LINE

Call **1-877-303-2642 (toll free)** to speak with a mental health specialist, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

CRISIS SERVICES CANADA

If you're in crisis or have thoughts of self-harm, call **1-833-456-4566**. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

OUR MENTAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS

HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
<p>WHAT CAN BE DONE?</p> <p>Wellness Education, awareness, lifestyle management</p>	<p>Prevention Screening, early diagnosis, lifestyle management</p>	<p>Treatment Treatment and symptom management</p>	
<p>FREE AND PUBLICLY AVAILABLE RESOURCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care navigation—mental health and lifestyle, education, tools and public and member resources • Alberta Blue Cross wellness blog • Wellness Insights Whitepapers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mental health in the workplace</i> • <i>Organizational uptake and implementation of wellness programs</i> • <i>Building your emotional resiliency</i> • Alberta Blue Cross Workplace Wellness Framework • Infographic ‘Putting a face to mental illness’ • Alberta Blue Cross Wellness Summit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care navigation—self-assessment tools, education and resources • Stronger Minds by BEACON—One-stop private space to access a wide range of mental health supports • Text 4 hope—featuring daily text messages to help build personal coping skills and resiliency • Wellness Together Canada—Free, virtual, 24/ access to mental health and substance use support for people in Canada and Canadians abroad • Togetherall online community—Online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care navigation—Learn how to stay healthy, prevent illness and where to find help, so you can live your best life 	
<p>ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ALBERTA BLUE CROSS MEMBERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance® resources—education modules, 30-day mental health challenges, caregiver supports, stress management, physical, mental and social wellness resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance® resources—Health Risk Assessment, mood and stress trackers • Internet-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy—Therapist-guided online programs ensure your employees have the tools and support they need, accessible from anywhere • Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP)—Homewood Health counselling is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week • Organizational Wellness Screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance® resources—medication schedules and reminders • Prescription drugs—general drug coverage • Virtual Care • Health care services—psychology services, paramedical services, ambulance and hospital care • Health spending account and wellness spending account for non-covered health and wellness services 	

If you are a customer looking for more information about your benefits, reach out to our Customer Services team, **1-800-661-6995**, or as an organizational representative looking for mental health strategy support, contact the Wellness team at Alberta Blue Cross at wellness@ab.bluecross.ca.

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

STEP 1: COMMITMENT

The Alberta Blue Cross workplace wellness framework

<https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/resources/workplace-wellness-framework.php#three-tab>

Alberta Health Services Addressing addiction and mental health in the workplace: the business case for workplace health

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-iob-module-1-handouts.pdf>

The Workplace Mental Health Playbook for Business Leaders

<https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/workplace-mental-health-playbook-for-business-leaders>

The ROI in workplace mental health programs from Deloitte

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ca/Documents/about-deloitte/ca-en-about-blueprint-for-workplace-mental-health-final-aoda.pdf>

Workplace Mental Health Promotion: Establishing a Healthy Workplace Committee

<https://wmhp.cmhaontario.ca/comprehensive-workplace-health-promotion-affecting-mental-health-in-the-workplace/element-2>

STEP 2: ASSESS

Healthy workplace quick assessment

<https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/resources/healthy-workplace-assessment.php>

Assembling the Pieces: An Implementation Guide to the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (audit tool)

<https://www.csagroup.org/store/product/SPE%20Z1003%20IMPLEMENTATION%20HB/>

Pulse Survey on COVID-19 and its Impacts on Public Service Employees—Work and Well-being

https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Instr.pl?Function=assembleInstr&lang=en&Item_Id=1283881

Pandemic Pulse Check from Mental Health Commission of Canada:

<https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=10750>

Alberta Blue Cross: New research supports Return On Investment (ROI) for workplace wellness investments

<https://ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/group/new-research-supports-ROI-for-workplace-wellness-investments.pdf>

Alberta Blue Cross: Balance for Employers

<https://ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/balance-plan-sponsor.pdf>

STEP 3 MEASURE:

Assembling the Pieces: An Implementation Guide to the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (audit tool)

<https://www.csagroup.org/store/product/SPE%20Z1003%20IMPLEMENTATION%20HB/>

Healthier Together Action and Evaluation Planning Facilitators Guide

<https://workplaces.healthiertogether.ca/resources/>

University of Calgary Program Evaluation Toolkit

https://www.ucalgary.ca/live-uc-ucalgary-site/sites/default/files/teams/148/cmhs_program_evaluation_toolkit.pdf

CMHA Ontario Workplace Mental Health Promotion—Developing a Program and Evaluation Plan

[Element 5: Developing a Program and Evaluation Plan | Workplace Mental Health Promotion \(cmhaontario.ca\)](#)

STEP 4 PLAN AND PRIORITIZE:

Alberta Blue Cross—Creating a corporate wellness action plan that includes mental health and wellness

<https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/group/GR20-101-workplace-wellness.pdf>

Workplace wellness framework: workplace wellness framework

<https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/resources/workplace-wellness-framework.php#three-tab>

Mental Health Commission of Canada: Psychological Health & Safety: An Action Guide for Employers

https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/Workforce_Employers_Guide_ENG_1.pdf

Toolkit for the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

https://www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/assembling_pieces/

CMHA Ontario Workplace Mental Health Promotion—Developing a Healthy Workplace Plan

<https://toronto.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WorkplaceMentalHealthPromotionGuide.pdf>

Excellence Canada—Workplace Mental Health Essentials Toolkit (action plan template)

<https://excellence.ca/mentalhealthmonth2021/>

Centre for Disease Control - Workplace Health Improvement Plan

<https://cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/planning/action-plan.html>

STEP 5 ACT:

Healthier Together Action and Evaluation Planning Facilitators Guide

<https://workplaces.healthiertogether.ca/resources/>

Healthier Together Workplace Well-being and Mental Health Toolkit

<https://workplaces.healthiertogether.ca/tool-kits/mental-health/>

Mental Health Commission of Canada: Psychological Health & Safety: An Action Guide for Employers

https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/Workforce_Employers_Guide_ENG_1.pdf

Toolkit for National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

https://www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/assembling_pieces/

Navigating the New Normal: A COVID-19 Supplement (playbook supplement)

<https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/navigating-the-new-normal-covid19-playbook-supplement.pdf>

Conference Board of Canada Moving to Action: Implementing the Workplace Safety and Prevention Services Mental Harm Prevention Roadmap

<https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=10866>

Alberta Blue Cross workplace wellness framework

<https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/resources/workplace-wellness-framework.php#three-tab>

Centre for Disease Control—Workplace Health Promotion Communication

<https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/planning/communications.html>

Public Health Ontario – Program planning and evaluation

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/health-topics/public-health-practice/program-planning-evaluation>

REFERENCES:

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2. https://www.octanner.com/in/insights/articles/2019/10/23/how_does_leadership_.html
3. <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/workplace-mental-health-programs-worker-productivity.html>
4. <https://toronto.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WorkplaceMentalHealthPromotionGuide.pdf>
5. http://communitysolutions.ca/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/DataParty_prf2.pdf
6. <https://toronto.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WorkplaceMentalHealthPromotionGuide.pdf>
7. <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/health-wellness-public-servants/mental-health-workplace/federal-public-service-workplace-mental-health-strategy.html>
8. <https://ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/group/mental-health-in-the-workplace-wellness-insights-whitepaper.pdf>
9. <https://workplaces.healthiertogether.ca/tool-kits/mental-health/>



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