

Expanding Access to Workplace Care and Supports for People with Mental Health Conditions

A Mental Health Matters National Online Dialogue



Hosted by: The State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED), an initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy.

Dates: March 10 - April 14, 2023



This national online dialogue was one of four in a series designed to inform the *Mental Health Matters: National Task Force on Workforce Mental Health Policy*. Through these dialogues, ePolicyWorks engaged targeted audiences and key stakeholders on four main priority areas, including:

- Parity, benefits and equal treatment in the workplace,
- Workplace care and supports,
- Underserved rural, racial and ethnic communities, and
- Behavioral health care workforce shortages and state resource systems.

Participants submitted ideas regarding how to ensure policies meet the needs of workers and jobseekers with mental health conditions. The following is a summary of recommendations on expanding access to workplace care and supports, as well as participant demographics, that can now be used to inform the task force's development of resources and policy frameworks.

Participant Recommendations

Encourage open and honest disclosure processes.

Participants noted that, in order to provide appropriate accommodations and supports, employers and managers first need a solid understanding of the needs of individuals with mental health conditions.



Provide education around mental health accommodations in the workplace and employees' rights to them under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the new Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (effective June 27, 2023).

Encourage positive, proactive collaboration among employers, managers and employees by creating privacy rules and standards related to self-disclosure.

Develop and share best practices for creating an environment in which employees feel comfortable disclosing a disability, including to request accommodations.

Provide resources for the creation and support of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

ERGs, also known as affinity groups, are led by employees and made up of colleagues with shared experiences. EAPs are work-based intervention programs designed to identify and assist employees in resolving personal problems that may be adversely affecting their performance at work. Both were identified as promising employer practices for supporting workplace mental health.



Engage with disability ERGs, including those that are disability- and/or mental health-focused, to obtain honest measures and feedback to inform ongoing policy decisions.

Work with employers and insurance companies on ways to enhance access to mental health providers through EAPs.

Facilitate communication among government agencies, employers and the mental health community.

Participants suggested that government representatives provide employers and members of the mental health community with resources and facilitate conversations on how to best support employees with mental health conditions.



Ensure state and local governments are reaching employers through a variety of mechanisms, including by working directly with small business development offices, economic development entities and local chambers of commerce.

Require the inclusion of individuals with mental health conditions on state and local disability boards and councils. In addition, ensure the boards and councils are informed of local mental health data and trends.

Participant Recommendations

Consider ways to support maternal mental health in the workplace.

Participants noted that workplace stress can lead to increased risk of postpartum depression and other long-term consequences on maternal mental health that may lead to job loss.



Encourage employers to adopt workplace benefits and leave policies that support employees who are soon-to-be and new parents.

Serve as a model employer by forming ERGs to offer employees opportunities for social supports.

Enhance employee-centered workplace policies to allow for flexible arrangements that meet the needs of each employee.

Fund perinatal and postnatal workplace screenings to help employees connect with available workplace and community resources early and often.

Implement organization-wide mental health safety trainings and education.

It was suggested that standard or industry-specific workplace health and safety trainings include mental health-related topics to equip managers and employees with tools to address colleagues' needs within the workplace.



Require managers and employees to participate in organization-wide trainings on ways to prevent suicide, detect early warning signs of mental health conditions and reduce stigma.

Collaborate with professional associations to design frameworks of standard safety trainings that embed training and education on mental health.

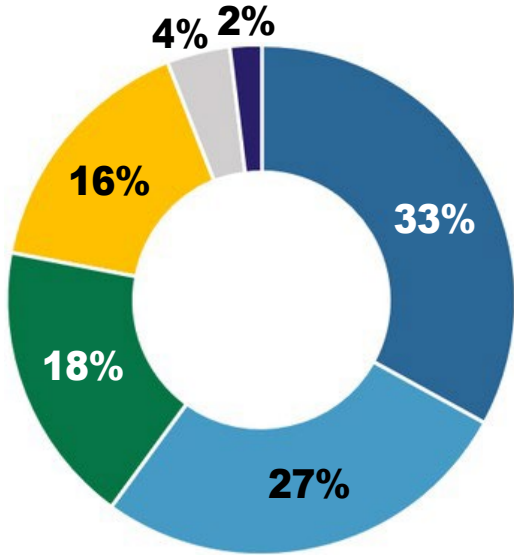
Incentivize employers to offer mental health education and safety trainings.

Encourage employers to partner with employees with lived experiences and others with diverse perspectives to develop such training programs.

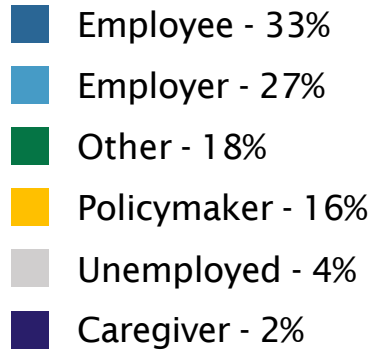
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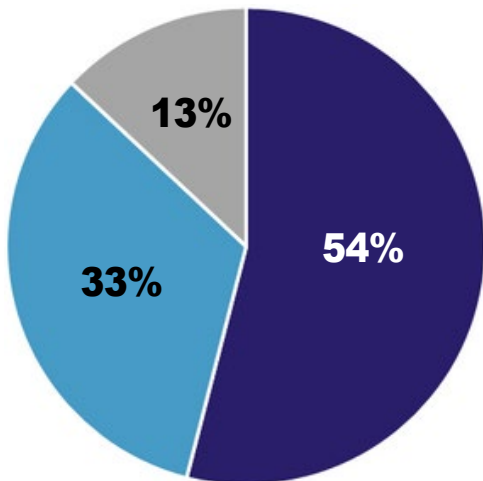
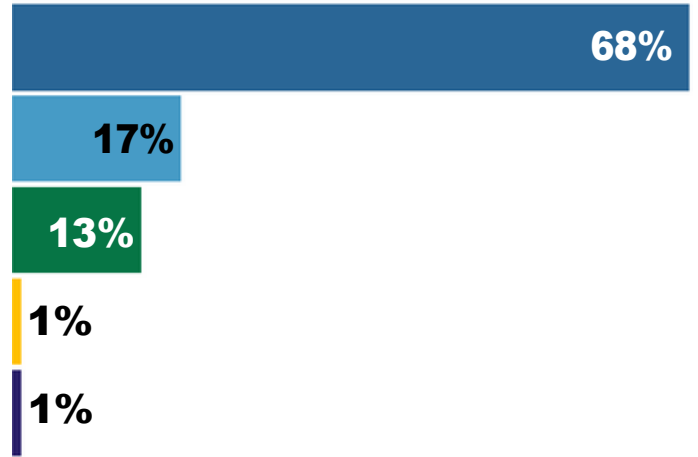
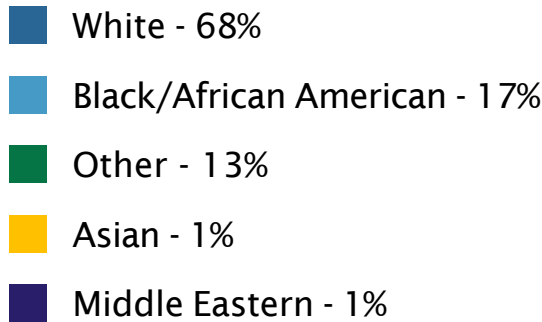
Participant Demographics



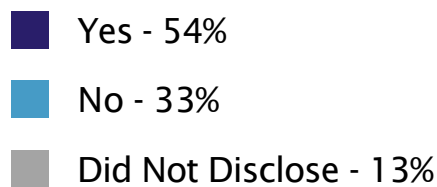
Stakeholder Group*



Race/Ethnicity*



Mental Health Condition



*Respondents could select all that apply.

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Many leading organizations, agencies and advocacy groups helped promote the dialogue and shared ideas and resources. These included, but are not limited to:



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