



Influencers in the Field

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Supporting Mental Wellness: How Healthcare Associations Can Improve Members' Lives

When my father walked through the door after a long shift, I could always tell what kind of day he had. A well-respected family care physician and general surgeon in Gary, Indiana, for more than 60 years, he had his fair share of patients. Their joys — the successful delivery of a baby, for instance — were his joys, buoying him as he went about his day. Their sorrows — such as the loss of a loved one — were his sorrows, steeping him in painful heartache.

With three siblings following our father's commitment to the field, I know the pressure of this critical work hasn't lessened. If anything, it's only increased due to the lingering aftereffects of the pandemic. Healthcare professionals struggle with staff shortages, long hours and burnout. The emotional toll of their duty is heavy, accompanied by harmful feelings of depression, anxiety and stress.

Too often, medical care comes at the cost of workers' mental and emotional wellbeing. Healthcare associations, however, are uniquely positioned to improve their members' lives with mental health solutions and services. In this article, I'll take a deeper look at their struggles and how associations can make a difference.

A Growing Mental Health Crisis

The health of our society depends on the wellbeing of our healthcare professionals. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic had — and continues to have — long-term consequences on this essential field.

According to a 2024 [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) departmental update, at least a quarter of health and care workers reported anxiety, depression and burnout symptoms between January 2020 and April 2022. Burnout is a state of emotional, mental and often physical exhaustion due to prolonged or repeated stress. While the medical field was demanding even before the pandemic, as my siblings would attest, these feelings were enflamed by the greater medical needs of that crisis.

Taking a closer look at the state of U.S. health workers, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) reported that nearly half — or 46% — reported often feeling burned out in 2022, up from 32% in 2018. Their duties, demanding and putting their health and safety at risk amid [rising threats](#) against them, also resulted in greater feelings of fatigue, loss and grief.

It doesn't seem like there's been much relief for healthcare workers in recent years. In its 2024 update, WHO reported no "significant reductions" in anxiety, depression and burnout have been observed since 2022. Furthermore, it stated that these feelings are normal reactions to the current state of global health systems, which are often understaffed, unsafe and extraordinarily stressful.

Offering Mental Health Resources Through Associations

Associations improve members' lives by supporting their health and wellness through supplemental and group insurance offerings, such as life and health coverage. However, member-conscious healthcare associations are well-positioned to fill gaps in mental health support by fostering community, reducing stigma surrounding these issues and promoting healthy workplace policies. There are many ways your association can support mental wellbeing with programs, such as:

- **Peer mentoring** – Pair seasoned professionals with less experienced members to offer guidance, emotional support and practical advice. Peer mentors provide a non-judgmental space to discuss challenges, validate experiences and share healthcare-specific coping strategies. Mentors can give valuable support during stressful employment-related transitions, such as entering residency, while recognizing and relating to common struggles, like those associated with work-life balance.
- **Focus groups or discussion forums** – Give members space to share their experiences and feelings without fear of judgment or professional repercussions. Focus groups reduce isolation and foster camaraderie, providing participants with valuable time to discuss issues such as burnout, emotional exhaustion and other career difficulties. Topics such as grief support, managing workplace stressors or balancing clinical and administrative duties can make healthcare workers feel seen and heard. Taking recommendations for session themes from your membership can help ensure discussion topics are always relevant.
- **Mental health workshops** – Offering workshops focused on practical techniques for managing stress and building emotional resilience can empower members while addressing the stigma around seeking help. Whether societal, cultural or financial, these barriers can make securing mental health assistance difficult. Healthcare professionals can find essential relief from workplace stressors by normalizing conversations around these topics.
- **Digital communities and virtual support** – Create inclusive environments for those uncomfortable with in-person meets or struggling with hectic schedules. Lack of transportation, childcare needs and the 24-hour nature of healthcare shift work can also make it difficult to attend in-person groups. Online platforms allow healthcare workers to connect, elicit advice and provide support — both at work and home. Offering a moderated forum or live chats powered by mental health experts can ensure members' issues are resolved according to their schedules.
- **Awareness campaigns** – Associations can launch campaigns to normalize conversations about mental health, encouraging workers to seek help without fear of judgment. These efforts break down cultural barriers around mental health, creating a more accepting environment within the healthcare community. Campaigns can include mental wellness awareness days with fun and educational group activities, testimonials and stories from members or resources so they can start their own peer-led support groups.

Fostering a Culture of Mental Wellness in Healthcare

Healthcare professionals instinctively advocate for their patients, ensuring they receive the utmost care. For associations, advocacy in the workplace — whether on an individual or legislative level — should have similar priority.

Associations have unique perspectives on the needs, wants and priorities of critical issues facing their members. A common hardship can include feelings of overwork stemming from administrative duties, such as electronic charting, rather than direct care of patients. If that workload is too high, resulting in work coming home with them, it can erode healthcare workers' private lives. When that happens too often, they'll have no space to recharge or recuperate from these demands, leading to burnout.

Frank conversations surrounding these issues can reduce lingering stigma surrounding mental health and issues like anxiety or depression, ensuring they can be handled in a meaningful way. Doing so won't just enhance members' loyalty to your organization; it can improve the function of our national health systems.

Healthy people make better decisions, think more clearly and work more efficiently than those dealing with unresolved mental health issues. Conversely, those with high levels of stress are more likely to miss work or show lower engagement and commitment, according to the [American Psychological Association](#) (APA). Additionally, healthcare workers can struggle with substance abuse disorders and [suicide at higher rates](#) compared to the general population. Unresolved stress can also lead to serious mistakes, which can have devastating consequences in the health field, such as patient injury or death.

With associations leading the charge, we can reduce the stigma surrounding issues like burnout, anxiety and depression, providing healthcare workers with essential support so this crisis can be handled in a meaningful way.

The Value of a Strong Partnership with your Supplemental and Group Health Provider

Building a strong partnership with a trusted supplemental and group health provider is essential for healthcare professionals seeking comprehensive support. Gallagher Affinity offers customized solutions that go beyond basic coverage, providing access to supplemental health plans capable of addressing the unique challenges healthcare workers face, such as high-stress environments and unpredictable schedules.

Through this partnership, associations can offer their members a broad range of benefits designed to meet their memberships' unique personal and professional health needs. These can include flexible health plans, wellness resources and access to mental health services like telehealth and counseling. Gallagher Affinity's focus on tailored programs helps associations provide preventive care solutions, which improves member retention, satisfaction and overall wellbeing.

*If you or someone you know is struggling with harmful thoughts or feelings, you are not alone.
Contact the national mental health hotline at 988 for support.*



To explore our insurance products, solutions and member savings program, or to connect with an expert to assess your current offerings, visit gallagherperks.com/daphne-chube.



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