

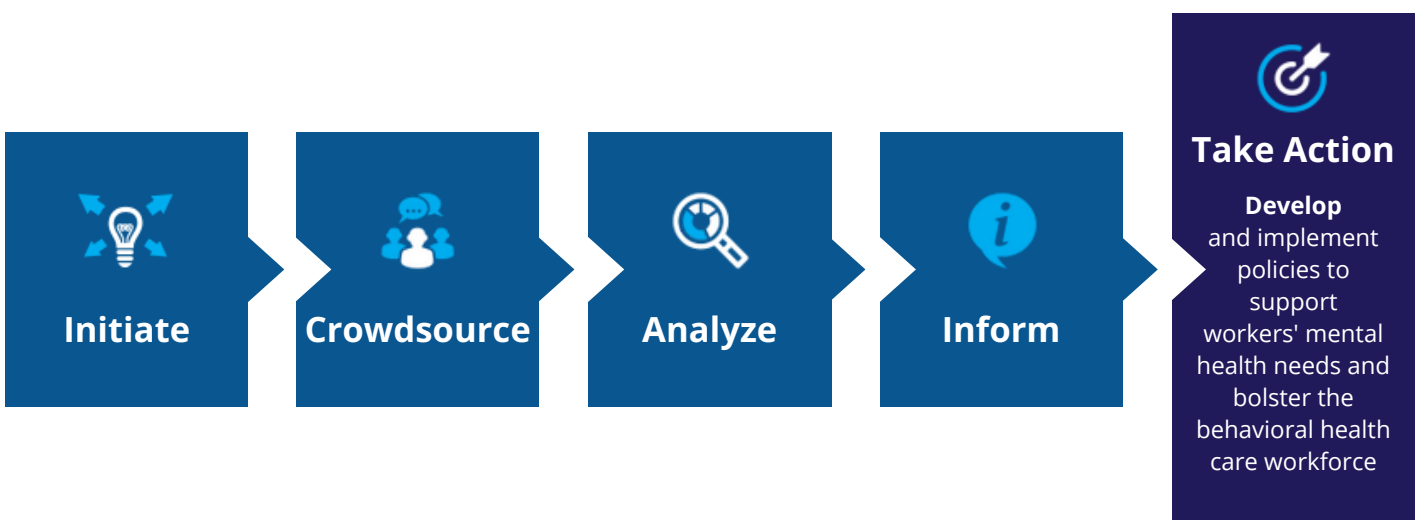
# Expanding Access to Workplace Care and Supports for People with Mental Health Conditions

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*. 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
- Behavioral health care workforce shortages and state resource systems

Participants submitted ideas to ensure policies meet the needs of workers and jobseekers with mental health conditions. The following is a summary of participant recommendations on expanding access to workplace care and supports submitted to the online dialogue, as well as relevant demographics, that can 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 need a solid understanding of the needs of individuals with mental health conditions.



**Provide** education around mental health accommodations in the workplace, including those covered 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 in order 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 around workplace mental health.



**Engage** with disability ERGs, including those that are 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.

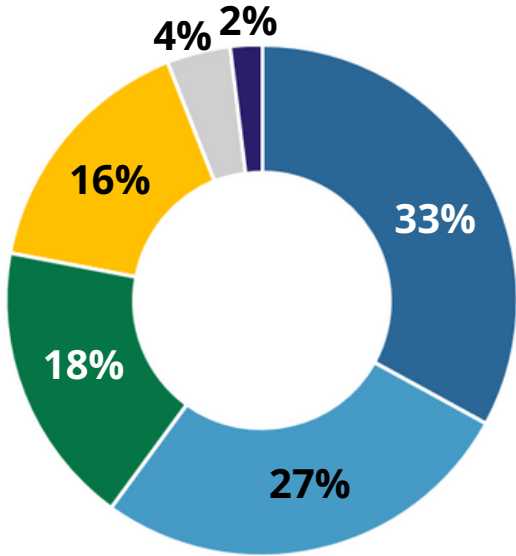
**Incentivize** employers to offer mental health education and safety trainings.

**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

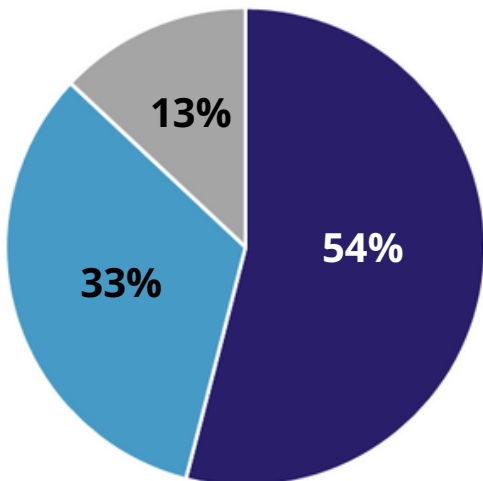
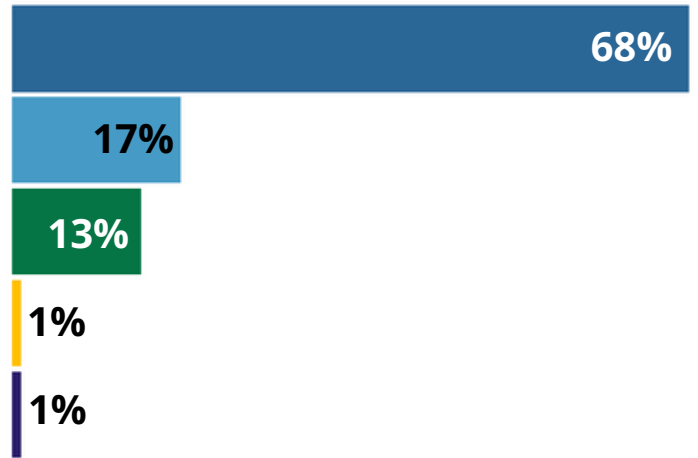


### Stakeholder Group\*

- Employee - 33%
- Employer - 27%
- Other - 18%
- Policymaker - 16%
- Unemployed - 4%
- Caregiver - 2%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

- White - 68%
- Black/African American - 17%
- Other - 13%
- Asian - 1%
- Middle Eastern - 1%



### Mental Health Condition

- Yes - 54%
- No - 33%
- Did Not Disclose - 13%

\*Respondents could select all that apply.

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Leading organizations, agencies and advocacy groups helped promote the dialogue and shared ideas and resources including, but not limited to:



Connect with ePolicyWorks to learn more about policies, programs and upcoming dialogues.