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# U.S. Surgeon General Releases New Framework for Mental Health & Well-Being in the Workplace

*Reports of “Quiet Quitting” and the Great Resignation Highlight How the COVID-19 Pandemic Shifted the Way Americans Live and Work*

*Framework Highlights Five Essentials for Workers in Organizations, and Businesses of Every Size to Help Leaders Develop Policies and Practices that Support the Mental Health and Well-Being of Workers*

(Washington, DC) -- Today, United States Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy released a new [Surgeon General’s Framework for Mental Health & Well-Being in the Workplace](https://surgeongeneral.gov/workplace) (<https://surgeongeneral.gov/workplace>), outlining the foundational role that workplaces should play in promoting the health and well-being of workers and our communities. As reports of “quiet quitting” and the Great Resignation have shown, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the nature of work for many and the relationship that some workers have with their jobs.

With more than 160 million people participating in the United States workforce and with the average full-time worker in the United States spending about half of their waking life at work, workplaces play a significant role in shaping our mental and physical well-being. Employers have a unique opportunity not only to invest in the mental health and well-being of their workforce, but also to strengthen their organizations’ success by doing so.

*“A healthy workforce is the foundation for thriving organizations and healthier communities,” said **Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy**. “As we recover from the worst of the pandemic, we have an opportunity and the power to make workplaces engines for mental health and well-being, and this Surgeon General’s Framework shows us how we can start. It will require organizations to rethink how they protect workers from harm, foster a sense of connection among workers, show workers that they matter, make space for their lives outside work, and support their growth. It will be worth it, because the benefits will accrue for workers and organizations alike.”*

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the relationship between work and well-being into clearer focus for many U.S. workers. According to recent surveys:

- 76% of U.S. workers in a 2021 survey reported at least one symptom of a mental health condition (<https://www.mindsharepartners.org/mentalhealthatworkreport-2021>) (anxiety, depression), an increase of 17 percentage points in just two years.
- 81% of workers reported that they will be looking for workplaces that support mental health ([https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/work-well-being/2022-mental-health-support#:~:text=A%20majority%20\(81%25\)%20of,into%20their%20future%20job%20decisions.](https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/work-well-being/2022-mental-health-support#:~:text=A%20majority%20(81%25)%20of,into%20their%20future%20job%20decisions.)) in the future.
- 84% of respondents reported at least one workplace factor that had a negative impact on their mental health (<https://hbr.org/2021/10/its-a-new-era-for-mental-health-at-work>).

In the *Surgeon General's Framework for Mental Health and Well-Being in the Workplace*, (<https://surgeongeneral.gov/workplace>) Dr. Murthy outlines Five Essentials for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being to help organizations develop, institutionalize, and update policies, processes, and practices that best support the mental health and well-being of all workers.

- 1. Protection from Harm:** Creating the conditions for physical and psychological safety is a critical foundation for ensuring mental health and well-being in the workplace. In order to promote practices that better assure protection from harm, workplaces can:
  1. Prioritize workplace physical and psychological safety
  2. Enable adequate rest
  3. Normalize and support focusing on mental health
  4. Operationalize Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) norms, policies, and programs
- 2. Connection and Community:** Fostering positive social interaction and relationships in the workplace supports worker well-being. In order to promote practices that better assure connection and community, workplaces can:
  1. Create cultures of inclusion and belonging
  2. Cultivate trusted relationships
  3. Foster collaboration and teamwork
- 3. Work-Life Harmony:** Professional and personal roles can create work and non-work conflicts. In order to promote practices that better assure work-life harmony, workplaces can:

1. Provide more autonomy over how work is done
  2. Make schedules as flexible and predictable as possible
  3. Increase access to paid leave
  4. Respect boundaries between work and non-work time
4. **Mattering at Work:** People want to know that they matter to those around them and that their work matters. Knowing you matter has been shown to lower stress, while feeling like you do not can increase the risk for depression. In order to better assure a culture of mattering at work, workplaces can:
1. Provide a living wage
  2. Engage workers in workplace decisions
  3. Build a culture of gratitude and recognition
  4. Connect individual work with organizational mission
5. **Opportunities for Growth:** When organizations create more opportunities for workers to accomplish goals based on their skills and growth, workers become more optimistic about their abilities and more enthusiastic about contributing to the organization. In order to promote practices that better assure opportunities for growth, workplaces can:
1. Offer quality training, education, and mentoring
  2. Foster clear, equitable pathways for career advancement
  3. Ensure relevant, reciprocal feedback

A Surgeon General's Framework is a guide to call attention to a public health issue, developed to help the American public better understand and address factors that affect health. This particular Framework provides Essentials, a foundation of key components, for workplace leaders to engage all workers and equitably support their mental health and well-being. It includes evidence-informed practices that leadership across workplaces of varied sizes and industries can apply to reimagine and reinvigorate their organizations.

As the Nation's Doctor – the 21st Surgeon General of the United States – Dr. Murthy has focused much of his work, research, and public platform on how the nation can recover from the pandemic stronger than before, including his recently-issued Surgeon General's Advisories on [Youth Mental Health](https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/12/07/us-surgeon-general-issues-advisory-on-youth-mental-health-crisis-further-exposed-by-covid-19-pandemic.html)

and [Health Worker Well-Being](https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/05/23/new-surgeon-general-advisory-sounds-alarm-on-health-worker-burnout-and-resignation.html). The *Surgeon*

*General's Framework for Mental Health and Well-Being in the Workplace* is part of the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) ongoing efforts to support President Joe Biden's whole-of-government strategy to transform mental health services for all Americans—a key part of the President's Unity Agenda that is reflected in the President's Fiscal Year 2023 budget. Following the President's State of the Union in March, HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra kicked off the HHS National Tour to Strengthen Mental Health to address the mental health challenges that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including substance use, youth mental health, and suicide.

You can read the full Framework [here](https://surgeongeneral.gov/workplace).

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