

# Suicide Prevention

in the  
Workforce



Employer  
Toolkit





# CONTRIBUTORS



## Dear Fellow Utahns,

Utah is renowned for its strong and vibrant economy, unparalleled quality of life, and community spirit. Yet despite these successes in so many areas, Utah has challenges that require our best efforts. One of those that needs to be more fully addressed is mental health.

While there are many complex factors that impact mental health, we do know that the coronavirus pandemic and its economic impact have made this long-standing problem significantly worse. Preventing suicide, and helping all Utahns to achieve a greater level of mental fitness, is a priority for Utah's business community.

We are pleased to share this new toolkit: **"Suicide Prevention in the Workforce"** with Utah leaders in business, government, and the community. The private sector is uniquely positioned to positively impact the mental and emotional well-being of Utahns. After all, next to our families and community relationships, our employers arguably have the greatest impact on the mental health of our workforce.

We urge CEOs, presidents, managers, and human resource professionals throughout Utah's business community to carefully review the contents of this toolkit, and consider steps they can take in their own organizations to support the mental well-being of their employees.

Each of us can become more mentally and emotionally prepared, and through this effort, we can lift up those who struggle with more severe conditions of anxiety and depression that too often can lead to suicide. Together, we can save countless lives and ensure Utah's workforce is resilient, mentally and emotionally fit, and ready for the challenges and opportunities of the future.



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# UTAH SUICIDE PREVENTION COALITION

Dear Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce and Utah workplaces,

The Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition recognizes the importance of engaging workplaces in suicide prevention efforts across the state. The workplace is a critical place for changing how our state addresses mental health, and we recognize that employers are quickly becoming leaders in the area of suicide prevention. This resource is intended to help owners, managers, human resource professionals, and supervisors become more understanding of and responsive to the mental health needs of their employees as well as learn and implement strategies to help prevent suicide among their employees. We must change the culture around mental health and suicide and recognize that reaching out for help is a sign of strength. We believe employers can play a powerful role in delivering that message and creating meaningful change. The time for action is now. This toolkit will provide invaluable education for workplaces to implement comprehensive suicide prevention strategies in their businesses and create safer environments for their employees.

We would like to thank the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce for their partnership and advocacy for suicide prevention. It has been an honor to have the opportunity to create this valuable resource for Utah workplaces in partnership. We dedicate this toolkit to those whose lives have been impacted by suicidal thoughts or feelings and who bravely face each day and continue to live. We also dedicate this plan to survivors who have lost a loved one to suicide, and to those professionals, clinicians, first responders, individuals, and families who continue to engage in this work of suicide prevention.

**Kim Myers, MSW**

*Executive Committee Chair,  
Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition*

# CALL TO ACTION

The workplace is a critical area to address mental health and suicide prevention. Over two-thirds of the American population participates in the workforce (General, 2012) and it is where we spend much of our days, oftentimes spending more time at work than with family and friends. Unfortunately, this means that when workers are struggling with their mental health and/or thoughts of suicide it can impact employees and their place of work. Fortunately, we have an opportunity to impact mental health and suicide within the work community and teach skills for reaching out and saving lives.

As we train workers in the necessary skills and connect them to available resources, we create a workplace culture that values mental health and addresses it openly. Workplaces that schedule regular check-ins and encourage communication about the signs and symptoms of mental illness help to decrease the stigma that surround it. And as management better learns to understand their employees they can help find and support needed solutions. This willingness to see employees not only as a worker, but as a human being can be the key to building trust and loyalty within a workplace.

This guide is a call to action for employers to implement and improve strategies focused on improving the mental health of their employees. This is a crucial part of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention, outlined in the [Utah Suicide Prevention State Plan](#)<sup>1</sup>, that can empower employees and save lives.



If you or someone you know is in crisis or needs help, call 1-800-273-TALK



[liveonutah.org](http://liveonutah.org)

# THE UPSTREAM, MIDSTREAM, DOWNSTREAM PARABLE

Imagine you are walking along a river and hear a cry for help from someone drowning. You are startled but excited as you dive into the water to save him. Using all your strength, you pull him to shore and start administering CPR. Your adrenaline is racing as he starts to regain consciousness. Just as you are about to get back on your feet, another frantic call comes from the river. You cannot believe it! You dive back into the river and pull out a woman who also needs life-saving care. Now a bit frazzled but still thrilled that you have saved two lives in one day, you mop the sweat from your brow. When you turn around, however, you see more drowning people coming down the river, one after another. You shout out to all the other people around you to help. Now there are several people in the river with you – pulling drowning people out left and right. One of the rescuers swims out to the drowning group and starts teaching them how to tread water. This strategy helps some, but not all. Everyone looks at each other, completely overwhelmed, wondering when this will stop. Finally, you stand up and start running upstream. Another rescuer shouts, “Where are you going? There are so many people drowning; we need everyone here to help!” To which you reply, “I’m going upstream to find out why so many people are falling into the river.”

When it comes to suicide prevention and mental health promotion, most of the focus is on pulling people out of the water. Many find themselves exhausted while resources are depleted, and everyone keeps throwing in the life preservers and performing other heroic deeds. Upstream interventions – like shifting culture, building skills that support wellness, and making environmental changes – can help prevent people from falling into the stream in the first place. If we are only focused on the downstream rescue, then we will never get ahead of all the crises demanding our attention. To be truly impactful and reduce suicides in Utah, we must find a balance between upstream, midstream, and downstream approaches.



**UPSTREAM:** Bolster workplace protective factors that can prevent mental health problems from occurring



**MIDSTREAM:** Detect early signs and symptoms of mental health and suicide prevention needs before they become more severe and refer employees to resources



**DOWNSTREAM:** Respond in a safe and effective way when mental health or suicide crises occur to promote employee healing and return to organization’s mission

## This toolkit is divided into five sections:



### PRE-ACTION

planning includes assessment and considerations for implementing new mental health and suicide prevention strategies in the workplace.



### UPSTREAM

strategies – What can we do to bolster protective factors that prevent mental health problems in the first place?



### MIDSTREAM

strategies – How do we identify employees who are experiencing higher levels of stress or who may be in the early stages of a mental health or substance abuse problem?



### DOWNSTREAM

strategies – What do we need to do to ensure we respond in a safe and effective way when mental health or suicide crises occur?



### GETTING STARTED

Now that we have all his information, what do we do? This section will provide tips for getting started.

# PRE-ACTION

## Assess Needs and Strengths of Your Organization

The best way to build buy-in for change is to engage employees early on in the process and listen to their input. Employees are a great resource for providing insight into areas of concern, for recognizing areas of resiliency, and identifying opportunities for positive change.

Here are some ways to get started and establish the needs of your organization:

- Conduct a baseline employee survey to measure:
  - Current knowledge and attitudes about mental health and suicide.
  - Knowledge and attitudes about help giving and help seeking behaviors.
  - Knowledge of existing employer resources such as an EAP and mental health benefits provided through health insurance plans.
  - Assessing employee's current mental and emotional well-being.

## Establishing baseline information is important for later evaluation of programs and strategies implemented into the organization.

- Oversee focus groups of 10-15 people who represent all groups within the organization.
- Perform in-depth interviews with key stakeholders including business leaders, HR directors, safety directors, and others.

### Some Important Questions to Ask Employees:

1. Is mental health discussed in our workplace? If so, is it discussed with the same rigor as physical health or safety?
2. How do mental health problems show up at our workplace?
3. When are people experiencing the most stress?
4. Where are our biggest gaps in meeting the needs of people in distress?
5. What do people think of the mental health services offered to employees?
6. What are the barriers to accessing mental health care services?
7. What are our company's strengths in supporting employees going through overwhelming life challenges?
8. What should be our goals to make things better?
9. How do we integrate mental health into our culture of health and safety?
10. Where should we start?



These efforts will provide invaluable insight into the culture within the organization and help management tailor education and awareness strategies to employees.

Assessing current policies and identifying gaps in these policies is another important step for developing a comprehensive policy to support mental wellness and suicide prevention. When changing a policy, educate staff on the changes from the top down, and layout a timeline for when the policy changes will be in effect.

## Communication Channels for Changes in Policy and Internal Initiatives

- New policies and programs/initiatives should be introduced in regular staff meetings by management.
- Use multiple forms of communication so information about new policies, initiatives and resources are readily available to staff.
- Email staff highlights of policy changes and attach the entire policy for their perusal.
- Post changes and updates to company websites and/or social media.
- Deliver hard copies of policies to employee mailboxes.
- Promote new resources by posting them where employees/staff gather in common areas like break rooms, bulletin boards, restrooms, and company vehicles.
- Update training materials to include new policies and include policy information in new staff orientations.

## Planning and Implementation

As part of the planning phase, it is important to include evaluation and measurable objectives so you can celebrate your successes and find areas for improvement. There is no way to know if your policy changes and strategies are having the intended effects unless you measure changes and evaluate them. Good strategy implementation includes open communication about the program or policy, providing a timeline for implementation, and showing that leadership and management support the changes.

### **Key consideration during implementation:**

When implementing a new mental health program, organizations should develop a plan on how a crisis event will be communicated to staff. It is also important to identify how and to whom managers can report when they are concerned about co-workers. Having a clear communication plan and structure provides direction on how to respond in a time of uncertainty and emotional distress.



### **Resources for additional guidance;**

- [Implementation | Model | Workplace Health Promotion](#)<sup>2</sup>
- [Programs | Depression Interventions | Workplace Health Strategies by Condition | Workplace Health Promotion](#)<sup>3</sup>
- [Policies | Depression Interventions | Workplace Health Strategies by Condition | Workplace Health Promotion](#)<sup>4</sup>
- [Assessment](#)<sup>5</sup>

As you review each of the following sections, consider your organization's readiness for and resistance to change and then complete the worksheet in the Appendix A. After all these preliminary steps are taken, consider how your company can overcome resistance, build a team to form an implementation strategy, and then roll out each component in a coordinated fashion.



# UPSTREAM:

## Bolster Protective Factors that can Prevent Mental Health Problems from Occurring

### Cultivating Strong Leadership

Have internal champions, ideally, high-level executives, lead the effort to promote mental health and suicide prevention in the organization. Meaningful and positive change will be most successful if it comes from the top down. It is also important to have representation from different groups and divisions to ensure the needs of all employees are considered.

#### Strong Mental Health Leaders:

- Normalize talking about mental health by sharing their own stories and modeling help seeking and help giving behaviors.
- Acknowledge that employees experience overwhelming life challenges, both inside and outside of work, including mental health conditions and substance use disorders.
- Assess their own readiness and their organization's readiness to change.
- Reassure employees that the organization will support them when they reach out for mental health support.
- Allocate resources for training, materials, evaluation, and mental health services for employees.
- Promote the organization's commitment to prioritize mental health and suicide prevention.
- Cultivate open communication about changes to organizational mental health policies and how they will support the changes.



Resource for additional guidance:

[Leadership Support | Planning | Model | Workplace Health Promotion](#)<sup>6</sup>

### Improve Mental Health Literacy

Resistance to talking about mental health and suicide openly can stem from stigma, misunderstanding, and fear about these topics. For this reason, it is important to not only talk about them openly but to also provide factual information about them.

Mental health literacy includes education about these things:

- Knowledge about mental health conditions and substance use disorders.
- Recognizing signs of distress in themselves and others.
- Familiarity with mental health resources, support tools, and treatment options.
- Stories of hope and recovery.

Mental health literacy can empower people as they learn to better understand their own mental health and enable them to reach out when they need help. It can also build confidence in their own efficacy for reaching out to others who may need help.

## Ways to Increase Mental Health Literacy

- Provide Mental Health First Aid training.
  - [Educational Programs](#)<sup>7</sup> and [mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://mentalhealthfirstaid.org)<sup>8</sup>
- Promote and train on “person-first” language in the organization.
  - [mhanational.org/person-centered-language](http://mhanational.org/person-centered-language)<sup>9</sup>
- Schedule lunch and learns.
  - EAP to present on common mental health symptoms or conditions and how they might be managed
  - Mental health professionals to present treatment options and substance use disorders
  - Guest speakers to share stories of hope and recovery (this could be internal staff as well)
- Make mental health and crisis resource materials readily available and promote them to employees.
  - EAP
  - Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition and [LiveOn Utah](#)<sup>10</sup> Campaign
  - [AFSP Utah](#)<sup>11</sup>
  - [NAMI Utah | Programs for Mental Illness - Home](#)<sup>12</sup>
  - [National Suicide Lifeline](#)<sup>13</sup>
  - [Safe UT](#)<sup>14</sup>
  - [University of Utah Warmline](#)<sup>15</sup>

## Teach Coping Skills for Life Challenges

Normalize that stress is a part of life and that everyone experiences elevated levels of stress due to life challenges at one time or another. Provide opportunities for employees to learn how to cope with stress to increase the overall resiliency of the workforce. These types of training opportunities should be included in new employee and onboarding processes as well as part of an ongoing and regular training schedule for all employees within the organization. They can also be integrated into worksite wellness initiatives and incentivized.

Here are some training examples that can increase employee coping skills:

- Stress Management
- Conflict Resolution or Anger Management
- Healthy Relationships
- Parenting Skills
- Emotional Intelligence
- Healthy Sleep
- Financial Literacy
- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Pain Management
- Communication



A great place to start for finding resources for providing these trainings may be perhaps your own EAP or insurance provider, reaching out to your local mental health authority [Location Map | DSAMH](#)<sup>16</sup> or even checking in with your local university to see if they provide these types of training opportunities. Larger companies may be able to integrate other strategies into training and resources including grief support groups, regular exercise and yoga classes, life and/or wellness coaching, and wellness assessments. An alternative might be referring employees to complete self-guided learning about evidence-based coping skills using [crediblemind.com](http://crediblemind.com)<sup>17</sup> or [positivepsychology.com](http://positivepsychology.com)<sup>18</sup>, and then reporting back for discussion in small team meetings. Companies could also do mental health wellness challenges where they provide a menu of options from these two websites and employees log their efforts to receive incentives.

## Build a Caring Culture

Creating a culture where employees feel supported and cared about has to begin with all levels of leadership within the organization. Culture change is a long-term process, so it may take years for an organization to see meaningful gains toward positive change.

## **Supervisor Training**

The first step toward shifting culture within an organization is to provide important training for all levels of leadership within the company. These trainings should improve mental health literacy (see prior section), increase cultural competence in mental health, and provide guidelines of how the company will support those who seek help with mental health and substance use disorders.

## **Mental Health and Suicide Awareness**

A great way for an organization to demonstrate support for mental health is by creating internal awareness campaigns and/or participating in existing national and local campaigns and events.

### Awareness Days

- National Alcohol Screening Day (April)
- Mental Health Awareness Month (May)
- National Anxiety Screening Day (May)
- Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (September)
- World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10)
- National Depression Screening Day (October)
- International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day (November)



### Suicide Prevention and Awareness Campaigns

- [LiveOn Utah](#)<sup>10</sup> is a statewide effort to prevent suicide by promoting education, providing resources, and changing our culture around suicide and mental health. Together we can get through, reach out, lift up, look ahead, and Live On.
- [Home - #BeThe1To](#)<sup>19</sup> is a shareable campaign that has simple, actionable steps to help someone who may be thinking of suicide.
- [Man Therapy](#)<sup>20</sup> has targeted messaging for men.
- [HeadsUpGuys | Manage & Prevent Depression in Men](#)<sup>21</sup> has targeted messaging for men.
- [Right Direction for Me](#)<sup>22</sup> is a website dedicated to depression in the workplace. Has free educational brochures, newsletter templates, posters, and more to share with employees.

Examples of local awareness efforts include:

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Utah awareness walks (September), [AFSP Utah](#)<sup>11</sup>
- National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) Utah awareness walk (May), [NAMI Utah | Programs for Mental Illness](#)<sup>12</sup>

Organizations may decide to do their own internal educational campaigns on mental health and integrate messages into internal newsletters, publications and as part of company events or celebrations. In this case, companies have opportunities to have fun and be creative while also creating a sense of solidarity and connection with their employees. We would recommend utilizing information from Utah's new statewide suicide prevention campaign "[LiveOn](#)<sup>10</sup>".

## **Community Involvement**

Getting involved in community events and organizations that focus on mental health and suicide prevention are a great opportunity for showing support for employees, for increasing connections in the workplace and building a sense of solidarity. This may include getting involved in the Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition ([www.liveonutah.org](http://www.liveonutah.org)<sup>10</sup>) or another local group, fundraising for a local awareness event such as AFSP's or NAMI's annual walks or volunteering as an employee group for an organization that focuses on these topics. There are endless possibilities for this type of project.

## **Safe Messaging**

One of the best ways to change internal social norms and reduce stigma is to change the way we talk about mental health and suicide in the workplace. Safe messaging principles provide guidance on how to safely talk about these topics to create safe spaces for people to seek or provide help. Safe messaging guidelines should be used in all company awareness campaigns and publications. Here are some safe messaging resources:

- Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition: [Safe Messaging](#)<sup>23</sup>
- National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention: [suicidepreventionmessaging.org](http://suicidepreventionmessaging.org)<sup>24</sup>

## **Positive Mental Health Culture**

When communities pull together and strive toward a common and compelling mission, the experience of solidarity helps people get through the day-to-day challenges and hardship that can come with work. Workplaces that strategically foster positive and purposeful group bonding also add to the resilience of their workers. This can include creating opportunities for affinity and social groups to thrive and engaging workers' families in the workplace community. These efforts can work toward internal social norms change toward help giving, help seeking, and connection.

The following milestones represent ideal times for strategic communication to improve mental health literacy and positive mental health culture:

- **Recruitment**

Before new employees have even started, messages about well-being and support should be prominent. Develop a policy to educate potential employees on mental health initiatives during recruitment and interview processes.

- **On-Boarding/Orientation**

During the on-boarding process, employees would benefit from stress reduction and self-care training as well as an in-depth orientation to the mental health and crisis resources available to them. Develop a policy that outlines what training will be required throughout the on-boarding process.

- **Work Transitions**

Knowing employees in transition can be vulnerable, ensure services are advocated and made available when employees experience a new job, a new role, a disability, a lay-off/furlough, or enter retirement. Develop a policy that outlines how employees going through transitions will receive notice of services, who will be responsible to do so, and for how long.



## **Peer Support and Well-Being Ambassadors**

Formal peer support programs in workplaces have existed for decades in some professions including doctors and lawyers, but they remain a relatively new and innovative concept for most other industries. An advanced support network of trained peer supporters or peer specialists offers an excellent model of a gap-filling intervention for workplaces. Key staff can be recruited, nominated as natural helpers, or self-nominated to volunteer because of their desire to serve.

Additional for information for these programs can be found here:

- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration](#)<sup>25</sup>
- [Mental Health America](#)<sup>26</sup>



# MIDSTREAM:

**Detect early signs and symptoms of mental health and suicide prevention needs before they become more severe. Help recognize individuals within your workplace who are feeling increased levels of distress or having thoughts of suicide and refer them to appropriate care.**

## **Benefits**

### ***Healthcare Insurance***

If an employer doesn't already include mental health coverage as part of their health insurance plan, this is a great way to ensure employees and their families have access to effective behavioral health care. Start with your current provider and find out what options are available for your company.

### **Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)**

More and more employers are seeing the benefit of offering an EAP for their employees as part of the benefit package. EAPs help employers by offering psychological assessments, short-term counseling, managing critical incidents, and conducting mental health evaluations. In addition they also:

- **Incorporate** mental health services into employee training.
- **Repeat** information about mental health benefits regularly.
- Make accessing mental health resources **easy**.
- **Integrate** mental health resources into a yearly company health fair with a variety of organizations representing talk therapy, exercise, life coaches, and peer support. Showcasing the importance of mental and emotional health as part of overall physical health.
- **Provide** peer assistance [training](#)<sup>27</sup>, and normalize help-seeking behavior.

## **Promote Employee Assistance Programs and other Mental Health Resources**

### ***Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)***

Just as important as having an EAP is to regularly educate employees about this benefit and promote its usage by them when needed. Placing EAP and the Utah Crisis Line materials around the workplace in areas where employees will regularly have access is a great way to ensure employees are aware of this benefit.

## **Screen for Mental Health Conditions and Substance Misuse**

Implementing regular mental health screenings is an important way to normalize mental health as a part of overall wellness. Here are some ways to do this:

- **Incorporate** mental health and substance misuse [screenings](#)<sup>28</sup> into yearly health check-ups.
- Just as regular **checkups** can flag physical health problems, so can a mental health screening be used to catch emerging mental health crises.
- **Participate** in [National Depression Screening Day \(NDS\)](#).<sup>29</sup>
- **Screening** that is given throughout a workplace repeatedly over time sends a strong cultural message – we value mental health.

### ***Incentivize Mental Health Engagement***

**Encourage** wellness program participation by acknowledging and rewarding (e.g., earning points toward prizes) when employees complete anonymous self-screening tools, attend lunch-and-learns on related topics, or complete training. (National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention) Leadership testimonials of the efficacy of the resources after the leaders have used them for their mental health bring credibility to the resources and model appropriate self-care to the employees.

### ***Train Supervisors and Others About How to Have Difficult Conversations***

The key to **prevention** is early recognition of warning signs and referral to appropriate help. Supervisors can play a significant role in this. To do so, supervisors need thorough training on mental health and suicide risk factors, symptoms, and warning signs, as well as internal policies and procedures. The following trainings can be requested from a certified Utah trainer, at [Educational Programs](#)<sup>30</sup>.

#### ***Supervisors and then Staff***

- [Question, Persuade, Refer \(QPR\)](#)<sup>31</sup>, just as people trained in CPR help save thousands of lives each year, people trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help.
- [Mental Health First Aid \(MHFA\)](#)<sup>8</sup> is an 8-hour course that trains participants how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance abuse
- [SafeTalk](#)<sup>32</sup> is a 3-hour course that trains participants to be a suicide alert helper. This includes recognizing suicide warning signs, reaching out and asking about suicide, and referring them to resources.

#### ***Management and Human Resources***

- [Working Minds](#)<sup>33</sup> is a 2-hour training that targets HR and managers and gives participants the tools and skills to appreciate the critical need for suicide prevention while creating a forum for dialogue and critical thinking about workplace mental health challenges.
- [Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training \(ASIST\)](#)<sup>34</sup> is a two-day intensive, interactive, and practice-dominated course designed to help participants recognize and review risk, and intervene to prevent the immediate risk of suicide.

***Employers can find a local instructor for all these programs [here](#)<sup>27</sup>.***





# DOWNSTREAM:

Respond in a safe and effective way when mental health or suicide crises occur, in order to promote employee healing and return to the organization's mission.

## Promote Mental Health Crisis Resources:

- [Utah Crisis Line](#)<sup>35</sup>, (801) 587-3000
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK \(8255\)](#)<sup>36</sup>
- [SafeUT App](#)<sup>37</sup>
- [Crisis Text Line 741741](#)<sup>38</sup>
- Crisis Services offered by your Employee Assistance Program

**Display** these resources prominently via postings in break rooms.

**Share** them in company-wide emails.

**Remind** employees of resources during open enrollment or other health fairs.

**Request** materials from your local mental health authority. Contact information for your area can be found [here](#).<sup>39</sup>

## Manage Behavioral Health Crises in the Workplace

**Develop a protocol** for how to address a mental health crisis in your workplace, and share with supervisors.

A link for an editable PDF that you can customize for your workplace can be found here; [Navigating a Mental Health Crisis in the Workplace](#).<sup>40</sup>

When possible, **accommodations** can significantly reduce stress, and improve employee retention, loyalty, and productivity (i.e., flexible work hours, telework, reassessing employee workloads, medical leave, scheduled supportive check-ins, etc.). Reasonable accommodations may be required by law when the mental health condition is classified as a [disability](#).

It is reasonable to **address performance issues** in essentially the same manner you would if there were not mental health conditions present. The conversation may be more productive if you start with compassion, ask what is driving the performance issues, and problem-solve around the underlying distress rather than keeping the conversation on a surface or “strictly business” level.

## Provide Effective and Compassionate Grief and Trauma Support After a Suicide

**Use strategies** from these reliable resources an employee suicide:

- [A Manager's Guide to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace](#)<sup>40</sup> contains policy, checklists, and templates for effective workplace crisis response.
- [Action Alliance Framework for Successful Messaging](#)<sup>24</sup> contains tips and resources to communicate safely and effectively about suicide.

## Why Prepare in Advance?

Without policies and protocol in place, workplaces are likely to make mistakes that might affect public communication, employee morale, and additional safety concerns – with costly and possibly tragic consequences. When policies and protocols are established before a crisis occurs, workplaces are in a much better position to effectively and compassionately respond.

## Grief Support

Employers can promote existing grief support services in Utah. A complete list of these resources can be found here at [I've Lost Someone](#)<sup>42</sup>.

## Evaluation

Evaluation of mental health and suicide prevention strategies is imperative to the success of these efforts. It also ensures that policies are implemented correctly and enforced fairly across the organization. A baseline evaluation should be conducted prior to implementation and then follow up evaluation should be conducted approximately one year after implementation. There are a number of ways in which evaluation can be conducted, depending on an employer's organizational capacity to collect and analyze related data as well as what data they are seeking. Evaluation components that could be considered:

- Changes in attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors.
- Measure healthcare costs and return on investment.
- Comparisons of data from health screenings before and after the policy implementation.
- Organizational Indicators: this could include the # of workers' compensation claims filed, # of sick days per period of time, # of disability days per period of time, # of preventive medical screenings completed, # of health screenings held, per capita health benefit claims cost, per capita worker compensation cost, per capita sick leave absenteeism cost, per capita disability claims cost, etc.
- Health Status Questionnaire: a health status questionnaire could assess mental health in the workplace by inquiring about an employee's stress levels, sleep patterns, feelings of anxiety and depression, comfort levels in discussing mental health at work, etc. This information can be used to track changes in the mental health status of employees overall and help identify how effective the mental health initiatives have been in providing a positive mental health environment. It can also help an employer develop new policies to address further issues in mental health in the workplace.
- Employee Participation and Satisfaction: Evaluating employee participation and satisfaction can be handled in a number of different ways.
- An employer could conduct focus groups with employees or administer satisfaction surveys to employees to allow them to provide input on the policy and resources made available in the worksite.
- Employers could also measure the number of hits to a mental health section on a company website, as well as track the number of participants engaged in mental health related initiatives
- Outcome Evaluation: outcome evaluation takes a little more work to gather, but can measure a number of different elements related to the policy

Additional information for evaluation can be found here at [Evaluation | Model | Workplace Health Promotion](#)<sup>43</sup>.

## Conclusion

It is important for workplaces to recognize that they have an integral role in promoting mental wellness and preventing suicides of their employees. We know that mental health problems are common and that they can impact employees much in the same way as physical problems. Employees also spend an incredible amount of time in their workplace underscoring the importance for employers to take an active role in this work. In the end, by implementing a combination of upstream, midstream, and downstream strategies, employers have an opportunity to realize important benefits both for their employees and for their organization.





# GETTING STARTED

Included in Appendix A is a convenient Next Steps Worksheet to help guide businesses. Successfully elevating the mental fitness of employees hinges on three general steps:

1. Understand your baseline - how are my employees doing mentally and emotionally right now? What is the scope and effectiveness of resources or services we already provide?
2. Implement a plan of action - what are the key steps, and who are the key players in my company that need to move this forward?
3. Track and measure results, adapt as needed - how can I use both operational and experiential data, to measure success of these interventions?

**To help get started, consider the following questions:**

1. Is there a written policy clearly establishing well-being as a company value?
2. Does company policy explicitly value work/life balance, including: encouraging employees to take personal time and supporting them when they do?
3. How do employees rate their mental and emotional well-being, and how does the workplace impact that in their view?
4. Does the company have a clear vacation policy, and does company culture encourage employees to use vacation time?
5. Do employees feel they receive consistent, specific, and constructive feedback?
6. Does this feedback focus more on their behavior and performance, and not on their worth as a person?
7. Do employees feel they have a safe way to provide honest, timely, and specific feedback upward through managers or HR on workplace culture, work expectations, and growth opportunities?
8. Does company leadership and management clearly communicate and follow these policies?
9. Do employees have access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and if so what is the utilization rate, and how effective do employees feel it is?
10. What does company health insurance cover as it relates to mental and emotional health?



# APPENDIX A - NEXT STEPS WORKSHEET

## Step 1: Measure baseline

Deadline:

***I commit to the following data and information gathering strategies to answer the questions in “Getting Started.” (Consider the value of hard data, surveys, and focus groups.)***

1.

2.

3.

***I will incorporate these findings into a baseline analysis, or “well-being audit” of my company.***

## Step 2: Implement a plan of action

***We will develop and execute these communication, education, and company policy strategies:***

1.

2.

3.

## Step 3: Track and measure results, and adapt as needed

***At regular intervals, we will evaluate our efforts by:***

1.

2.

3.

***We will adapt our plans as needed based on these findings.***

# APPENDIX B - ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Data

1. [Utah Suicide Prevention Plan 2017-2021](#)<sup>44</sup>
2. [Suicide Rates by Industry and Occupation CDC](#)<sup>45</sup>
3. [Utah Department of Health Suicide Data Fact Sheet, 2018](#)<sup>46</sup>
4. [Suicide and Firearm Injury in Utah, 2018](#)<sup>47</sup>

## Treatment

1. [Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Resource Locator](#)<sup>16</sup>

## Support Groups

1. [NAMI Utah](#)<sup>12</sup>
2. [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)<sup>48</sup>
2. [USARA, Pathway for recovery](#)<sup>49</sup>

## Crisis Resource Hotlines

1. Child Abuse/Neglect, 1-855-323-DCFS(3237)
2. Crisis Line & Mobile Outreach Team, 1-801-587-3000
3. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK(8255)
4. Sexual Violence Crisis Line, 1-888-421-1100
5. Utah Domestic Violence, 1-800-897-LINK(5465)

## Additional Suicide Prevention Toolkits

1. [Breaking the Silence in the Workplace, A guide for employers on responding to suicide in the workplace](#)<sup>50</sup>
2. [Construction Working Minds](#)<sup>51</sup>
3. [Police and Sheriff Peer Support Team Manual](#)<sup>52</sup>
4. [Preventing Suicide: A Technical Package of Policy, Programs and Practices](#)<sup>53</sup>
5. [The Role of Coworkers in Preventing Suicide in the Workplace](#)<sup>54</sup>
6. [The Role of Managers in Preventing Suicide in the Workplace](#)<sup>55</sup>

## Training Opportunities

1. [Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition](#)<sup>7</sup>
2. [Trauma-Informed Services](#)<sup>56</sup>

# APPENDIX C - WEB ADDRESSES

- 1 <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/28167/28167.pdf>
- 2 <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/model/implementation/>
- 3 <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/health-strategies/depression/interventions/programs.html>
- 4 <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/health-strategies/depression/interventions/policies.html>
- 5 <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/model/assessment/>
- 6 <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/planning/leadership.html>
- 7 <https://liveonutah.org/resources/educational-programs/>
- 8 <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>
- 9 <https://www.mhanational.org/person-centered-language>
- 10 <https://liveonutah.org>
- 11 <https://afsp.org/tag/afsp-utah>
- 12 <https://namiut.org>
- 13 <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- 14 <https://healthcare.utah.edu/uni/safe-ut/>
- 15 <https://healthcare.utah.edu/uni/>
- 16 <https://dsamh.utah.gov/contact/location-map>
- 17 <https://crediblemind.com>
- 18 <https://positivepsychology.com>
- 19 <https://www.bethe1to.com>
- 20 <https://www.mantherapy.org>
- 21 <https://headsugguys.org>
- 22 <https://www.rightdirectionforme.com>
- 23 <https://liveonutah.org/resources/safe-messaging/>
- 24 <http://suicidepreventionmessaging.org>
- 25 <https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools/peers>
- 26 <https://www.mhanational.org/center-peer-support>
- 27 <https://liveonutah.org/resources/trainings/>
- 28 <https://healthymindsutah.org>
- 29 <https://www.mindwise.org/>
- 30 <https://liveonutah.org/resources/educational-programs/>
- 31 <https://qprinstitute.com>
- 32 <https://www.livingworks.net/safetalk>
- 33 <https://www.coloradodepressioncenter.org/workingminds/>
- 34 <https://www.livingworks.net/asist>
- 35 <https://healthcare.utah.edu/uni/programs/crisis-diversion.php>
- 36 <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>
- 37 <https://healthcare.utah.edu/uni/safe-ut/>
- 38 <https://www.crisistextline.org>
- 39 <https://dsamh.utah.gov/contact/location-map>
- 40 <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V5y-lueEdoeh-fEDv107gUpbs9XWLUoBg6JPvdOZu5o/edit>
- 41 <https://suicidology.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Managers-Guidebook-To-Suicide-Postvention.pdf>
- 42 <https://liveonutah.org/live-lost-someone/>
- 43 <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/model/evaluation/index.html>

- 44 <http://health.utah.gov/vipp/pdf/Suicide/SuicidePreventionCoalitionPlan2017-2021.pdf>
- 45 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6903a1.htm>
- 46 <http://health.utah.gov/vipp/pdf/Suicide/SuicideInUtah2018.pdf>
- 47 <https://dsamh.utah.gov/pdf/suicide/Suicide%20and%20Firearm%20Injury%20in%20Utah%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf>
- 48 <https://afsp.org/find-a-support-group/>
- 49 <http://www.myusara.com/about/multiple-pathways/>
- 50 [https://www.iasp.info/pdf/special\\_interest\\_groups/workplace/Breaking-the-Silence-in-the-Workplace-A-Guide-for-Employers-on-Responding-to-Suicide-in-the-Workplace.pdf](https://www.iasp.info/pdf/special_interest_groups/workplace/Breaking-the-Silence-in-the-Workplace-A-Guide-for-Employers-on-Responding-to-Suicide-in-the-Workplace.pdf)
- 51 <http://www.constructionworkingminds.org/assets/constructionguide.pdf>
- 52 <http://post.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/postnvgov/content/Training/PST%20Manual%203rd%20E-version.pdf>
- 53 <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/suicideTechnicalPackage.pdf>
- 54 [http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/V11\\_Co-worker\\_May2018.pdf](http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/V11_Co-worker_May2018.pdf)
- 55 [https://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/V13\\_Managers\\_May2018.pdf](https://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/V13_Managers_May2018.pdf)
- 56 <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/consulting-services/trauma-informed-resilience-oriented-care/>





