Expanded Mental Health Benefits

Expanded mental health benefits is one of the nine cornerstone policies that companies can implement today to help untapped talent enter, thrive, and stay in the workforce. To access the rest of the policies, read the full System Upgrade report today.

WHAT ARE EXPANDED MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS?

Expanded mental health benefits encompass a variety of tailored policies supporting the mental health of employees, like personal leave or access to support groups. While there are no federal mandates for mental health policies in the workplace, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified employees with mental health conditions[1] This means workers' experience of mental health benefits varies greatly by company.

It also varies by demographics—mental health struggles are often difficult to talk about in professional settings, and receive diagnoses and time off for, but for Black, Latina, and Native American (BLNA) women in your technical workforce, those struggles are compounded by difficulties in getting access to necessary treatment and support as a result of misconceptions and gaps in screening and diagnosis.[2]

The good news? Workplaces can act to protect mental health. Companies that prioritize mental health benefits are likely to attract and retain top talent. Offering comprehensive support for mental well-being can serve as a key differentiator for potential employees, and contribute to higher employee retention rates.[3]

## DID YOU KNOW?

01 Reduce Stigma

72% of organizations already offer some kind of mental health coverage as part of their employee health care benefits. But **mental health struggles can sometimes feel isolating and surrounded by stigma**, making it harder to access and use these policies.[4]

02 Improve Work Culture

In 2023, one in three U.S. employees said their job had a negative impact on their mental health.[5] **Without access to comprehensive mental health benefits, employee burnout and stress-related issues will continue** to impact retention, productivity, work culture, and the industry at large.[6]

03 Optimize Performance

Companies that support their employees' mental health see better engagement outcomes overall. They also tend to **perform better and have higher job satisfaction**, intention to stay, and more positive views of their company and leaders.[7]
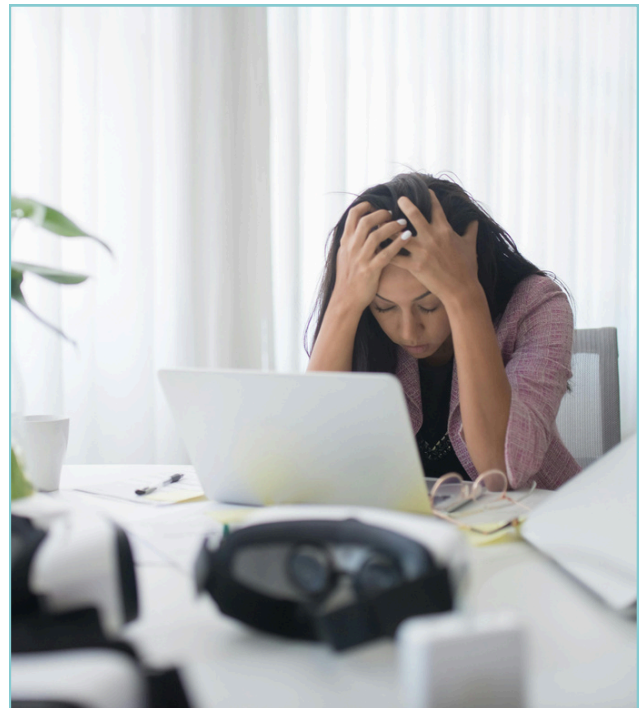
MORE THAN 75%	57%	71%	NEARLY 50%
Of employees in the United States have struggled with at least one issue that affected their mental health in the past.[8]	Of U.S. employees feel uncomfortable discussing their mental health with their supervisor.[9]	Of tech workers say their productivity is affected by a mental health issue.[10]	Of BLNA women in the technical workforce believe that expanded mental health benefits have had a significant impact on their decision to join, remain at, or advance within their companies.[11]

POLICY IN PRACTICE

Meet Sarah, a seasoned software engineer at your company, who is facing anxiety and stress due to personal reasons, exacerbated by her workload. When she bravely confides in her manager, Mark, he talks to her about multiple options she can access under your company's new mental health benefits. Sarah is able to take personal leave to focus on her well-being, and also able to telecommute and take frequent breaks as she returns back to work.

Sarah feels empowered by the safety net of expanded benefits and the support of her colleagues. She's not only able to flag when she's overwhelmed and takes time off for her wellbeing, but also encourages more junior colleagues to do so. The result? Less burnout, more employee retention, and more job satisfaction.

POLICY PAIRINGS

If you're looking to supercharge your mental health strategy, consider also implementing the recommended cornerstones:

- Flexible work
- Flexible working hours
- Offer paid sick leave benefits

6 DESIGN QUESTIONS

It's not just about offering mental health policies—it's about intentional design. Organizations can ensure their policies and practices are accessible and effective—and thereby efficient—by asking six key design questions:

1	**How can we use quantitative and qualitative data to identify how pain points differ for each group?**	Conduct listening sessions, focus groups, and surveys that collect disaggregated data by race, gender, level, and caregiving set-up to identify unique pain points around mental health benefits.
2	**How can we offer employees multiple relevant options?**	Offer counseling services, telehealth benefits, wellness stipends, mindfulness workshops, peer support groups and programming in collaboration with employee resource groups, and flexible work arrangements and schedules.
3	**Have we ensured that all options are accessible and easy to use?**	Provide resources in multiple languages, offer remote or virtual support options, simplify the process for accessing health benefits, and create regular feedback loops with employees to identify any barriers to accessibility.
4	**How are we communicating frequently and clearly about this practice?**	Explain available options, how to access them, and emphasize the company's commitment to supporting employees' well-being through company-wide emails, intranet announcements, or dedicated workshops.
5	**How are we promoting a culture that encourages adoption?**	Encourage leadership to model healthy behaviors, promoting open conversations about mental health, training or workshops to reduce stigma, and employee resource groups and champions or ambassadors who can help promote awareness and encourage their peers to utilize available resources.
6	**How are we continuously measuring impact and iterating as needed?**	Track utilization rates, employee satisfaction scores, absenteeism rates, regular feedback surveys on employees' experiences.

Questions?

Get in touch at impact@rebootrepresentation.org

1. Accommodations for Employees with Mental Health Conditions
2. System Upgrade: Rebooting Corporate Policies for Impact (2023). Pg. 38
3. System Upgrade: Rebooting Corporate Policies for Impact (2023). Pg. 38
4. System Upgrade: Rebooting Corporate Policies for Impact (2023).
5. Mental Health In The Workplace (2023)
6. Dear Tech Companies: How are you ensuring that BLNA women can truly bring their whole selves to work? (2021)
7. Do Remote Workers Want to Return to Office? (2023)
8. System Upgrade: Rebooting Corporate Policies for Impact (2023).
9. Mental Health In The Workplace (2023)
10. Dear Tech Companies: How are you ensuring that BLNA women can truly bring their whole selves to work? (2021)
11. System Upgrade: Rebooting Corporate Policies for Impact (2023). Pg. 39