WORKPLACE OPTIONS

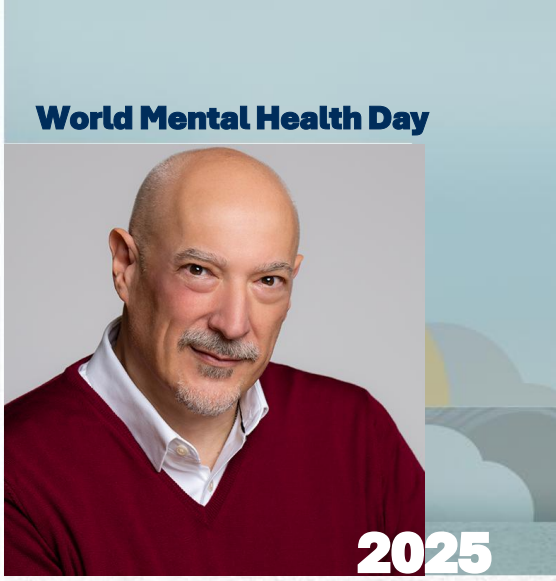
2025

World Mental Health Day

PROMOTIONAL TOOLKIT

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

On World Mental Health Day, we reflect on why mental health is on our minds. Why must today's leaders prioritise the psychological wellbeing of their people, during the everyday moments and when a crisis crashes into our lives?



This year's theme, ***Access to services – mental health in catastrophes and emergencies***, is really a call to action—an urgent reminder that what we do at Workplace Options (WPO), and how we help support your people, is not only our work. It is our calling. And we are honoured to serve.

2025 has brought a series of unrelenting disasters:

- Deadly flooding in Texas
- Wildfires scorching California and Israel
- Earthquakes shaking Turkey, China, Myanmar, and Thailand
- Social unrest in Guyana, and in the United States, following ICE raids that have left families fractured
- Storm Éowyn battering the UK and Ireland
- A rare Midwest derecho sweeping through tornado-weary communities

Each of these events left homes demolished, lives disrupted, and communities devastated. But beneath the visible destruction lies something more insidious: the emotional and mental aftershock.

At WPO, we are ready to respond; we are here to listen, guide, and care for people anytime, anywhere, as they navigate trauma, grief, fear, and uncertainty. In this past year, that response has been global and immediate:

- Over **60,000 crisis support** sessions delivered
- More than **5,000 cases requiring urgent psychological first aid**
- A surge in demand from regions impacted by **natural disasters**, **political conflict**, and **civil unrest**

As employers, you are essential to the success of the response. The workplace is more than a space to do a job. It is a lifeline: a source of stability, connection, and trust. And for many, their team at work is the pathway through which they find care for themselves and their families.

How can you ensure that access to mental health service is in place before disaster strikes?

1. Prepare now for the unexpected. Develop trauma-informed policies and people-first emergency response plans that prioritise mental health support before the next emergency occurs.

2. Empower managers as frontline responders. Provide your managers with tools, training, and language to recognise distress and guide people to care with clarity, confidentiality, and compassion.

3. Amplify access, globally and locally. Ensure that every employee, regardless of location or level, knows what services are available, how to use them, and how to extend support to their families.

At WPO, we cannot and will not accept a world where mental health support is optional, conditional, or out of reach. Along with you, our employer partners, we can turn awareness into access, and access into action.

Thank you,
Alan King

PLANNING
FOR WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

World Mental Health Day is an opportunity for individuals and organisations to raise awareness of mental health issues and to mobilise efforts in support of mental health. A growing number of employers are using the day to:

- Draw attention to positive mental health practices
- Remind employees of the mental health support available to them
- Reduce the stigma sometimes associated with seeking help for mental health problems

If you would like to observe World Mental Health Day at your organisation, consider the following.

WHEN TO OBSERVE THE DAY

World Mental Health Day is officially observed on **10 October** every year. In 2025, 10 October falls on a Friday. Some employers choose a different day if doing so makes greater engagement possible. So, your first decision will be when to observe the day.

WHO TO INVOLVE IN PLANNING

Consider who you will need to involve in planning the day, including any events, activities and communication:

- Your organisation's leadership might send out a message announcing the day in support of its goals, or may be more directly involved in some of the day's activities.
- Your HR leadership team can decide on the focus of the day, key messages to communicate, and important benefits to highlight.
- Your communications group might plan and execute the strategy for reaching as many employees as possible for meaningful engagement with the day's activities.
- Employee resource groups (ERGs) can use targeted communication and organise special activities related to their interests.
- Team leaders can facilitate communication and ensure focus on issues of particular relevance to their teams.
- Wellbeing ambassadors, if the organisation has them, could also participate in the planning and execution of ideas.
- Your employee wellbeing programme or EAP can contribute communication tools and other elements of your activity plan (such as webinars).

WHETHER TO FOCUS ON A THEME

The World Federation for Mental Health, the organiser of World Mental Health Day, has chosen 'Access to Services - Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies' as the theme for 2025. You might choose a different theme for your organisation's observance of the day, or you might decide not to have a theme.

The official theme might help build awareness of your organisation's disaster preparedness plans and the mental health support available from your EAP after disasters or traumatic events. However, a broader theme, focusing on the positive aspects of mental health, mental health in the workplace or reducing the stigma around seeking help for mental health issues, may tie more closely with your workforce strategy.

We will provide communication tools, webinars, and other resources to support observation of World Mental Health Day under the broad theme, 'Access to Services - Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies'.

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WAYS TO OBSERVE THE DAY

Employers observe World Mental Health Day in many ways, depending on their organisation's size, the resources available, and the unique mental health needs of the employee population. There are many options to choose from, including

- Communication of support for mental health from the organisation's leadership
- Special communications to build awareness of the mental health support available to employees
- Special on-site or online webinars on relevant topics
- Web-based or in-person discussions about mental health issues of special relevance to your organisation's employees, such as stress, burnout or navigating change with emotional resilience
- Town hall meetings to discuss the findings of employee surveys related to stress and mental health, describe steps being taken to address any concerns and answer questions from employees
- On-site events related to positive mental health, such as meditation demonstrations and presentations on sleep, mindfulness or other mental health topics

EXTENDING THE IMPACT

Observance of the day sends an important signal; however, consider your organisation's long-term strategy for enhancing mental health. Encourage the team to plan activities or learning events each month or quarter, aligned with a theme relevant to employees' mental health concerns. Consider mental health awareness training sessions for everyone in the organisation — managers and employees, and people who work remotely.

HOW WE HELP

Your employee wellbeing programme is a key resource in supporting the mental health of your workforce:

- Our **counselling**, **coaching**, **training** and **consulting services**, along with the articles and resources on the **member website**, can all be helpful as part of your organisation's observation of World Mental Health Day.
- **Crisis response resources** can be described if you choose to observe the day with the theme 'Access to Services—Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies'.
- We will provide **communication tools**, **webinars**, and other resources to support your observation of the day.
- Our resources for **HR and organisational leaders** include **consulting** services and **written guides** addressing issues of managing teams during crisis, navigating mental health in the workplace, and more.

CREATING A PROJECT PLAN

Together with your planning team, it's helpful to map out a project plan showing the key details, such as

- What needs to be done
- The date by when each task needs to be completed
- Who is responsible for each task and who will help them

The success of the day will depend on broad outreach to, and engagement with, employees.

RESOURCES

- World Federation for Mental Health, the originator and sponsor of World Mental Health Day: wfmh.global
- World Health Organisation (WHO): World Mental Health Day, Mental Health at Work, and Mental Health in Emergencies

MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

PORTUGAL

- 32% of people aged 16+ screened positive for generalised anxiety disorder (GAD-2 ≥ 3) in 2023/24
- 33% report anxiety symptoms, and 20% depressive symptoms
- 59% of workers report being stressed at work, and many lack the skills to cope with stressful situations
- 6.8% public-sector absenteeism rate in 2023
- 482,500 employees reported a health problem caused or aggravated by work

SPAIN

- 60% of the population reports that stress affects their daily lives
- 49% admit to experiencing stress at work on a daily basis
- 42% of workers have experienced some mental health problem
- 37% suffer from stress, depression, or anxiety related to their work environment
- 59% of workers with mental health problems originating in the workplace feel a lack of support from the company
- 30% rate their wellbeing as insufficient; 30% feel their work significantly interferes with their wellbeing
- Sick leave related to psychological disorders such as anxiety, stress, and depression, has increased by 66% since 2018, and is now one of the leading causes of absenteeism

PORTUGAL SOURCES (from top to bottom): INE, Health Status Survey 2024 (facts #1 & #2) I EU-OSHA, OSH Pulse Portugal 2022 I Ministério do Trabalho, Balanço Social 2023 I INE, "Work-related health disorders" (2020 data, published 2022)

SPAIN SOURCES (from top to bottom): IPSOS I El Economista I InfoJobs I United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization I InfoJobs I 2025 Corporate Wellbeing Study in Spain by Both People & Comms, MásMétrica and Equipos & Talent I National Social Security Institute

FAMILIES FIRST:

HOW MANAGERS CAN SUPPORT MENTAL WELLBEING AFTER DISASTERS

In every catastrophe—whether an extreme weather event, geopolitical conflict, or humanitarian crisis—at least a third of those affected are children. For managers looking to be supportive, focusing on the family unit is key.

WHY FAMILY SUPPORT MATTERS — The facts:

- 35% of the global workforce are parents to children under 18; over 70% have caregiving responsibilities.
- Whilst 10 to 30% of all disaster survivors develop long-term mental health issues, up to 60% of children do.
- 65% of working parents experience burnout due to concerns about their children's wellbeing.
- Children of caregivers with poor mental health are twice as likely to experience mental or behavioural issues.

The analysis:

After a crisis, most employees aren't thinking about themselves alone, they're thinking about how to protect their families. This isn't just some grand act of selflessness, but a basic physiological response. Just as children rely on healthy, emotionally available caregivers to be well in times of distress, so, too, do parents rely on the health and safety of their children to regulate their own wellbeing.

Supporting one means supporting both. This means positioning the EAP not just as a self-care tool, but as an essential resource. Luckily, today's EAP already offers paediatric counselling, family support navigation, digital learning modules, and more to support employees and their families. Managers can play a critical role in making sure employees know this support exists—and feel empowered to use it.

5 WAYS TO HELP FAMILIES DURING CRISIS

Step 1: Include child and family support in wellbeing offerings. Today's wellbeing programmes offer more than traditional counselling. Programmes like Child and Family Wellbeing provide tailored support for children's mental health—addressing trauma, behavioural concerns, and developmental challenges through counselling, referrals, and care navigation.

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Including family services in wellbeing packages helps increase awareness and use—especially during crises. Framing the EAP as a tool to support caregiving, not just individual needs, can reduce stigma and encourage engagement.

Step 2: Integrate wellbeing messaging into your crisis communications. Post-disaster communication should acknowledge emotional impact and clearly point to available support. Embedding EAP information into response protocols ensures family-centred resources are visible when most needed. This may include relevant digital resources (e.g., "Flood Safety for You and Your Family") and empathetic messaging that validates family challenges. Many EAPs also offer templated materials to assist with timely outreach.

When employees feel seen and supported, they're more likely to access help early—especially when it matters most.

Step 3: Check in regularly with parents and caregivers. Even when support is available, stigma and competing demands can prevent engagement. Regular one-on-one check-ins create space for honest conversations and timely referrals.

These touchpoints help normalise help-seeking, uncover unmet needs, and reinforce that wellbeing is a shared priority.

Step 4: Equip managers to reinforce the message. Managers are often closest to employees' day-to-day experiences and best positioned to spot signs of distress. To respond effectively, they need the right tools and training.

Workshops like "Leading Through Crisis" or "Mental Health: Recognise and Respond" help managers identify needs early, offer reassurance, and connect employees and families to care.

A confident, informed response signals that EAP resources are a real investment in employee wellbeing, and not just for show.

Step 5: Create and leverage employee resource groups (ERGs). Parent and caregiver ERGs are trusted channels for communication and connection. They help HR share relevant resources, foster peer support, and normalise family-related challenges.

Importantly, they can also provide valuable insights into evolving caregiver needs, helping shape more responsive, effective support strategies—especially after a disaster.

RECOVERY STARTS WITH FAMILY

By targeting support where it's needed most in the wake of a catastrophe—not just to the individual, but to their families and community—HR leaders can ensure employees make the best use of available resources and facilitate a full and lasting recovery.

CHILD AND FAMILY WELLBEING

EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Comprehensive wellbeing support for parents and their children providing:

- Specialist paediatric assessment
- Customised care plan
- Individual counselling for minors aged 6+
- Family counselling for minors aged 3+
- Couples counselling
- Care Coach and case management support
- Additional care resource support

Commonly addressed issues include:

- Helping children better understand and manage anxiety/depression
- Supporting children through divorce
- Boosting children's academic and social confidence
- Managing emotions
- Practising self-regulation
- Locating specialists for mood/behavioural disorders
- Processing trauma (e.g., family death, natural disasters)

To learn how the Child and Family Wellbeing programme can support employees at your organisation, fill out the form to get in touch with us or email service@workplaceoptions.com for more information.

MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

MEXICO

- Mexico is the country with the highest prevalence of work-related stress in the world
- Workplace stress affects the lives of 82% of Mexicans
- 75% of workers live with anxiety about work and experience symptoms of stress-related fatigue
- 60% perceived an increase in work-related stress in the past year

AUSTRALIA

- 80% of employees are struggling with burnout
- Australian workers are the most stressed in APAC – experiencing stress 12x per day on average
- 64% feel stress has greatly impacted their mental health
- 61% experience poor mental health because of employers' failure to manage psychosocial risks
- 40% rate mental health stigma as a source of their stress at work

MEXICO SOURCES (from top to bottom): World Health Organization I El Economista I El Financiero & the Mexican Social Security Institute I OCC Mundial

AUSTRALIA SOURCES (from top to bottom): Robert Half I ADP I NIB I Australian Counsil of Trade Unions (ACTU) I Bowers, J., et al. (2018, May 21). Psychological distress in remote mining and construction workers in Australia. Medical Journal of Australia, 208(9), 391-397. https://doi.org/10.5694/mja17.00950

ENDURING SUPPORT:

PRIORITISING WELLBEING IN THE YEARS AFTER A CRISIS

In the aftermath of disaster, immediate support is vital—but it's long-term care that shapes lasting recovery. Many continue to struggle years later, especially when support fades too soon. For managers, the anniversary of a disaster or emergency is a pivotal opportunity to reaffirm the organisation's commitment to employee wellbeing and ensure that care remains visible, accessible and responsive.

WHY SUSTAINED SUPPORT MATTERS

In the wake of a disaster or emergency, psychological distress is a near-universal response. But whilst most people recover over time, a third go on to experience lasting mental health challenges like post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety.

One study found that early improvements in mental health—specifically, reductions in anxiety and depression—briefly reversed around the one- to two-year mark. In another study of hurricane survivors, researchers found that whilst 90% of respondents continued to experience distress almost a year later, fewer than 10% had accessed mental health support.

These findings reinforce two truths:

1) recovery isn't linear, and
2) help-seeking declines over time.

In the event of disaster, many survivors are unprepared for the complex and evolving emotions that can follow. In the immediate aftermath—when support is most visible—ongoing communication, check-ins and a general acceptance that distress is normal help empower individuals to seek the support they need.

But as time passes—and messages of support fade, conversations cease, and people seem to return to normal—survivors may begin to feel isolated. That isolation can bring confusion or shame about lingering symptoms, discouraging help-seeking. For others, the lack of ongoing communication may leave them unaware that support is still available.

Either way, the outcome is the same: a further decline in mental health. For HR leaders, this underscores the need for prolonged support to ensure lasting recovery for impacted employees.

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With that said, here are five steps HR leaders can take to drive support for survivors on the anniversary of a disaster.

NAVIGATING CRISIS ANNIVERSARY REACTIONS

Step 1: Communicate with care. The first anniversary of a disaster can be especially painful. Depending on the nature of disaster and culture of organisation, sharing a company-wide message may be appropriate. A simple, empathetic message could be helpful in four key ways:

- It validates ongoing pain and frames the anniversary as part of a longer healing journey.
- It helps employees identify symptoms they may not have linked to the disaster and seek support.
- It creates an opportunity to share the availability of EAP resources, especially for grief, trauma, and family needs.
- It can be disseminated across various channels—including email, intranet or signage—to maximise visibility and reach.

Step 2: Conduct regular check-ins. Everyone experiences trauma differently, and at different times. Conducting regular check-ins over an extended period is thus essential to ensuring employees receive support when they need it most. Furthermore, continuing these check-ins around the anniversary of the disaster reassures employees that it's valid to still be struggling—and acceptable to seek support.

Step 3: Engage ERGs and peer support groups. Peer networks play a central role in maintaining an open dialogue around mental health. They offer informal, more personal employee support, normalising post-traumatic stress, reducing stigma and fostering a culture of care and wellbeing.

By establishing ERGs—and encouraging them to host events or storytelling forums around the anniversary—HR leaders can help sustain connection, validate experiences, and keep mental health support accessible.

Step 4: Provide manager training and guidance. Many feel unprepared to navigate emotionally complex situations. Trauma-informed leadership training can help managers recognise signs of distress, respond with empathy, and connect employees to the right resources. Tip sheets and toolkits also ensure managers have clear, accessible guidance even after training ends—so they feel equipped to support their teams and reinforce the message that wellbeing matters just as much as output.

Step 5: Monitor and adjust support based on evolving needs. Employee needs may shift as the organisation and its people move through different stages of recovery. What was helpful in the immediate aftermath may no longer be appropriate a year later. Gathering feedback through surveys or informal conversations allows managers to adjust the support approach. Such responsiveness strengthens trust and ensures the care being offered remains relevant, timely, and aligned with employees' healing journeys.

SUSTAINED SUPPORT FOR LASTING RECOVERY

By delivering care that's as dynamic and enduring as the road to recovery, HR teams can ensure employees receive the support they need to achieve long-term healing and resume their lives with restored confidence, clarity and calm.

MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

FRANCE

- 1 in 5 employees experiences a mental disorder each year — that's over 13 million people
- 44% of employees took at least one sick leave in 2022; 22.2% of long-term absences were due to psychological issues
- Occupational diseases related to mental health rose by 25% in 2023; sick leave benefits for work-related accidents and psychosocial risks reached €4.4 billion (+8.3% year-over-year)
- 16.9% of French workers reported experiencing harassment or violence in the workplace — one of the highest rates in the EU
- 53% of the French population reported experiencing psychological suffering over the past 12 months

GERMANY

- 47% increase in sick leave due to mental disorders between 2014 and 2024
- In 2023, TK-insured employees took an average of 3.59 sick days due to mental health diagnoses, an 8% increase from 2022
- Mental health disorders represented 11.9% of all sick leave days in 2023
- The average length of a sick leave was 32.7 days in 2023 — significantly influenced by long-term mental health cases
- Germany recorded its highest ever sickness rate: 7.18% — more than 7 out of 100 employees off work on any given day
- 54% of employees say they would continue working despite a mental health condition (psychological presenteeism)
- 65% of employees feel ashamed to talk about their mental health at work

FRANCE SOURCES (from top to bottom): Santé Publique France, 2024 I INSEE & DREES, 2023 I Assurance Maladie – Annual Report 2023 I Eurofound EWCTS 2021 (2025) I Ministère du Travail, Grande Cause Nationale 2025

GERMANY SOURCES (from top to bottom): AOK, Fehlzeiten-Report 2024 I Techniker Krankenkasse, Gesundheitsreport 2024 I AOK, 2025 synopsis of 2023 I DAK-Gesundheit, Gesundheitsreport 2024 I AOK Rheinland, Feb 2024 I Barmer, Arztreport 2023 I Robert Koch Institute (RKI), 2023

RAPID RESPONSE

CRISIS SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES FOLLOWING A TRAUMATIC EVENT

When disaster strikes, employers need to act quickly. Whether it's unexpected like a workplace accident or employee death, or an anticipated event like an organisational restructuring, employees need a way to cope and move forward. Rapid Response, which can be operational quickly, provides employees access to experienced counsellors in the wake of a traumatic event.

HOTLINE SUPPORT

- In-the-moment support with experienced counsellors
- 24/7 access from virtually any location
- Structured telephonic and face-to-face counselling
- Timely referrals to local resources
- 30-day blocks of services available for purchase

To learn how the Rapid Response programme can support employees at your organisation, fill out the form to get in touch with us or email service@workplaceoptions.com for more information.