

WORKPLACE SAFETY ADVISORY

Supporting Mental Wellness in the Construction Industry

In the high-stress, high-risk environment of construction, supporting mental wellness is pivotal not only to worker health but to creating a safer and more productive workplace. Mental health is essential to overall well-being, on and off the job.

Federal data on suicide and overdose rates consistently point to construction and extraction workers — including laborers, skilled trades and management — as among the most at-risk populations in the U.S. These workers rank highest in incidence of suicide of any other industry sector¹ and highest in rates of death from overdose compared to other occupations.² These sobering statistics point to a broader mental health crisis that demands industry-wide attention and action.

Building a Culture of Care and Connection



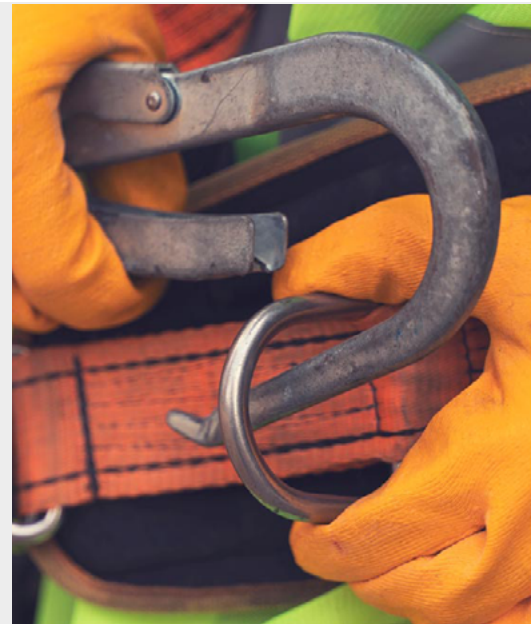
Unaddressed mental health conditions can impact a worker's levels of distraction, impulsivity, fatigue, micro-sleep and risk-taking, all of which can compromise jobsite safety. Risk management that integrates mental wellness strategies for employees can help mitigate safety and liability exposures. In addition, when a company's culture emphasizes overall well-being, research points to positive trends in employee engagement, work behavior and transformational leadership.³

Fortunately, novel workplace health and safety strategies are emerging to help construction industry employers support mental wellness and reduce risks. A common thread running through successful initiatives is **building a culture of care and connection** — a key concept referenced in the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, issued in 2024.

Getting Started



Building a culture of care in the workplace begins with eliminating threats to psychological safety such as bullying, toxic management practices and discrimination. It requires aligning with the expert resources, including local mental health services and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that can offer workers psychological assessment, short-term counseling, critical incident management and other services. Companies should also become familiar with the 988 National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline to understand how the resource works and what to expect before it is needed.



Situational Awareness for Mental Wellness



Developing situational awareness has long been a core tenet of jobsite safety. Employers routinely train workers to detect physical hazards and prevent injury. That same vigilance can be applied to mental health. A worker’s sharp rise in errors committed on the job, not talking to coworkers, sudden irritability or other mood changes are often clues that the person is in mental distress. Within a culture of care, coworkers are encouraged to help detect and address such behaviors without fear of judgment or adverse consequences for any of the parties involved.

In addition, with the guidance of mental health professionals, the following tools and initiatives can elevate mental health and wellness support across construction operations.

Tools and Initiatives	
Confidential Screenings	Anonymous mental health assessments can identify issues early so they can be treated appropriately.
Tiered Training	Raising awareness of the symptoms of mental health issues puts more eyes on the jobsite and makes it more likely someone will notice and act when a peer seems in need.
Peer Support Networks	Formal and informal channels can encourage workers to look out for one another, engage empathetically, and help connect employees to supports when needed.
Toolbox Talks and Mental Health Moments	Encouraging employees to open up about their struggles in small group conversations can help reduce stigma and shift the conversation to hope, recovery and peer support, helping connect the dots between mental health and jobsite safety.
Safe, Effective Storytelling	Individuals who have personally experienced depression, anxiety and addiction can be powerful advocates when they are comfortable sharing their stories to support others seeking wellness resources.

By fostering a culture where mental wellness is prioritized, construction employers can reduce safety incidents, improve team cohesion and enhance job satisfaction and retention. From peer support to awareness training to complimentary screenings, an investment in worker mental health is an investment in the overall safety and resilience of your workplace.

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- 1. Suicide Rates by Industry and Occupation — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2021 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7250a2.htm>
- 2. QuickStats: Age-Adjusted Drug Overdose Death Rates Among Workers Aged 16–64 Years in Usual Occupation Groups with the Highest Drug Overdose Death Rates — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2020
- 3. [20220630-FINAL-FINAL-HR-EmploymentLaw-WhitePaper.pdf \(workplacesuicideprevention.com\)](#)

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