



Healthy Workplaces = Thriving Employees

Creating Workplaces that Reduce Burnout



NORTHWEST MICHIGAN
**Behavioral
Health
Initiative**



This is the work of the **Retain Providers Action Team**, one of the 10 Northwest CHIR's Behavioral Health Initiative Action Teams. Action Teams consist of cross sector partners willing and able to take action collectively and supported by the CHIR BBO staff. Learn more about the [CHIR](#) and the [Behavioral Health Initiative](#), and stay connected by subscribing [here](#).

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Resources for change.

Dear Behavioral Health Leaders and Staff,

As fellow behavioral health professionals in the region, we know firsthand that the last three years have been especially difficult. The pandemic has made an already strenuous job even harder.

As a result, provider burnout has skyrocketed.

This toolkit presents concrete steps that you can take as a behavioral health staff member and a behavioral health leader to reduce burnout levels and create a culture of care within the workplace. This toolkit:

- Highlights findings from the Burnout and Work-Life survey of 182 behavioral health providers in the region
- Recommends best-practices to promote employee engagement and reduce burnout
- Provides concrete suggestions and resources for how to put these in place

Our ultimate goal is to have local organizations introduce policy and practice changes to address and prevent burnout, create community within their staff for support, and promote work-life balance.

We realize that another critical next step in this work is the recruitment of behavioral health providers in the region. We are happy to say that our partners in the Recruit Providers Action Team are working on just that.

If you have questions about this toolkit or would like to contribute to the work of the Action Team moving forward, contact: behavioralhealth@northernmichiganchir.org.

Sincerely,

The Retain Providers Action Team

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Employee Burnout is a Problem Locally and Across the Nation

IN THE REGION



60% of behavioral health providers report experiencing high levels of burnout in at least one area.

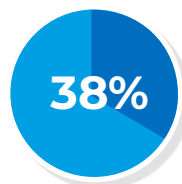


Greater levels of **burnout** are associated with employees intending to quit their jobs.



Burnout levels are also related to work-life conditions.

IN THE COUNTRY¹



38% of employees report they would be comfortable using their organization's mental health support services.



4 in 5 report that workplace stress affects their relationships.



2 in 5 report that their manager encourages them to take time off when needed.



2 in 3 employees report they are not comfortable providing feedback to their manager.

Across the nation there is a great recognition that one way to address burnout levels and employee turnover is to focus on creating healthy work environments. These environments promote six work-life conditions that are related to employee satisfaction, engagement, burnout levels, health & wellbeing, and organizational success. The six work-life conditions include: workload, value alignment, fairness & equity, employee empowerment, community, and rewards & recognition. The following pages describe each of these work-life areas, report findings from the [Maslach Areas of Worklife Survey](#), and provide best-practice ideas, adapted from the Maslach Burnout Report for Human Services, for how to grow these conditions within local organizations.

Information about best practices gathered from participants at the Behavioral Health Initiative Summit on September 29th, 2022 will be integrated into the toolkit and available on the initiative's [website](#) in October.

¹ "Mind the Workplace," Mental Health America, accessed September 27, 2022, <https://www.mhanational.org/mind-workplace>.

Reasonable Workloads

Heavy workloads require individuals to do more than is possible with the time and resources available. A heavy workload is the most significant predictor of emotional exhaustion and behavioral health provider burnout levels.

How did BH staff describe the workload in their organization?

73.6%

Agreed they work intensely for prolonged periods of time.

41%

Agreed they have so much work to do on the job that it takes them away from their personal interests.

54.6%

Agreed they do not have the time to do the work that must be done.

ONLY
40.4%

Agreed they have enough time to do what's important in their job.

Pathways to More Reasonable Workloads

What could organizations put in place to create reasonable workloads?

More Behavioral Health Staff

- Expand internship opportunities
- Coordinate recruitment efforts with other behavioral health organizations. Target areas outside of northern Michigan
- Invest in growing the BH workforce
- Prioritize hires based on workload priorities

Manageable Billable Hours and Caseloads

- Assess number of direct service hours required each week and adjust across team members
- A reasonable, maximum caseload size established
- Manageable caseloads for all direct providers

Reasonable Workloads and Work/Family Balance Valued and Normalized

- Employees encouraged to take time for self-care
- Working beyond normal work week discouraged
- Four-day work weeks and/or shorter workdays
- Expanded PTO offered to employees

Flexible Work Hours

- Alternative work hours available outside of the 9-5 standard
- Work-from-home options in place
- Flexible break options

Improved Workflows

- Sufficient administrative supports for clinical staff
- Simplified paperwork requirements
- Streamlined workflow processes



Creating More Reasonable Workloads in your Organization

- Talk to or survey employees to learn their perspective about what a reasonable workload would look like inside the organization.
- Conduct a time study to understand hours spent on paperwork/administrative tasks
- Provide assistance when people leave for vacation or have time off so returning to work is less overwhelming
- Create spaces within the work environment where staff can relax and take a break.
- Encourage staff to take breaks throughout the day and to take time off.
- Incorporate time throughout the workday for staff to complete paperwork
- Pay attention to uneven workload distributions and rebalance when needed
- Engage staff in identifying and fixing workflow and paperwork barriers.
- Identify how to make unfilled staff positions more attractive to potential employees

“Giving employees opportunities to participate in workplace improvements can be an effective approach to fostering their well-being.”

– 7 Strategies to Improve your Employees Health and Well-Being



RESOURCES

The article [***7 Strategies to Improve your Employees Health and Well-Being***](#) highlights several research based strategies for addressing high workloads and reducing staff burnout.

Employee & Organization Value Alignment

Alignment between employee and organizational values connects an individual's beliefs and goals with the purpose of their work. A value mismatch creates conflict and disengagement.

How did BH staff in NW Michigan describe their organization's values in relation to their own?

67%

said their career goals are consistent with the organization's stated goals

69%

said their values align with the values of their organization

69%

said their organization's goals influence their day to day activities

Pathways to Value Alignment

What does an organization offer when it aspires to promote value alignment?

Ethical Work Environment

- Ethical guidelines and procedures in place and reinforced
- Employees feel safe reporting ethical violations of fellow staff or supervisors

Shared Organizational Values

- Employees engaged in defining organizational values
- Communications highlight organizational values and their purpose
- Organizational policy, procedures and actions align with stated values

Values Accountability

- Employees and customers provide feedback on misalignments between values and organizational operations
- Performance reviews and rewards consider how behavior aligns with organizational values

Enhancing Alignment in Your Organization

- Seek employee feedback on organizational values and potential misalignments with current practices
- Engage employees from all levels and worksites in refining organization values
- Communicate ethical guidelines to all employees
- Respond to employee feedback with actions that communicate the importance of shared values
- Incorporate evaluation criteria into performance reviews/rewards that target organizational values



RESOURCES

The article [***What are Organizational Values and Why are they Important***](#) describes why organizational values matter and how to nurture alignment between organizational and employees' values.

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Fair & Equitable

The existence of consistent and equitable rules and that apply to everyone and fair distribution of resources communicates respect for all organizational members.

How did BH staff in NW Michigan describe their organization's fairness?



said that management treats all employees fairly



said that opportunities are decided solely on merit



said that their organizations offer effective appeal procedures when the fairness of a decision is questioned

Pathways to Organizational Fairness

What does an organization offer when it aspires to promote fairness?

Just Workplace Practices

- Day-to-day policies, practices and procedures are fair and just for all employees

Transparency

- Transparent communication about job opportunities, promotions, and rewards
- Organizational decisions, outcomes and changes explained to all employees

Workplace Diversity Expanded and Nurtured

- Diverse staff, supervisors, leaders and board members
- Diversity celebrated, acknowledged and respected
- DEI efforts create inclusive cultures

Respectful Behavior

- Nurture and model mutual respect
- Expect and respect employee feedback





Enhancing Fairness in Your Organization

- Implement an anonymous survey asking employees if they feel that workplace decisions are made based on merit or if they experience incidents of disrespect, discrimination, or favoritism in the workplace
- Assess the “fairness impact” of current policies, practices, and procedures
- Support and expand upon the diversity of staff, leaders, and board members
- Support supervisors to model respectful and empathic behavior
- Welcome feedback from employees on organizational fairness and equity
- Create a culture of safe and open communication

“Almost nine out of 10 Fortune 100 companies now list equity as one of their corporate values.”

– *Four Elements of a Fair Employee Experience*



RESOURCES

The *[Four Elements of a Fair Employee Experience](#)* highlights what leaders can do to create a more equitable and supportive work environment during the pandemic. *[Organizational Justice 101: How to Foster Fairness in the Workplace](#)* describes the different types of organizational justice and how to nurture them

Employee Empowerment and Autonomy Within Organizations

Healthy work environments provide employees with opportunities to make choices, inform decision-making, and solve problems.

How did BH staff in NW Michigan describe the opportunities in their organization?

28%

of BH providers in the region said they are not able to influence management to obtain the equipment/space they need for their work.

54%

said they have influence in the decisions affecting their work.

68%

said they have control over how they do their work.

Pathways to Empowerment and Autonomy

What does an organization offer when it aspires to promote employee empowerment and autonomy?

Flexibility over When and Where Work Happens.
Employees can:

- Work from home when possible
- Structure and schedule their workday
- Complete paperwork at home

Autonomy and Trust:

- Leaders trust staff to get their work done
- Staff have the ability to make decisions about work processes

Capacity to Support Employee Empowerment

- Leaders and supervisors have the skills to effectively delegate and promote employee empowerment
- Safe feedback mechanisms and channels in place to seek and respond to employee input

Contributions Valued

- Empowerment is an explicit organizational value and considered when making policy, practice and procedure changes.





Growing Empowerment in your Organization

- Talk to employees about what they would like autonomy and empowerment to look like in the workplace.
- Talk to employees about which parts of their job need more flexibility
- Implement changes in a flexible way – allowing employees to chose what works best for them
- Create a shared understanding about responsibilities and timelines so flexibility is compatible with requirements
- Identify and address where employees feel overly monitored and unable to make informed decisions on their own.
- Incorporate the support for employee empowerment in leader/ supervisor performance reviews
- Seek employee feedback on supervisor’s assessments
- Engage staff from all levels and worksites in improvement efforts

“As employees become increasingly overwhelmed and burned out, the organization itself becomes ineffective and unhealthy.”

– *Self Care for Care Givers Toolkit*



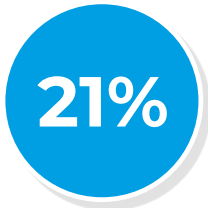
RESOURCES

The [*Self Care for Care Givers toolkit*](#) provides a short assessment tool to evaluate your organization’s self-care environment. The toolkit also includes activities for increasing your organization’s self-care culture including enhancing employee empowerment and autonomy.

A Supportive Community

Employees thrive in work settings characterized by support, collaboration, and positive co-worker and supervision relationships. The quality of an organization's social environment, positive connections between coworkers, and supportive management can significantly reduce burnout.

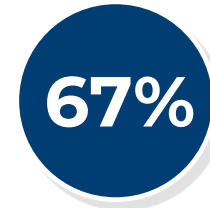
How did BH staff in NW Michigan describe their organization's community?



reported not feeling close to their colleagues



said people in their organization trust one another to fulfill their jobs



said members of their work group communicate openly

Many identified the need for more supportive supervisors.

Pathways to A Strong Community

What does an organization offer when it promotes a strong community?

A Culture of Health

- Focus on the physical, mental, social, spiritual, and financial health of employees
- Empathic environment that supports employees' need to take time-off for personal, mental, or health-related reasons
- Employee wellness program designed to address employee priorities

Supportive Management

- Lead with empathy
- Work with employees to improve worklife conditions
- Create supportive work environments

Inclusive, Trusting Spaces

- Consistent, positive, and inclusive communication & community events
- Open channels of communication that encourage conversation horizontally and vertically throughout the organization

Community-Building Orientation

- Value and nurture positive interpersonal connections





Strengthening Community in your Organization

- Talk to employees about how to support their well-being
- Seek and respond to employee feedback on organizational policies and workplace community
- Engage staff from all levels and worksites in developing community events
- Ask employees if they experience alienation, or segregation between groups at work
- Start chat roulettes or scheduled coffee/snack breaks to encourage the development of staff relationships
- Create opportunities for staff to celebrate personal and professional successes and milestones
- Create cross-team peer-to-peer mentoring and learning groups
- Engage employees in working collectively towards a common cause, charitable goal or community service project
- Provide team building activities, retreats, and social gatherings during and outside of work

“When you have an engaging team, you’re more likely to have an open and trusting culture”

– *How to Create a Culture of Organizational Well-Being*



RESOURCES

The article ***How to Create a Culture of Organizational Well-Being*** by Jennifer Robinson offers insight into the benefits of a healthy organizational community. She identifies the five essential elements of well-being and offers instructions for managers on how to promote it.

Organizational Rewards & Recognition

Recognition and financial rewards for job contributions are vital to reducing burnout. A meaningful reward system signals what is of value to the organization and recognizes the work of employees.

How did BH staff in NW Michigan describe their organization's reward system?

31%

said they are not recognized for all of the things they contribute

20%

said their efforts usually go unnoticed

Pathways to a Effective Employee Recognition

What does an organization offer when it aspires to promote employee recognition?

Ongoing Support and Guidance

- Employees receive regular guidance and feedback on whether they are doing a good job or if they can make changes to improve their work
- Supervisors and managers hold regular check-ins with employees to identify workplace needs

Competitive Compensation

- Compensation levels exceed average industry and local standards
- Overtime work adequately compensated

Excellence Acknowledged

- Significant workplace contributions acknowledged in-person and organization-wide
- Frequent positive feedback and recognition from supervisors

Alternative Job Perks

- Flexibility in scheduling, virtual work, assignments, job-shares, etc.
- Increased amounts of PTO, extra vacation days or free days off.





Enhancing Employee Recognition in Your Organization

- Compare employee's salaries with local and industry standards to ensure they are fairly compensated for their work
- Seek employee feedback on their experience of work
- Is their work satisfactory?
- Does their work provide a challenge?
- Acknowledge and celebrate impressive employee contributions publicly
- Ask employees what perks would motivate them
- Reward employees with non-financial perks such as additional paid time off
- Create a reward and recognition committee that includes staff from diverse roles and levels


“If you want to reduce employee turnover, you may want to look into reward and recognition as a solution.”

– *Improve Employee Engagement using Recognition and Reward*



RESOURCES

Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. have a **toolkit** that describes how to create an effective formal and informal employee reward and recognition system. The article **[Improve Employee Engagement using Recognition and Reward](#)** describes the importance of creating environments that recognize employees and provides several reward examples.



Are you interested in implementing these strategies in your workplace? Would you like more support?

Contact us at behavioralhealth@northernmichiganchir.org for implementation support.

Does your organization implement any best practices to improve work-life and address burnout that you would like to share? If so, share them with us at

behavioralhealth@northernmichiganchir.org and we will add it to the toolkit!

