EAB

COVID-19 Employee Mental Health Support Audit and Resource Guide

Improve Your System of Mental Health Support for Faculty and Staff in Response to COVID-19

Overview

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Instructions

Use this audit to evaluate the resources in place at your institution to support the mental health of faculty and staff. Rate your current capabilities for each criterion with a simple "yes/no" answer and refer to the implementation resources for advice and sample peer practices. See EAB's COVID-19 resource center for additional implementation resources and sample peer practices.

Audit Key

💡 **High impact practice**

Look for the "high impact practice" designation for guidance on where to focus limited time and resources to improve employee mental health and wellness

Mental Health Support Audit and Resource Guide

Step 1: Alleviate Anxiety Through Honest, Ongoing, and Multi-Channel Communication

Assess Your Institution's **Communication Strategy**	Rating		Implementation Resources
	Y	**N**	
Our institution has directly acknowledged the increased burden placed on faculty and staff as a result of COVID-19 and has proactively adjusted expectations of essential work responsibilities during this time. 💡 *High impact practice*			Reduce stress and enable employees to seek needed support by honestly acknowledging the personal and professional strain resulting from COVID-19 and proactively setting realistic work expectations. See sample letters from Michigan State University and Baylor University
Leadership has established a regular cadence of communication (i.e., daily, weekly) to update faculty and staff on the institution's response to COVID-19. 💡 *High impact practice*			Do not wait for "breaking news"—send regular emails with updates about your institution's response to COVID-19, even if some updates are short or simply offer messages of gratitude. See samples from Amherst College and CUNY Brooklyn College
Our institution has a process and multiple communication channels through which faculty and staff can ask pressing questions and provide feedback. 💡 *High impact practice*			Make this process clear on your website and use a combination of communication channels to enhance accessibility and encourage participation. Samples include: • A dedicated email address • An embedded webform • A coronavirus helpline • Virtual townhall meetings (see College of Charleston and Northeastern University) For virtual townhall meetings, consider hosting role-specific sessions with the option to submit questions in advance.
Our institution has a dedicated COVID-19 webpage that archives all communication and supporting resources in a centralized location.			Archive COVID-19 related communications on a centralized webpage to increase transparency and ease of future reference. See samples from the University of Washington and the University of Toronto
Our COVID-19 webpage includes a comprehensive FAQs section with detailed answers for key stakeholders, including faculty and staff.			Keep FAQs organized by topic or relevant stakeholders as the list of questions and answers continues to grow. See samples from Bowdoin College and the University of Washington
Email communications are supplemented with regular social media blasts, blog posts, short videos, or podcasts to ensure messages are timely and accessible.			Translate existing information and emails into 1-3 posts per week to keep information digestible, accessible, and personal. Feel free to use posts to direct employees back to centralized repositories of information (e.g., your website). Samples include Texas Tech University's Facebook page and Monmouth University's weekly podcast

Mental Health Support Audit and Resource Guide

Step 2: Support the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Faculty and Staff

Assess Your Institution's **Mental Health Supports**	Rating		Implementation Resources
	Y	**N**	
Our institution sends weekly wellness emails to faculty and staff with mental health support resources to encourage self-care and keep wellbeing top of mind. 💡 *High impact practice*			Focus weekly wellness emails on topics like self-compassion, stress reduction, and mindfulness. Be sure to also highlight available support resources and upcoming events. See samples from Simon Fraser University's 14 weekly email templates and Northwestern University
Our institution has organized virtual events or informational webinars focused on mental health and wellness (e.g., fitness classes, mindfulness breaks, webinar on coping strategies). 💡 *High impact practice*			Offer virtual events that build community, develop resiliency skills, and reinforce healthy coping strategies like exercise and meditation. Survey faculty and staff about the topics and frequency of events that they would find most supportive. See samples from Cornell University and Ohio State University
Our institution offers virtual counseling services and support groups for faculty and staff who are struggling with mental health challenges such as anxiety, grief, and social isolation. 💡 *High impact practice*			See EAB's expert insight on technological solutions to improve access to mental health care during COVID-19. See a sample from Smith College offering recurring counseling zoom groups on grief and social isolation.
Our institution provides a comprehensive set of self-serve resources for faculty and staff to focus on mental wellness and self-care.			Provide faculty and staff with wellness and self-care tips, reputable support resources, and details on benefits available through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). See samples from EAB's expert insight, UC Berkeley and Ryerson University Also direct faculty and staff to free or low-cost mental health and wellness apps. If possible, cover subscription costs for paid apps. See samples from SUNY Geneseo and Smith College
Our institution posts mental health resources and tips on social media to improve accessibility and visibility of resources, and to encourage dialogue about mental health and wellness.			Incorporate mental health support resources and topics into your regular flow of social media posts about COVID-19. See samples from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Calgary
All faculty mental health and wellness resources are featured on, or linked to from, our COVID-19 webpage.			Prominently feature all mental health and wellness resources on your COVID-19 webpage so faculty and staff easily know where and how to access support. See samples from Emory University and the University of Louisville

Mental Health Support Audit and Resource Guide

Step 3: Adjust Administrative Policies to Ease the Impact of COVID-19

Assess Your Institution's **Tenure** Policy	Rating		Implementation Resources
	Y	**N**	
Our institution has granted an automatic one-year extension to the tenure clock of all tenure-track faculty, with participation on an opt-out basis.			See sample policies from MIT and the University of Iowa
At any time, all tenure-track faculty can reduce the tenure-clock extension (i.e., to only six months) or opt out of the extension completely.			See sample policies from Vanderbilt University and West Virginia University

Assess Your Institution's **Performance Evaluation** Policies	Rating		Implementation Resources
	Y	**N**	
Student course evaluations will not be punitively used against faculty but may be used to positively acknowledge added work being done while in remote instruction.			The COVID-19 crisis response spotlights long-standing concerns about bias and utility of student course evaluations. Consider revising or suspending evaluations this term—if evaluations are still used, leave it to the discretion of faculty whether to include them in performance reviews. See sample policies from the University of Louisville and Millersville University
Our institution has pushed back deadlines for the completion of performance reviews for faculty and staff.			See sample policies from The University of Tennessee-Chattanooga and Brown University
Our institution offers remote professional development opportunities to faculty and staff.			Provide centralized professional development to strengthen faculty and staff performance and increase engagement. See samples from Appalachian State University and Baylor University At minimum, focus limited time and resources on supporting the transition to remote instruction. See samples from the University of Miami and New York University

Assess Your Institution's **Flexible Schedule and Leave** Policies	Rating		Implementation Resources
	Y	**N**	
Our institution has enabled employees to implement flexible work schedules to support work-life balance.			See sample guidance and resources from EAB's Conversation Guide for Managers and Yale University
Our institution has granted additional paid administrative leave to accommodate extenuating circumstances relating to COVID-19.			See samples from the University of California System and the University of Nebraska System

Mental Health Support Audit and Resource Guide

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Assess Your Institution's Response to Hiring Changes	Rating		Implementation Resources
	Y	N	
Our institution has communicated any needed hiring freezes, outlining affected roles, and clarifying any impact on the workload, job security, or advancement opportunities for current employees.			Be sure to highlight how a temporary hiring freeze will safeguard your ability to support current students, faculty, and staff. See sample statements from Portland State University and Boston University

Assess Your Institution's Health Care Benefits	Rating		Implementation Resources
	Y	N	
Our institution has expanded access to our existing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to provide coverage to all employees and their families.			See sample policies from the University of Utah and Smith College
Our institution offers telehealth services to employees.			See sample policy from Texas A&M University and Denison University
Employees without enough accrued sick time may use unearned sick days to take care of themselves or family affected by COVID-19.			Institutions most often allow employees to use 14 unearned sick days. See sample policies from Harvard University and the University of Missouri System
Costs for COVID-19 testing and care are waived for employees at our institution.			See sample policy from Boston University and Vanderbilt University