Bend the Trend: Lower Healthcare Costs by Supporting Mental Health

Tuesday, May 12, 2026



The Alliance
Self-Funding Smart

1

Bend the Trend



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Workplace Stress



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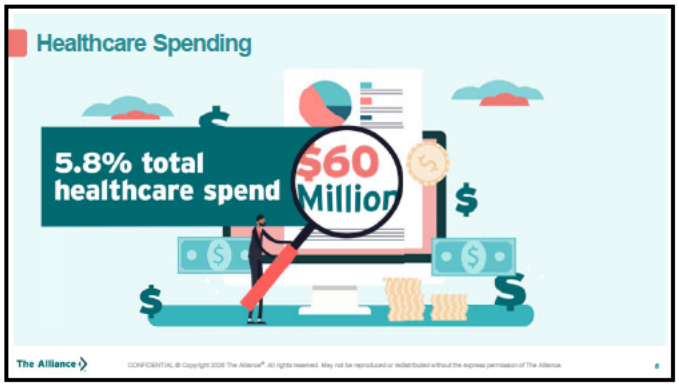
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Mental Health Resources
In-Person & Telehealth
Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
Wellness Support
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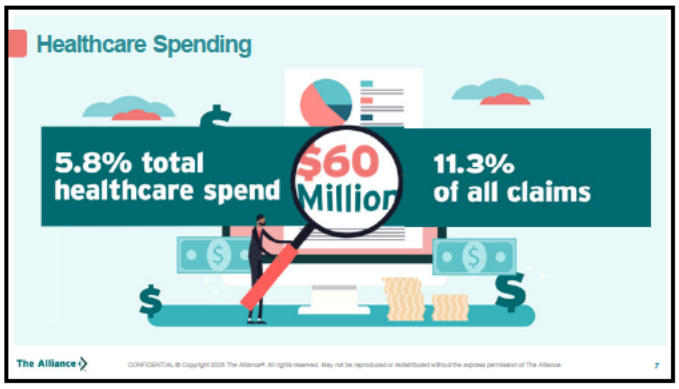
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Healthcare Spending
$60 Million
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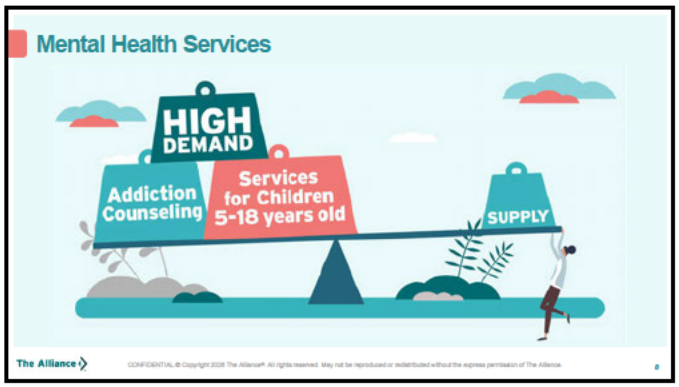
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Healthcare Spending
5.8% total healthcare spend
$60 Million
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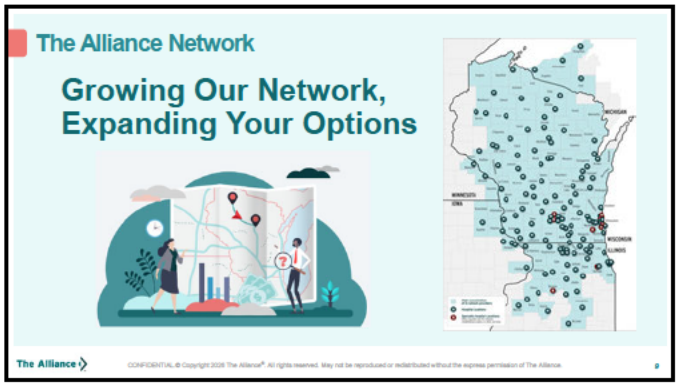
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Healthcare Spending
5.8% total healthcare spend
$60 Million
11.3% of all claims
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Mental Health Services
HIGH DEMAND
Addiction Counseling
Services for Children 5-18 years old
SUPPLY
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The Alliance Network
Growing Our Network, Expanding Your Options
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Workplace Benefits

Behavioral Health Support

- Employee Assistance Programs
- Flexible Work Schedules
- Wellness Stipends
- Mental Health Days



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Checkpoint

Poll

How confident are you that your organization effectively supports employee mental health?

A Very confident
B Somewhat confident
C Not sure
D We could use some improvement

CHECKPOINT

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Introduction

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Melanie Schoenemann
VP Business Growth & Member Strategy
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Agenda

1. Identify drivers of workplace stress
2. Implement strategies that reduce stress
3. Evaluate and communicate mental health resources



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MH IMAGING
WHEN YOU NEED TO KNOW
MRI • CT • X-RAY • ULTRASOUND

CheckUps



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Introduction

QUEST
Counseling & Consultation Center, LLC



Rich Derks
Co-Owner and Business Director
QUEST Counseling & Consultation Center

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Bend the Trend: Lower Healthcare Costs by Supporting Mental Health

Rich Derks
Co-Owner and Business Director

May 12, 2026

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How can I help others with their mental health if I am not a therapist?

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My Journey

		Workplace Stressors
1980's (Engineering)	Motorola Austin	• Corporate downsizing, factory automation • Movement of production to Japan • U.S. Postal Shootings begin
1990's, 2000's (General Management)	GRAINGER	• Cost cutting, downsizing, layoffs, 2008 recession • Movement of production to Mexico, Asia • Workplace shootings accelerate
2010's (Executive Leadership)	MEDLINE	• Aftermath of 2008 recession • Long hours and overworking • Unsupportive management
2020's (Mental Health)	JOHNSON QUEST	• Pandemic, remote work, AI emerging • ICE raids, Iran War, Neurodivergence increasing • Restrictions (LGBTQ, Abortion, Environment)

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My Learnings as a Manager

- The environment outside the workplace matters
- Personal mental health issues can significantly affect performance
- Majority of mental health issues caused by the workplace are controllable
- Keeping toxic managers in place can be a mistake when it comes to mental health
- "Stretch goals" can backfire
- Partnering with HR is critical
- Mental health is viewed differently by generations
- 2/3 times I ever saw a therapist was related to the workplace

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What Are the Numbers?

23% of employees will experience a significant mental health issue this year

Personal Drivers

- Personal financial stressors
- Life trauma
- Physical health
- Addictions
- Relationships
- Issues with children (neurodivergence increasing)
- Biological
- Political environment
- Psychological skill deficits

Workplace Drivers

- Of those with mental health issues, 61% cite mental health issues (burnout, depression, anxiety, stress) caused by or exacerbated by the workplace
- Caused by work overload, job insecurity, inadequate feedback or incentives, toxic environment, conflicts with coworkers or managers, AI concerns

Only 25% seek help.

- Stigma, lack of motivation, barriers to access (e.g., financial, knowledge, waiting lists)
- Mental health claims are only 6-7% of total healthcare expenditures
- Things are changing with the generations

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Generations are Changing

•Silent Generation **(1928–1945): "stiff upper lip" mentality**

•Baby Boomers **(1946–1964): Self-help books**; skeptical of meds, dual careers

•Gen X **(1965–1980):** highly stressed; caring for both kids and parents, **opening up to therapy**

•Millennials **(1981–1996):** experiencing **higher rates of depression**

•Gen Z **(1997–2010): Highest rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness; raised entirely with smartphones; social media pressures**

•Gen Alpha **(2010–mid 2020s):** Expected to be deeply influenced by the mental health struggles and digital-first upbringing of their Millennial parents.

Source: Behavioral Health News, 2025

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How Do We Improve Things?

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Objectives & Metrics

PWC Study: For every $1 spent on improving mental health, $2-$4 is returned

Example Metrics

- **Absenteeism**
- **Turnover**
- **Acceptance rate on job offers**
- **Productivity**
- **Revenue**
- **Physical and mental health insurance claims**
- **Movement in ratings on organizational surveys (e.g., awareness of EAP, attitude towards support)**

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Benchmarked Companies

- **Strong training orientation**
- **Driving off a needs analysis**
- **Prioritizing their initiatives**
- **Sustaining their efforts (vs flavor of month)**
- **Cross-functional involvement**
- **Senior leadership support**
- **Clear objectives and metrics**

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Identified Best Practices



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Compiled 100 Best Practices

	Self-Care Strategies
1	Think about what you specifically need in order to improve your mental health and make the improvements and/or discuss with your manager. Examples are: Time off to see a therapist? Time off from work to get a break? A more quiet place to work? A more flexible schedule? More regular check-ins with your manager? Time off the phones to focus on tasks?
2	**Ask your manager or HR what mental health support is offered.** EAP, health insurance for mental healthcare, workshops on stress management or mental well-being.
3	**Structure your day to fit your mental health condition.** Examples: for anxiety, set short-range targets during the day; for ADHD – ask someone for help in laying out a project schedule; for Bipolar disorder, as far a more consistent daily task schedule so your rhythm is not interrupted.
4	**Use mindfulness techniques to manage anxiety.** For example, focus on breathing in/out. Another technique is to have a routine that you do regularly (e.g., yoga or meditation). Exercise, hobbies, listening to music, etc. also help – all are self care methods. Choosing to be kinder and more compassionate with yourself is key.
5	**Share articles about mental health in the workplace with your manager**, as a means of educating them.
	Leadership Strategies
6	**Talk in a general and trauma-informed way about your own mental health challenges** helps reduce stigma (based on culture in your organization, decide how much detail is appropriate). For some organizations, it may be more appropriate to talk about past challenges, rather than current challenges.
7	**Show your employees you value self-care**: prioritizing family, going to sailing vacations, going to therapy if needed, working out regularly, getting enough sleep, limiting your work hours, not doing emails in off-hours.
8	**Hold mental health trainings** to help your employees learn coping skills, and to learn that your organization cares about their mental health. Also, communicate EAP services that include counseling.
9	**Open the door to discussions about mental health.** When you ask an employee's physical health or work activities, also open the door to talk about mental health (e.g., "I'm glad your back is feeling better. How are you doing overall? I know you have been dealing with a lot of stress lately.") This sends a signal you care, and opens the door in case they want to share.
10	**Take notice of employees who consistently work late or work through lunches.** Encourage these employees to seek a better balance, and get involved looking at workloads, if necessary, to help support them.

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Built an Improvement Process

Process Steps

1. Form Cross Functional Team → 2. Educate Team → 3. Identify Problems and Opportunities → 4. Review Best Practices → 5. Conduct Focus Groups and Surveys → 6. Decide Objectives and Actions → 7. Hold Monthly Meetings

Process Template (Excel or Google)
QuestMadison.com → Support → Workplace Mental Health

Process Benefits

- Focuses on continuous improvement
- Leverages knowledge within your organization
- Maintains a focus on mental health

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Improvement Process

Process Steps



Tips
- Limit to 5-8 members
- Lead team with strong facilitator
- Include HR Director or HR VP
- Establish initial list of objectives

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Improvement Process

Process Steps



Tips
- Watch selected YouTube videos
- Attend Mental Health First Aid Training
- Debrief and summarize learnings

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Improvement Process

Process Steps



Tips
- Solicit feedback from group
- Suspend evaluation of problem list and ideas list
- Leverage multi-voting to identify key improvement ideas

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Improvement Process

Process Steps



Tips
- Review list of best practices to identify more improvement ideas
- Combine idea lists
- Use multi-voting to arrive at best ideas

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Improvement Process

Process Steps



Tips
- Hold focus groups, soliciting more problem lists and ideas
- Refine and conduct organizational survey (include questions about new ideas)
- Allow for open-ended comments

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Improvement Process

Process Steps



Tips
- Review survey results and consider new ideas suggested
- Use multi-voting to narrow to best ideas
- Firm up objectives/measures and establish action plan (what, who, when)

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Improvement Process

Process Steps



Tips
- Follow a standing agenda:
  - Updates from each area representative
  - Review progress against objectives
  - Updates on each improvement action item

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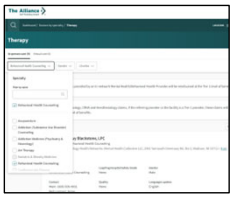
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Communicating Mental Health Resources and Benefits

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Communicating Benefit Information



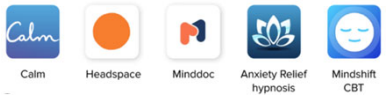
- Format (EAPs, outpatient, IOP's, inpatient)
- Specialties (Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Professional Counselors, Social Workers, Marriage & Family Therapists)
- Telehealth
- Waiting time
- Distance to travel
- Referral sources
- Terminology: Copays, deductibles

*Note: Some **therapy practices** will flag therapists on their sites who have openings, some provide access to therapist calendars; and some **HR Depts** create lists of the most promising providers*

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Popular Apps



- Mood tracking, meditation, cognitive behavioral therapy (avoiding stressful thoughts and focusing on goals/present), relaxation exercises
- Some evidence of effectiveness
- Can help coping skills while on waiting list for therapy

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Key Points

- Caring for employees' mental health is an investment, not an expense.
- You can reduce workplace stressors *inside* your organization, and you can create an environment that helps employees deal with the stressors *outside* your organization.
- Starting and maintaining a dialogue about mental health should be your #1 priority.

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For Assistance

- Setting up your cross-functional team
- Identifying problems and ideas
- Survey design
- Prioritizing actions
- Reviewing metrics
- Willing to sign NDA

Contact

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- Ph (608) 567-4465, Ext 102

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Takeaways

1. Workplace stress can impact employee mental health
2. Small workplace and benefit design changes can reduce stress
3. Clear communication helps employees use available support



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Bend the Trend Movement



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Checkpoint

Poll

What's one small action you will take before our next session?

- A Download the workbook Rich mentioned to get started
- B Improve communications about mental health resources
- C Not sure – I need help choosing the next step
- D Something else – tell us in the chat

CHECKPOINT

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Schedule a Meeting with Our Account Management Team
Mike Roche
Vice President, Business Development
Kristin Andro
Account Executive
Teresa Maas
Account Executive
Gretchen Shea
Account Executive
Victoria Faust
Account Executive
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We're Here to Help!



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