



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

May 18, 2022

Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

From: Kiran A. Ahuja
Director

Subject: Supporting the Mental Health and Well-Being of Federal Employees

Overview

During Mental Health Awareness Month this May, OPM is working with Federal agencies to ensure that Federal employees are aware of and know how to access the mental health benefits available to them. President Biden made clear in his State of the Union address in March 2022 that addressing the mental health crises in this country is a top priority, and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is committed to fostering a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for the Federal workforce. OPM urges agency leaders and managers to work together to cultivate work environments that keep the well-being of our workforce the highest priority. We want to make sure that all Federal employees understand the supports available to them and underscore that there should be no shame or stigma for taking care of their mental health.

Mental Health Benefits Available to Employees

In accordance with the President's Management Agenda (PMA), OPM is committed to promoting federal employee well-being, including, in particular, making employees "aware of available mental wellbeing support and services." (PMA Goal 2.3). As a reminder, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) health plans offer mental health services to employees and their family members. We encourage agencies to proactively communicate to their workforces about their options and to encourage employees to contact their agency Benefits Officers or EAP Coordinator to learn more. OPM is committed to collaborating with agencies and FEHB health plans to improve the ability of these programs to respond to employee needs.

We also encourage all agencies to remind employees about the various leave and workplace flexibilities available to them should they seek counseling and treatment related to their own mental health or that of a family member. It's important to note that a medical need is not limited to physical health – it applies to mental health as well, and there should be no shame or embarrassment for using workplace flexibilities for a mental health reason.

For an employee's own needs, they include [Sick Leave for Personal Medical Needs](#), [Family and Medical Leave](#), [Parental Bereavement Leave](#), leave under the [Voluntary Leave Bank Program](#) or [Voluntary Leave Transfer Program](#), [Annual Leave](#), [Advanced Sick Leave](#), [Advanced Annual Leave](#), [Leave without Pay](#), [Alternative Work Schedules](#), [Credit Hours under Flexible Work Schedules](#), [Compensatory Time off](#) and [Telework](#).

For care of an employee's family member who is pursuing treatment, they include [Sick Leave for Family Care and Bereavement](#), [Sick Leave to Care for a Family Member with a Serious Health Condition](#), [Family and Medical Leave](#), leave under the [Voluntary Leave Bank Program](#) or [Voluntary Leave Transfer Program](#), [Annual Leave](#), [Advanced Sick Leave](#), [Advanced Annual Leave](#), [Leave without Pay](#), [Alternative Work Schedules](#), [Credit Hours under Flexible Work Schedules](#), [Compensatory Time off](#) and [Telework](#).

Laying Out the Facts of Vetting

Agency human resource and personnel vetting offices (security, suitability, and credentialing) are important partners in dispelling the myth that seeking mental health treatment will disqualify applicants or employees from working for the government or passing a background check. Everyday individuals with mental health conditions carry out their duties without presenting a security risk. We encourage proactive management of mental health conditions to support the wellness and recovery of Federal employees and others.

Additional Information Available for Agencies and Employees

We also continue to provide policy guidance and technical assistance to agencies to support a focus on mental health, including:

- Information Pamphlets for Employees – Information and tips to assist employees or family members who may need mental health assistance.
- Tip Sheets for Employee Work-Life Support – Tips for supervisors and human resource practitioners to ensure that employees who need mental health assistance are supported and encouraged to utilize the Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).

OPM's Work-Life staff stands ready to support Federal agency efforts in the coming months. Visit us at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/worklife/>. If you have any questions, please contact worklife@opm.gov.

Cc: Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO)
Deputy CHCOs
HR Directors