

Find Out What Your Workers Need to Support Their Mental Health and Reduce Workplace Stress



Workers may be feeling an increase in stress that is negatively impacting their work and overall well-being. If left unchecked, increased stress over prolonged periods can lead to mental health challenges. Employers can help their staff manage stress by:

- Identifying what factors are making it harder for workers to get their jobs done and determining if adjustments can be made to lessen the burden.
- Determining whether staff need mental health support.

One way to get this information is to ask workers directly what challenges they are experiencing and what kind of support they need. Some employers may be able to gather this information through one-on-one conversations, but others may wish to distribute surveys that workers can answer anonymously. If surveys are distributed periodically, the information gleaned will help employers determine if their workers' needs and experiences are changing and if the services employers are offering are working.

Below are sample questions that employers may consider including in a survey. The use of open-ended questions and multiple-choice is recommended. However, employers may choose different formatting based on their workforce.

Note that section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, 29 U.S.C. § 660(c)(1), prohibits employers from, among other things, discriminating against an employee for raising safety concerns in the workplace. To the extent an employee may be experiencing such concerns, reminding them of these protections may encourage more forthcoming responses to these questions.

Distributing Surveys

The best approach for distributing surveys will differ based on an organization's size and current working conditions (i.e., remote versus onsite operations). Some options for consideration include:

- Printing out the survey, asking onsite workers to place their completed surveys in a secure "suggestion box," and letting them know they do not have to identify themselves.
- Loading questions into an online survey tool (some of which are free) that can be completed anonymously and sending the link to workers.
- Asking an employee assistance program to manage the survey responses.

Sample Questions

- On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), what was your average stress level at work over the past month? _____
- What worries you the most about your job? _____

- Has your stress level at work increased in the past month? Yes No

If **yes**, what factors have made it worse? _____

Note to employers: You may wish to keep this question open-ended. Alternatively, you could provide multiple options (and ask respondents to check all that apply) to gauge how prevalent certain stressors are in your workplace. Potential options include:

My workload increased because I now have to _____ .

I do not think we have enough protective measures in place at work. Here is what I think needs to improve: _____ .

My customers/clients/patients are confrontational.

I am afraid of getting into an argument with customers who refuse to follow safety protocols.

I am having more trouble juggling my personal obligations (e.g., childcare, elder care) than I did before.

I do not have all the tools or training I need to complete my work productively from home.

I am worried about job security.

I am afraid that my job performance has declined.

Other (please specify: _____ .)

- Does your supervisor talk about and look for ways to reduce workplace stress? Yes No
- Is there anything specific we (your managers and supervisors) could do to alleviate the stress you are feeling related to work? Yes No

If **yes**, please provide a detailed response to explain how we could make things better.

- How would you describe your work-life balance during the past month?

Great Satisfactory Bad Terrible No opinion

Is it better, worse, or the same as last year?

Better Worse Same No opinion

- Would you talk with coworkers or your supervisor (or an employee assistance program representative) about stress and mental health issues if you needed assistance? Yes No
- If **no**, what would hold you back? _____

- Did you know that [insert your organization's name here] has an employee assistance program (EAP)? Yes No. If **yes**:

- Do you know how to use the EAP if you need support with a problem or mental health issue? Yes No
- Do you know how to contact an EAP representative to talk? Yes No
- Are you interested in having access to mental health resources at work? This can include access to counseling, therapy, substance use prevention resources, etc. Yes No

If **yes**, please provide suggestions. _____

If **no**, why not? _____

Note to employers: You may wish to keep this question open-ended. Alternatively, you could provide multiple options (and ask respondents to check all that apply) to gauge your workers' interest in services that you are willing to consider. Potential options include:

- Meditation sessions Mindfulness classes Stress reduction workshops
 Yoga classes Exercise classes Other (please specify: _____)

- Do you think [insert your organization's name here] provides enough mental health resources? Yes No. If **no**, what suggestions do you have for improvement? _____
- Would you be interested in attending virtual social events to help you connect with your coworkers? Yes No. If **yes**, what sounds appealing (e.g., virtual book clubs, coffee breaks)?

- Please tell us if there is anything else you would like to share or any suggestions you would like to make about ways to manage workplace stress and support workers' mental health.
