

# Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention



## Building Blocks

### Accept the challenge.

“Be the change you want to see” (Ghandi).

### Begin the journey.

This is not about writing a policy or doing a “one and done” program. There is no single blueprint, so think of this guide as a roadmap with many roads leading to the same destination.

### Commit to action.

Adopt the mindset of “gentle pressure relentlessly applied”. This is a process of trial and error that will work through persistent implementation and continuous improvement.

### Develop a team.

Create a workable strategic action plan.

### Execute your plan.

Expand visible and vocal communications on project jobsites of addressing the emotional needs of workers and their families.

# The Why



Prior to the pandemic, the US construction workforce experienced high rates of mental health conditions, alcohol and substance misuse, overdoses and suicide.

- The pandemic worsened emotional stress, anxiety, and financial pressures on families in all industries.
- The risk of relapse of alcohol and other substances, especially opioids, has grown throughout the pandemic.
- Overdose deaths increased 28.5% nationally, surpassing 93k in 2020.
- Per data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the construction industry has the second highest rate of suicide among all major industries.
- The rate of suicide in construction is 3.5-4 times higher than the rate in the general US population.

# The How



Outline a series of strategies that will be relatively easy to implement in a relatively short timeframe.

- It takes time to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy and implementation plan for a rollout of a new initiative in a company.
- These steps will help companies get started with “small steps” as the organization secures top leadership support for a comprehensive initiative on mental health and suicide prevention awareness.
- These “quick starts” are intended to help “grease the skids” to prepare the organization to adopt a more comprehensive approach over time.
- Many of these strategies and solutions are intended to begin breaking down stigma associated with addressing tough topics like mental health and suicide prevention in construction workplaces and jobsites.

# Quick Start Guide

A guide for developing and implementing an effective suicide prevention strategy and action plan.

## 1. Galvanize top-down leadership support within your organization. Acknowledge there is an invisible crisis in construction and join the cause.

- Recognize the effects of the increased stress, anxiety, depression, grief, and financial pressures occurring during the pandemic.
- Demonstrate a caring culture to promote psychological safety among the entire workforce.
- Acknowledge with confidence and using reassuring language that it is ok to not be ok.
- Communicate with empathy that we recognize these are uncertain times and reinforce we’re in this together.

## 2. Understand the eligibility for the company’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP), as well as the services available, the frequency of the services, and the different methods of accessing these services. *Communicate the purpose of the EAP to company leaders with a summary of EAP services.*

- Who is eligible and when does eligibility start?
- What services are offered and how often can they be accessed?
- What methods can be used to access services (phone, email, text, virtual, app)?
- Most Employee Assistance Programs stipulate an agreed upon number of counseling sessions “per issue” available for eligible employees and dependents.

3. If your company is signatory to labor unions, determine if there is a Member Assistance Program (MAP) for union members as part of their health & welfare benefit program.

**Caution:** *It is important to work with your EAP/MAP provider to identify mental and behavioral health counselors who are in-network for the employee benefit program to minimize the potential disruption of someone having to start care over with new therapist.*

4. Include contact information and logos for your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and suicide prevention text lines in existing company publications, like newsletters or email updates.



5. Order (or create custom) wallet cards and hard hat stickers for mental health and suicide prevention. Distribute to all workers, subcontractors, and suppliers.



6. Upload information from #4 onto the organization's intranet for easier access by all employees.

The file of available online information can be expanded to include local mental health and social service organizations. Additional resources can be added to make this resource directory more robust over time.

7. Recognize the risk is real for relapse of alcohol and substances addiction for those in recovery AND for growing substance misuse. Identify local treatment and recovery resources and share with employees.



Free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

8. Establish Critical Incident Debriefing Support. Pre-planning is a key to being prepared to address the emotional needs of employees after a workplace incident.

- Evaluate your company's or local's Employee Assistance Program for timely access to trained clinicians to provide Critical Incident Response services.
- If the available EAP does not have critical incident debriefing services, contact your insurance advisor for assistance.

9. Display posters for mental health awareness and suicide prevention in the workplace and on jobsites.

<https://preventconstructionsuicide.com/Posters>

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Crisis Text Line
- SAMHSA National Helpline
- #BeThe1To campaign

10. Incorporate mental health awareness, suicide prevention and wellbeing into safety, health and wellness culture, programs, and practices.

- Daily Safety Huddles (during warm-up exercises)
- Pre-project and pre-season kick-off meetings
- Progress and Coordination meetings
- Toolbox Talks
- Companywide Safety Stand-Downs

11. Incorporating mental health awareness, suicide prevention and wellbeing into employment, employee benefits, workforce development and labor relations functions, programs, and practices.

- Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs
- New hire orientation and onboarding processes for new hires in both administrative and field positions.
- Annual Open Enrollment of employee benefits
- Last Chance Agreements

12. Consider training and offering high impact resources to managers and first-line supervisors to better understand mental health and substance misuse conditions:

- Check with your EAP about what they offer in training and resources.
- Review resources offered by the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) to share with managers and supervisors. Talk Saves Lives is an effective program.
- Reach out to [the National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#) which offers Mental Health First Aid courses.
- The [Center for Workplace Mental Health](#) offers Notice.Talk.Act® at Work, an online e-learning module for managers and supervisors.
- Check with community organizations like [National Alliance on Mental Illness or Mental Health America](#)
- QPR (Question-Persuade-Refer is suicide prevention “gatekeeper” training) is an excellent program.
- [LivingWorks](#) offers three tiers of training: START; safeTalk; and ASIST.

13. All construction stakeholders are encouraged to sign a STAND-up pledge form for the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention:

<https://preventconstructionsuicide.com>



## Needs Analysis & Implementation Tool

[https://preventconstructionsuicide.starchapter.com/images/downloads/ciasp\\_needs\\_analysis.pdf](https://preventconstructionsuicide.starchapter.com/images/downloads/ciasp_needs_analysis.pdf)



## Fact

More construction workers die by suicide than from all fatal occupational injuries.



## Contact:

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## For more information visit:

[csdz.com/service/worker-wellbeing-and-suicide-prevention/](https://csdz.com/service/worker-wellbeing-and-suicide-prevention/)

