



# Wellness Works

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Overview

The mental wellness of State of Missouri employees has undoubtedly been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this pandemic presents an **opportunity** for Missouri leaders to use the shared COVID-19 experience to create a stigma-free culture and normalize mental wellness discussions, thus improving State of Missouri employees' mental wellbeing.

### The Problem

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Missouri's depression prevalence was already 3% higher than the national average. To compound this, a June 2020 survey of Missouri state employees found that 70.8% reported increased emotional/mental stress due to COVID-19. Despite these statistics, 66.7% of survey respondents have never used the Strive Employee Life & Family (SELF) program and 92.7% have not used Anthem's Engage App, both of which offer free mental wellness resources. In considering these statistics, the following issues have been identified as factors inhibiting employees' mental wellbeing:

- There is a stigma associated with mental wellness issues and a perceived lack of support from management to prioritize employee mental wellness.
- Supervisors are not formally trained to discuss wellness issues with employees and provide resource guidance.
- The State of Missouri lacks a defined position responsible for coordinating wellness information and programs.
- Wellness information is not centrally accessible and easily identifiable.

### The Solution

Missouri's senior leaders can implement a few simple recommendations to improve the overall mental wellbeing of state employees.

- **Senior management can role model mental wellness** by destigmatizing the need for mental help. Opening up discussions about wellness issues and available programs can help remove the stigma associated with utilizing wellness programs. Departments can promote participation in the Department of Mental Health (DMH) Cares program.
- **Requiring and providing formal training for state supervisors** will improve the ability for supervisors to identify employees who may benefit from wellness programs offered by the state, as well as educate supervisors about how to appropriately refer employees to available wellness resources. The Leadership Development Rule can be revised to require wellness training within the first six months of becoming a supervisor. DMH's Mental Health First Aid and Stress First Aid training can be mandated for all supervisors. Employees can be provided and encouraged to use a learning path in MOlearning for mental health wellness resources. Supervisors can use ENGAGE meetings to connect and follow-up with employees about their mental wellness.
- **Creating a Statewide Wellness Coordinator position**, assigned to OA, Division of Personnel, will make improving employees' mental wellness a priority among all state departments consistently. This position would be responsible for creating a wellness strategic plan, distributing wellness information, maintaining wellness information on the Employee Self Service (ESS) portal, developing and promoting wellness training, and engaging the Wellness Ambassadors from each state agency.
- **Distributing wellness information** can improve the awareness and accessibility of existing programs to improve employees' mental wellbeing. Specifically, the ESS portal can be revised to include descriptions, as well as links, of available programs. Departments can use a standardized onboarding handout for available wellness programs. All supervisors can be provided MCHCP's "Toolkit for Managers and Supervisors."