

Wellness Leave

Supporting Employees' Mental Wellness

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Kristi Jacobson, Benefits & Wellness Manager

@wakegov

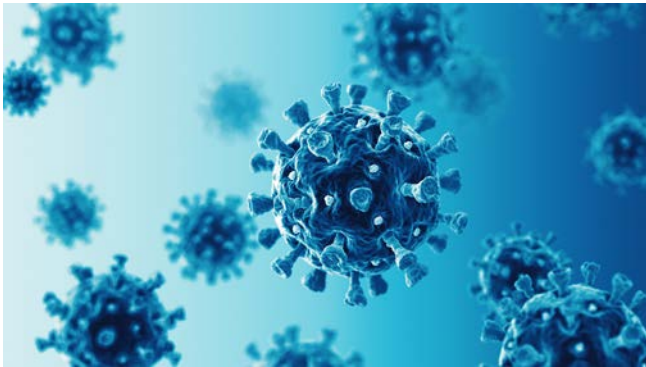


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Mental Health and Wellness

Mental Health and Wellness

Recent major changes to the health system, economy, and society have highlighted existing mental health issues and, in many cases, increased mental health and wellness issues.



Mental Health and Wellness

1 in 5 people live with a mental health condition

(The National Alliance on Mental Illness)

1 in 5

17 million adults in the US live with depression

(The National Alliance on Mental Illness)

17 million

1 in 4 active military members show signs of
mental health conditions

(Journal of the American Medical Association)

1 in 4

Mental Health and Wellness

Suicide was the tenth leading cause of death overall, and second leading for individuals between 10 and 34
(2019 CDC)

Suicide rates are growing among racial and ethnic minority communities
(University of Houston)

Among Wake County employees, there have been three suicides in the last four years

2nd

leading cause of
death in
10-34 yr. olds

Examples of Trauma Our Employees Face

- Homelessness
- Animal Cruelty
- Child Abuse
- Elderly Abuse
- Domestic Abuse
- Pandemic Warzone
- Trauma Scenes
- Suicide in Parks
- Coworker Deaths

Mental Health and Wellness

Failure to acknowledge an employees' mental health can hurt productivity, professional relationships and the bottom line

(Harvard Business Review)

**Supporting the mental health of our employees is
the responsible and right thing to do!**

Current Support Options and Data

Current Support Options and Data

Wake County's Health Plan

- Covers in-person care, telehealth, and online behavioral options
- In 2021, 33% of plan members had a behavioral health diagnosis – national average is 25%
- 687 provider visits at the Employee Health Centers for behavioral health concerns

33%

Of our plan members have behavior health diagnosis

Current Support Options and Data

Employee Assistance Program

- Free professional and confidential services designed to help employees meet a variety of life challenges
- Provided 510 hours of service in 2021

PTSD Services

- Access to on-site psychologist for both group and individual sessions
- In 2021, 518 hours of counseling was provided

A stylized, light blue map of Wake County is centered in the upper half of the slide. The map shows the county's irregular shape with various indentations and protrusions. The word "Recommendation" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the map.

Recommendation

Recommendation

Add Wellness Leave

Two full workdays per year for regular full-time employees

- Pro-rated based on FTE
- Unused days will not roll over to the next year
- Still requires supervisor approval to take time off
- Not paid out upon separation
- Cost neutral way to support employees' health and wellness
- Can be used for wellness, stress, anxiety, depression, mental health visits, etc.
- Can be used for immediate family members

How is this Different from Sick Leave?

Sick Leave

- Sick Leave can be seen as reactive to an existing event
- Does not always prioritize preventative care
- Documentation and/or disclosure can be required
- Must wait to accumulate Sick Leave to use
- Time taken impacts length of service calculations for retirement

How is this Different from Sick Leave?

Wellness Leave

- ❖ Encourages employees to focus on themselves to proactively address mental health
- ❖ Can be used to get support, relax, or unplug from stressors
- ❖ Demonstrates Wake County's commitment to employees' mental wellness
- ❖ Aims to increase workforce productivity by bringing focus to employees
- ❖ Another tool to help recruit and retain top talent in a competitive environment
- ❖ Supports existing options for mental wellness

Further Destigmatizing Getting Help

Employee Assistance Program

- Rebranded to reduce stigma and increase mental wellness support usage (myS.E.L.F.network)

Wellness Leave

- Another way to reduce stigma
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion focused by providing an alternative avenue to get help
- Provides time to begin or continue mental wellness support
- Opportunity to rejuvenate and recharge

Implementation

- Ask that Board of Commissioners approve the amendment to the Wake County Personnel Code of Ordinances for the establishment of Wellness Leave
- Effective January 1, 2023
- Communication to employees about new benefit to support their wellness