

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

AGENDA REQUEST

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Mark McCauley, County Administrator
Sarah Melancon, Human Resources Director

DATE: December 16, 2024

SUBJECT: Mental Health Awareness Guidelines & Policy Workshop

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

In February, 2024, the Board of Commissioners requested development of Mental Health Awareness Policy and Guidelines. This workshop is an opportunity to discuss the process of development, purpose and goals of the draft Mental Health Awareness Guidelines and Policy.

ANALYSIS:

Mental health awareness refers to the understanding, recognition and promotion of mental well-being and the acknowledgement of mental health issues – issues that impact our communities, our families and our workplace. It involves efforts to educate people about mental health, reduce stigma about mental illness and encourage individuals to seek help when needed.

Our goal is to normalize conversations regarding mental health awareness, reduce stigma, create an environment of empathy and support, outline resources available and provide guidelines to employees and leaders for supporting mental health in our workplace .

RECOMMENDATION:

An opportunity to discuss the Mental Health Awareness Guidelines and Policy.

REVIEWED BY:


Mark McCauley, County Administrator

12/12/24
Date



Jefferson County, WA POLICY

1820 Jefferson Street
P.O. Box 1220
Port Townsend, WA 98368
360-385-9100
www.co.jefferson.wa.us

POLICY TITLE: Mental Health Awareness Guidelines - DRAFT			
SUBJECT: Resources Provided to Support Employee Mental Health			
ORIGINATED DATE: 11/22/2024	REPLACES DATE:	EFFECTIVE DATE:	Page: 1 of: 3
CREATED BY: Mental Health Awareness Working Group		APPROVED BY:	

I. PURPOSE

The Purpose of this Policy is to support the mental health of Jefferson County employees by promoting mental health awareness, reducing stigma, and providing a supportive environment for those facing mental health challenges within our organization.

II. POLICY STATEMENT – COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

Jefferson County promotes the wellness of our employees. Employee wellness is a balance of many factors that includes an individual's personal life, social life, financial condition, and physical and mental health.

III. SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

Jefferson County strives to be an inclusive workplace committed to raising awareness of and supporting mental health through building relationships with our employees and:

a. Awareness & Education

The County encourages continued awareness and education through the following:

- Normalizing conversations around mental health awareness
- Providing access to training about mental health awareness
- Supporting training for employees who seek training in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)
- Supporting training for supervisors, managers and directors on communication, coaching and leadership best practices
- Sharing information regarding mental health support services
- Providing informational resources accessible to all employees

b. Mental Health Support

The County supports mental health by providing the following:

- **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** – a confidential and cost free benefit that may provide assistance and support for an employee's mental health. The EAP is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- **Access to Mental Health professionals** through health insurance plans
- **Personal Time Off (PTO), Sick Leave or Vacation** – Employees are able to take needed time away from work to attend to their mental health needs
- **Leave programs** such as Federal Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or State Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) – Qualifying employees may take leave of absence for mental health issues

c. Confidentiality and Privacy

- Employees seeking support or accommodation for mental health related issues will be treated with privacy and confidentiality in compliance with regulations
- EAP and referrals are completely confidential

d. Responsibilities

- All Staff – Contribute to a supportive workplace culture: seek assistance and support when needed, seek understanding of mental health awareness, participate in mental health awareness training and provide feedback about training experiences
- Senior Leadership – Provide support and resources for policy implementation
- Human Resources- Oversee policy implementation, provide training resources, coordinate accommodations for employees and coordinate on-site mental health response providers when necessary
- Managers and Supervisors – Support employees (for example, provide regular feedback and recognition, assess workload management, etc.), promote mental health awareness and facilitate access to resources
- Employees – Participate in training, seek support when needed, contribute to a supportive workplace culture, bring concerns about and suggestions for mental health awareness to Supervisor, Department Head or Human Resources

e. Resources

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – Confidential and free benefit to County employees, available 24/7: 800-777-4114, <https://www.fchn.com/Members/EAP>
- Discovery Behavioral Health – Free crisis services to all residents of East Jefferson County available walk-in 884 West Park Ave, Port Townsend from 8am - 5pm or crisis line available 24/7: 888-910-0416, using R.E.A.L. principles of Recovery, Empowerment, Advocacy and Linkage, <https://www.discoverybh.org/>
- Suicide and Crisis Lifeline- National Suicide Lifeline available for talk, text or chat: 988
- National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) Jefferson County- Local support groups to connect, share and get support and encouragement: 360-385-1716, namijeffcowa.org.
- Believe in Recovery- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services: 360-385-1258, <https://believeinrecoveryllc.com/>
- Crisis Textline available for text (741741) <https://www.crisistextline.org/>
- Crisis Connections peer support help line for people living with emotional and mental health challenges: 877-500-WARM (9276) <https://www.crisisconnections.org/wa-warm-line/>

IV. REPORTING MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Employees:

If an employee has concerns about their own mental health

- Contact your supervisor or department director. If you are uncomfortable contacting a department director, contact human resources.
- Reach out to co-workers, friends or family
- Contact medical provider
- Contact EAP
- Contact Jefferson Behavioral Health
- Contact Suicide Hotline

If an employee has concerns about the mental health of another employee

- Contact your supervisor, department head or human resources.
- If an employee prefers to remain anonymous, they may send a note through interoffice mail.

Managers:

If a manager has concerns about an employee who may be facing a mental health issue, or if approached by an employee about a mental health issue

- Talk with the employee if they feel comfortable
- Encourage employee to seek mental health assistance
- Provide resources to employee including
 - Contact information for the EAP
 - Jefferson Behavioral Health
 - 988- Call, Text, Chat SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE National Suicide Hotline
 - National Alliance of Mental Illness NAMI
- Offer opportunity to employee to take time off using their own accrued leave
- Offer ability to take extended leave
- Communicate with employee to check on and support their well-being
- Take training in Mental Health Awareness
- Check in with Human Resources

V. RESPONDING TO TRAUMATIC EVENT IN THE WORKPLACE

In a situation where employees in a work group or department are impacted by a traumatic event in the workplace, Department Leaders and Human Resources will:

- Inform employees of the Employee Assistance Program and other resources for emotional and mental health support
- Contract with a mental health professional to provide on-site emotional and mental health support to employees immediately and in the longer term, if necessary

VI. REFERENCES

- FMLA – Family and Medical Leave Act, federal law that entitles eligible employees to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons, with continuation of benefits
- PFML- Paid Family and Medical Leave – state regulation that provides eligible employee up to 12 weeks off for employee illness or for employee to care for a family member
- HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, 1996, federal law that protects the privacy and security of health information