



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

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The Role of HR and Employment Law in Workplace Suicide Prevention
New Report Addresses Concerns and Provides Recommendations

DENVER (September 6, 2022)– The workplace is arguably the most cross-cutting system to reach people at risk for suicide, and yet few workplaces, unions, and professional associations are tackling this life-threatening issue head-on. Today, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and United Suicide Survivors International launch a collaborative white paper that acknowledges the challenges employers face and offers actionable recommendations. It is titled, [“Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention in the Workplace - Policy and Response Recommendations to Help Employers Positively Impact Workers and the Work Environment.”](#)

According to the CDC, the majority of people who die by suicide are of working age (18–64), and many are men in their middle years who have never accessed any mental health services. While workplaces have undertaken other public health issues like heart disease, obesity, and cancer, addressing potentially lethal emotional health issues like overdose, suicide, and the consequences of addiction tends to evoke fear in workplace leaders—most notably, HR professionals and employment lawyers.

The goal of the report is to help employers recognize and navigate the complex issues of how best to support employees living with mental health conditions and suicidal intensity and to understand the policy and legal precedent surrounding best practices for prevention, intervention, crisis response, and postvention. Sample procedure tips, case studies, and manager approaches are offered throughout the report to help employers make the best decisions to support employees experiencing mental health emergencies.

“As a former employment law judge, I saw firsthand that fear of legal exposure drives human resources and legal staff to make bad decisions when an employee is struggling,” says Judge (Ret.) Mary McClatchey. “This report will guide employers to provide legally sound support and accommodations for valued employees who need it while improving retention and workplace culture. This is an extremely important resource that I hope will be circulated widely in HR and legal circles.”

“Suicide is a leading cause of death among working-aged adults in the United States, and workplaces are well-positioned to address this public health issue. While many workplaces have started to build robust mental health and suicide prevention efforts, some remain resistant, often due to fear or concerns for addressing mental health and suicide in the work setting,” says Maggie Mortali, vice president of programs and workplace initiatives at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. “This report helps to alleviate such concerns and furthers efforts to support suicide prevention in the workplace.”

The report is written by practitioners and researchers who represent subject matter expertise from three different perspectives: legal, human resources, and mental health. Common fears addressed include:

- “If the employee makes a disclosure of a mental health condition and requests an accommodation, it will become a time-consuming, burdensome process.”
- “If we reach out to a struggling employee, we’ll trigger an ADA or FMLA claim.”
- “What if the employee is performing poorly and we need to impose disciplinary action—will this violate the ADA?”

“The statistics speak for themselves,” says Sejal Thakker, J.D., chief civility officer for TrainXtra and chief culture officer for Nobody Studios. “Our current approach to suicide prevention simply is not working. We need to rethink suicide prevention and change the conversation. As an employment law attorney who has spent a majority of my career representing management and employers, I feel confident that this report will help equip employers to positively impact workers and their work environments.”

“As an HR leader, I am both a champion and advocate for happy and healthy workplaces,” says LeiLani Quiray, founder and CEO of Be The Change HR. “Mental health issues are not just something that happen at home. Suffering from situations and illnesses that result in suicide can be prevented, and the way we can do that as leaders is education and training in the workplace. I know, as a suicide survivor myself, this outreach and mission will save lives. Join us in promoting better mental health and elongating lives in the workplace and beyond.”

The report is part of the [National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention](#) whose mission is to change the culture of workplaces to reduce job strain and negative, fear-based, prejudicial, and discriminatory thoughts, behaviors, and systems regarding suicide and mental health while—at the same time—promoting psychologically healthy norms and environments. The Guidelines set forth a bold vision where workplaces and professional associations join in the global effort to aspire to zero suicides by sustaining a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy as part of their health and safety priorities.

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health or suicidal despair, call or text 988, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or text HOME to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

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About American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (501(c)(3))

[The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide, including those who have experienced a [loss](#). AFSP creates a culture that's smart about mental health through public education and community programs, develops suicide prevention through research and advocacy, and provides support for those affected by suicide. Led by CEO Robert Gebbia and headquartered in New York, with an Advocacy office in Washington, DC, AFSP has local chapters in all 50 states including Puerto Rico, with programs and events nationwide. Learn more about AFSP in its latest [Annual Report](#), and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following AFSP on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

About United Suicide Survivors International, Inc. (501(c)(3))

[United Suicide Survivors International](#) (US), founded 2016, is an independent international membership organization that serves as a home for people who have experienced suicide loss, suicide attempts, and suicidal thoughts and feelings, as well as their friends and families—collectively known as people with lived experience with suicide—where they can leverage their expertise for large-scale change. We envision a world where lived expertise becomes the fulcrum that leverages all suicide prevention efforts. We put the lived expertise of suicide attempt and loss survivors into action through leadership, collaboration, and advocacy. www.UniteSurvivors.org. Follow US on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).