

North Mississippi Health Services Case Study


At a glance

In less than 1 year, North Mississippi Health Services shifted from a fragmented workforce mental health approach to having a comprehensive strategy, launching a communications toolkit, and conducting training.

"We were very intentional when building our strategy to ensure our efforts wove this work into the culture of who we are. This is not a 'one and done, initiative of the month' effort for us."

Sondra Davis
Chief Human Resources Officer
North Mississippi Health Services



 Healthcare services

 7,200 workers

 <https://www.nmhs.net/>

Challenge

It's no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on an already fragile healthcare workforce. The North Mississippi Health Services (NMHS) Executive Leadership Team was acutely concerned about the mental well-being of their workers, and knew they needed to do something but were not sure where to start.

Response

Based on their Mental Health at Work Index results, NMHS prioritized building a comprehensive mental health strategy, moving beyond just tactics and benefits.



Mental Health Strategy



Communications



Mental Health Training

Key Success Factors

1

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP DEDICATION

"We had executive leadership buy-in from the start. Keeping them dedicated and engaged in this work was key. Change does not happen overnight, and we wanted a steady drumbeat."

2

EMPLOYEE DATA INFORMING ACTION

"Employee survey and other feedback data was a key driver in our strategic framework. We wanted to build a strategy that authentically represented what matters most to employees."

3

EARLY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE INDEX

"Do not think you need to wait to take the Mental Health at Work Index assessment until your plan is in place. Our results guided our efforts and created focus in an overwhelming space."

What's Next



BUILDING UPON THE INITIAL SUCCESS

NMHS plans to expand (1) their Mental Health Steering Committee to include frontline staff representation, (2) the mental health training beyond leaders, and (3) their communication efforts to create a consistent cadence.

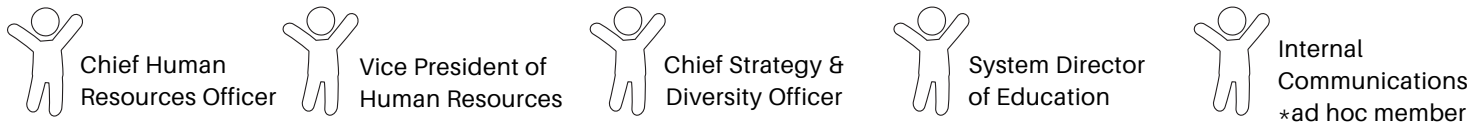
Building a Mental Health Strategy

The Goal: Embed mental health in the culture

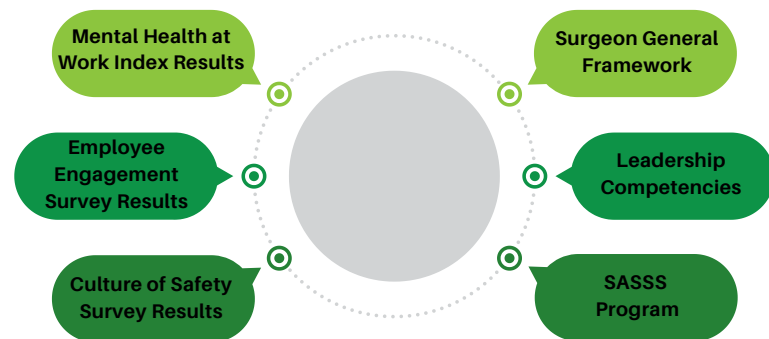
The Shift from Tactics to a Comprehensive Approach



Previous attempts to improve worker mental health at North Mississippi Health Services (NMHS) were centered around tactics, such as enhancing benefits, that were not tied to a larger, comprehensive approach. The Executive Leadership Team was highly supportive of the development of a mental health strategy. To build their strategy, the Chief Human Resources Officer formed a multidisciplinary team. Monthly and sometimes bi-weekly, this team reviewed a variety of information and resources, identified the opportunities to be prioritized, and presented the strategy to the Executive Leadership Team for awareness and to recruit them as ambassadors. The strategy was also presented to the Board of Directors.



The Inputs



Standout "What's your hassle factor?"

The SASSs Program, an approach coined and initiated by NMHS' President and CEO gives employees the space to identify barriers and challenges that complicate their job. Real work designs have occurred as a result. This process provides a foundation for continual improvement.

Simplify. Automate. Scale. Sustain. Support.

The Components



The Framework was transparently shared with NMHS leadership, accompanied by monthly directives from our CEO to guide team priorities. The team created a visual representation that aligns their strategy with cultural values and leadership competencies for all employees.

The Toolkit included clear responsibilities and practical tips for each topic, with accountabilities for both senior and frontline leaders; empowering leaders at all levels.

What's Next



Including frontline staff representation on the steering committee and adding metrics to monitor and track performance.



Adapted from the U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being.

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Mental Health Training

North Mississippi Health Services (NMHS) partnered with Mississippi State University to deliver Mental Health Awareness & Response Training (MHart) via a grant received by the University

- Worked with the university to adapt their Mental Health Training for First Responders
- Agreed to start with leaders and for the training to be voluntary rather than mandatory
- University trainers conduct the training onsite at NMHS
- Initial sessions were well received, reaching max capacity with very positive feedback
- Currently rolling out second phase of sessions

Standout

The CEO of NMHS completed the training. Talk about modeling positive behavior!

Key Training Metrics

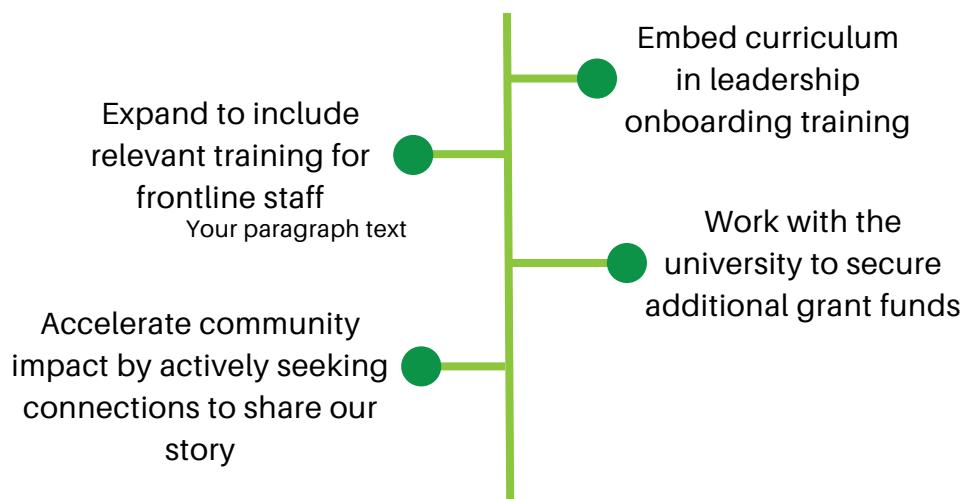
- 175+ leaders completed 3-hour MHart training
- 300+ leaders and front-line staff completed 1-hour EAP mental health training

Relevant Content

Trainings are designed to be relevant to healthcare providers. For example, it addresses repeated exposure to trauma in their roles.

The team developed a Social Determinants of Health segment in New Employee Orientation, connecting mental health and well-being broadly to the NMHS mission.

What's Next



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Communications ✓

To advance their mental health strategy, North Mississippi Health Services (NMHS) developed a **Conversation Toolkit** for leaders. This was especially important given the level of stigma around mental health in their community.

- The Toolkit explained the **why**, the **framework**, & the **how**
- Monthly communications from CEO to leaders focused on a well-being topic, such as community (example below), connecting passion with purpose, work-life balance, and trust.
- The team prioritized dialogue over a flashy campaign, starting with strong leadership and resources for team engagement.
- To prompt connection, these messages included key questions for leaders to ask their teams as well as tips for leaders.
- Both the framework and communications plan were derived from employee feedback and NMHS' employee value proposition: What Connects Us.
- Use of the toolkit was not mandatory, but did have impact. Leaders gained insight as to how their teams were doing and it built momentum across the organization.

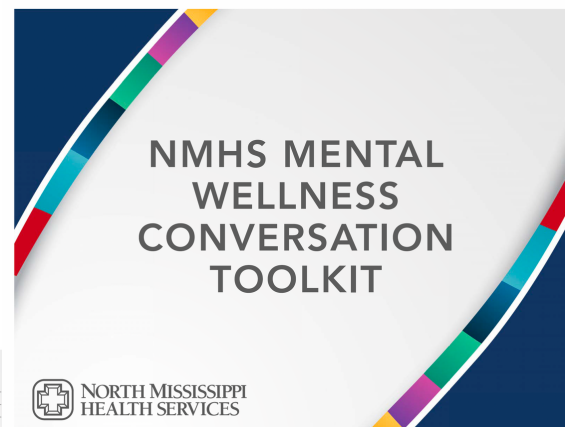


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Key Success Factor ✓

NMHS aimed to integrate the Framework into its organizational identity by carefully choosing how to share information. Before implementing impactful tactics, they wanted to normalize discussions on mental and whole-person wellness.

"We remain committed to continuing our work on mental well-being as a part of our employee experience. We do not want to move on and miss the opportunity to weave this practice into who we are."

Sondra Davis
 Chief Human Resources Officer
 North Mississippi Health Services

