

5 Mental Health Trends for Employers in 2026

Employees are navigating economic uncertainty, workplace change driven by artificial intelligence, rising healthcare costs and years of accumulated stress. For employers, the moment calls for rethinking how mental health support fits into the employee experience. Here are five trends to watch:

01



AI-powered mental health support goes mainstream.

Purpose-built platforms like Spring Health, Lyra Health and Modern Health now deliver personalized screenings, care navigation and 24/7 coaching. At the same time, concerningly, employees are increasingly turning to general-purpose AI chatbots for mental health support, which are not designed for mental health support and carry significant risks. Mental health organizations have called for federal safeguards to address these concerns.

02



Employees expect more from employers.

Mental health benefits are now a deciding factor in where people choose to work, yet many employees still don't know what's available to them. Closing that awareness gap through visible leadership, benefits communication, manager training and easy-to-find resources is becoming a real differentiator for retention.

03



Overcoming burnout remains a critical priority.

Burnout has reached its highest level in six years, and it's showing up in new forms, including "quiet burnout," where employees stay present but disengage from purpose and connection. The organizations making progress are addressing workload and autonomy directly by setting after-hours boundaries, building recovery time into projects and training managers to catch early warning signs.

04



Financial stress is a mental health issue.

Financial well-being is a core driver of employee mental health, engagement and workplace culture. With medical cost trends continuing to climb significantly, employers are well-equipped to help employees through programs such as financial coaching, emergency savings programs and employee assistance programs with built-in financial counseling.

05



Mental health-related leave is rising.

Leaves of absence for mental health are no longer rare exceptions. The priority now is keeping employees connected to care while they're out and ensuring a gradual, supported return.

Sources: American Psychological Association, Spring Health

LOOKING AHEAD

Mental health is now a core driver of workforce performance, retention and organizational resilience. The employers who move from reactive, checkbox wellness to proactive, integrated strategies will be better positioned over time.