



SUPERVISOR GUIDE

We spend more time at work than we do with our family and friends. As a supervisor, you are in a unique position to help your crew members protect their physical and mental health. You may notice concerning changes in behavior that others may not see and you because of your position on the worksite, you can create a culture that supports your crew's health.

Like any project you're starting, it's important to have the right tools in your toolbox. This guide provides information on how to:

1. recognize the signs of mental health issues or substance use
2. start a conversation about your concerns
3. reduce stigma surrounding mental health and addiction
4. help guide workers to the support they need

Remember - it's important to be proactive and intervene before someone is in crisis.

If you see someone overwhelmed and stressed, its time to step in.

1. Know the Signs

People can show signs mental health distress or substance abuse in both visible and subtle ways. Below are some common signs to look out for:

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION	SIGNS OF ANXIETY	SUBSTANCE USE
Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed; feel worthless	Uncontrollable and excessive worry	Problems at home or work
Significant weight loss or gain due to change in appetite	Muscle pain, tightness, soreness	Physical health issues
Headaches and muscle pains	Difficulty sleeping	Changes in behavior
Insomnia or sleeping too much	Upset stomach	Money issues
Unable to concentrate or make decisions	Increased heart rate, tight chest	Unwillingness to stop using
Fatigue	Avoidance	
Recurring thoughts of death or suicide	Compulsive behavior	

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS AT WORK	
Not concentrating and performing work duties	Lower than usual work standards
Not meeting deadlines	Less engaged than usual
Attention to detail is less than usual	Anti-social or withdrawn from colleagues, customers, and clients
Not paying expenses, employee wages, and service providers on time or not at all	

People often show signs of suicidal thoughts in subtle ways.

Some comments or threats could sound like “just talk,” but they can become dangerous quickly and it’s important to step in if you see these warning signs:

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDAL THOUGHTS	IMMINENT SIGNS OF SUICIDE
Anxiety or agitation	Feeling desperate
Changes in habits	Tying up loose ends
Withdrawal	Saying goodbye
Feel like a burden	Sudden mood changes
Reckless behavior	Talking about suicide or wanting to die
Depression	Seeking access to tools to complete the act of suicide
Increased alcohol or drug use	
Aggressive behavior or uncontrolled anger	

If you see imminent signs of suicide in a crew member, it’s important to get help right away.

Make sure your crew member is in a safe location, away from any means to complete the act of suicide, and call 911 or the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

2. Start the Conversation

If you have noticed signs of distress or substance abuse in a crew member, it’s time to start a conversation to offer support and direct them to resources they may need. You may feel uncomfortable, but remember as their supervisor you may be the only one who noticed the change in behavior and can have a significant impact on their life.

1. Prepare	• Gather available resources. • Practice what you are going to say so you feel comfortable – use non-judgmental language and be direct. Mention what made you concerned so it doesn’t feel like you are asking “out of the blue.” • Plan for a time when you can speak in private and not be rushed.
2. Listen	• Listen the worker and validate their feelings, let the person know you are genuinely concerned, and that you take their situation seriously. • If they are in imminent danger, create a safety plan together to keep them safe until they receive help. Get a verbal commitment that the person will not act upon thoughts of suicide until they have met with a professional.
3. Help them connect	• Provide the resources you have come prepared with. • Give them a “warm hand off” to someone who can help. Help them call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or connect them with a mental health professional. Stay connected • If you feel the situation is critical, take the person to a nearby Emergency Room or call 911.

3. Reduce the Stigma

Mental health is often seen as a taboo subject. There are concrete ways that you can help reduce the stigma in the workplace associated with mental health:

WHAT YOU CAN DO	HOW DOES THIS HELP?
Increase your own knowledge about mental health and be aware of the supports available	Allows you to provide the best support you can
Educate your staff about mental health in the workplace	Helps give your staff the skills and confidence to approach someone that may need help
Talk openly about mental health at work and encourage others to do the same	Creates an environment where people feel comfortable opening up
Provide support to any team member who is struggling with their mental health	Can mean the difference between staying in the workforce and leaving their job - which puts further strain on the worker, and the worksite
Encourage respectful behavior and communication by team members	Sets the expectation up front that you will not accept bullying behavior
Work with your team to develop a plan to make a more mentally healthy workplace	Pulls the group together to work towards a common goal

Adapted from headsup.org

4. Be a Guide

There are many places where someone struggling can find support. Familiarize yourself with your employer's resources and the local and national organizations below:

MENTAL HEALTH	SUBSTANCE ABUSE
MO Statewide 24-Hour Crisis Line: dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/aci-hotline-numbers [Phone number dependent on region]	Missouri Recovery Network - 573-634-1029
United Way of Greater St. Louis Referral and Info Hotline - 211	Alcohol & Drug Helpline - 1-800-821-4357
American Mental Health Alliance (AMHA) Therapist Locator: therapists.americanmentalhealth.com/therapistlocator.page	SAMHSA's National Helpline (Treatment Referral Routing Service) - 1-800-662-4357
National Suicide Hotline - 1-800-273-8255	
Veteran Crisis Hotline - 1-800-277-8255 and Press 1	