

Mental health and well-being programs are becoming more integrated with DEIB efforts, with significant focus on increasing cultural competency, access and utilization.

After several years of increasing investment in mental health and well-being benefits during the pandemic, employers are focused on understanding what is working and maximizing utilization. To identify gaps or barriers to access, they are trying to understand employee identities, life stages, and behavioral health needs at a more granular level using many sources of information, including employee listening and self-ID campaigns, claims analysis, and health assessments. In fact, [78% of employers are taking action to improve health equity](#), according to Mercer’s Health & Benefit Strategies for 2024 survey report.

There is a growing recognition that mental health issues vary widely by identity and cultural background, including how people interpret symptoms and how or if they seek care. For example, in [one study of Asian Americans](#) only 12 percent would mention their mental health problems to a friend or relative (versus 25 percent of whites) and only 4 percent would seek help from a psychiatrist or specialist (versus 26 percent of whites). To address these differences, employers are demanding diverse, culturally responsive provider networks and “white glove” treatment from EAPs and other vendors to match employees with the right type of care. According to Mercer, employers consider [adding supplemental networks for virtual or in-person care and enhancing/expanding their EAP](#) to be the most effective actions they have taken to increase behavioral healthcare utilization.

Among our BCCWF members, many coordinate well-being and DEIB efforts by leveraging resources like social workers, ERGs, and Mental Health First Aid training to reduce stigma and deliver more tailored programming for key populations like veterans, first generation employees, and neurodiverse employees and their families. From stepped up communication campaigns, to removing co-pays, to extending benefits to dependents, employers are aiming to create more affordable and equitable benefits.

Effectiveness of actions taken to increase behavioral healthcare utilization or create a more supportive environment	Have taken this action within past 3 years	Has been effective or very effective
1 Added supplemental network for virtual or in-person care	42%	69%
2 Enhanced or expanded EAP	69%	59%
3 Took steps to increase screenings for mental health and/or substance abuse	19%	58%
4 Implemented manager training in recognizing BH issues and steering to resources	36%	49%
5 Conducted campaign to reduce stigma and encourage use of BH resources	49%	46%
6 Added digital or in-person resources for managing stress/building resiliency	58%	44%