

Caring for Those Who Care for Us:

Envision Healthcare's Commitment to Professional Well-Being in Medicine

Envision Healthcare is a national medical group providing high-quality care across the country when and where it is needed most. As a group of more than 25,000 clinicians, caring for more than 32 million patients annually, a core tenet of our mission is caring for our teams and ensuring the professional health and well-being of our teammates. By developing emotionally intelligent leaders, advocating for a regulatory environment that eliminates the stigma of mental healthcare and focusing on personal mental health during high-stress events, we believe we can foster an environment that supports our clinicians' professional well-being and health. With the continuous evolution of healthcare, we must create a sustainable, holistic system of support that meets the evolving needs of our clinicians. Just as clinicians support us through some of our most difficult times, we at Envision are supporting clinicians with the resources they need to thrive professionally and personally.

Why Is Professional Well-Being Important?

Clinicians have experienced an alarming rate of burnout during the past decade – even before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. According to a 2019 report released by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, more than 50 percent of clinicians experienced symptoms of burnout. The report defined burnout as “high emotional exhaustion, high depersonalization... and a low sense of personal accomplishment from work.” The problem of burnout extends beyond the clinician, however, resulting in serious, far-reaching consequences that can impact patients: reduced job performance, high turnover rates and, in the most extreme cases, medical errors, clinician self-harm and even death from suicide. The [2020 Medscape Physician Lifestyle & Happiness Report](#) surveyed more than 15,000 clinicians across 29 specialties. Of those surveyed, 16 percent reported being depressed and, of those, nearly a quarter have considered suicide.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem, transforming professional and private lives. Typical work-related stressors are worsened by a lack of personal protective equipment, forced isolation from loved ones and an overwhelming feeling of helplessness when patient loads surge to or beyond hospital capacity. The pandemic has burdened an already overstressed healthcare system, and even clinicians who were previously thriving are feeling the strain. Too many clinicians suffer in silence, unsure of how to ask for help and afraid of the consequences of seeking mental healthcare even in the face of a global pandemic.

Throughout the years, our clinicians and hospital partners have expressed an overwhelming interest in learning about the resources that can help improve their wellness and receiving the needed support to ensure an environment that fosters professional well-being.

What Is Professional Well-Being?

The National Academy of Medicine's [consensus statement](#) on professional well-being outlines a wide-ranging approach to foster professional well-being among clinicians. Envision uses this statement to guide its professional well-being plan and commitment to clinicians. We acknowledge the various factors that affect professional well-being, including workplace culture, healthcare policies and regulations and societal expectations. By addressing these areas, we can support clinicians, improve their work environment and, in turn, support patients and the collective health of the nation.

The Five Drivers of Professional Well-Being

Because of the importance of improving professional well-being and mitigating burnout, we are committed to the following objectives, based on the Mayo Clinic's [drivers of well-being](#):

- Prevent clinician fatigue and disengagement
- Foster professional well-being among our clinicians

Envision takes a systems-based approach to professional well-being that includes a focus on work environment, regulatory environment, personal wellness and policies and programs that create a supportive, safe environment. Professional well-being cannot be achieved without understanding the role each of these pieces plays in clinicians' day-to-day lives.

1. Ensuring a psychologically safe, supportive environment for clinicians

Medicine traditionally has promoted a culture of competition and perfectionism, which creates barriers for clinicians to reach out for help or admit they are struggling. Clinicians thrive in an organizational culture that encourages open dialogue and discussion of stressors as a key coping strategy. In today's healthcare environment, clinicians face unprecedented financial, legal, physical and emotional strain. Although personal preventive strategies and coping mechanisms can be helpful to clinicians, they do not comprise a comprehensive wellness strategy. An effective supportive environment requires a psychologically safe and comfortable peer environment. When clinicians engage with other clinicians during times of stress, there is a higher likelihood of positive responses and the ability to effectively direct additional resources to struggling peers. To accomplish these goals, Envision created a number of programs to address the psychological and emotional needs of its clinicians.

Peer-to-Peer Outreach

In this program, select clinicians are trained to provide preventive and responsive resources to clinicians or clinical teams who have experienced high-risk professional situations, such as malpractice litigation exposure or psychology trauma associated with a challenging patient care event. To address these concerns, we have created two areas of focus: **peer litigation support** and **peer-facilitated debriefs**.

■ Peer Litigation Support

According to the [Charles Report](#), more than 50 percent of active physicians have been the target of malpractice litigation and, of those, 25 percent report it is the most stressful time in their life. Most clinicians have never been trained on the intellectual, emotional or physical effects of malpractice litigation and are provided few resources to help them cope during a lawsuit, which can last up to three years. Clinicians can better cope with the litigation process by understanding the normal emotional and intellectual responses that come with it. When a clinician enters the litigation process, they are paired with a trained peer supporter who is available throughout the litigation process and can offer resources, such as additional counseling or personal wellness practices.

■ Peer-facilitated Debriefs

Not all stressful events in a clinician's practice result in litigation. However, unexpected patient outcomes, mass casualty events and traumatic patient encounters can lead to "second victim syndrome," in which the clinician or the healthcare team faces mental health risks. When our clinician leaders identify a potentially stressful event, trained local peer supporters are dispatched to provide important resources as well as emotional and psychological support. For many of our clinicians and their teams, a quick touch-base and knowing someone is there to talk to are enough. For some people, a few meetings may be desired, and others may benefit from referral to further counseling resources. Additionally, our peer-to-peer leaders facilitate group meetings designed to enable participants to share what has been hard for them lately, what is helping them cope and what they find inspiring in their work. These meetings help destigmatize discussing challenges at work, reduce isolation and can inspire participants to try new coping mechanisms.

Intensive Professional Coaching and Intervention

At Envision, we train select clinicians to become peer coaches who engage with leader- or hospital-referred clinicians for a 6-month engagement. Clinicians are referred to coaching by their manager when they have been identified as needing help with communication skills, team leadership or personal well-being. Desired outcomes include identifying psychological triggers, improving communication skills, honing coping skills and re-engaging clinicians in their careers. Since the start of the program, for every two clinicians coached, Envision has prevented turnover costs totaling more than \$5.5

million. Additionally, 80 percent of clinicians who have completed the program stated they would recommend the program to a colleague, while 96.5 percent of referring managers state they are “satisfied” or “highly satisfied” with the program.

“One of our physicians was a part of the intensive professional coaching and intervention program. After the program, she felt like she was treated with dignity through the process and given every chance to be successful and ended up leaving on good terms. Can’t think of a better testament to culture that the coaching program is driving and facilitating.” – Matt Bush, MD

Peer Onboarding and Feedback

Starting a new career or role in a hospital, clinic or organization can be exciting. It can also be a stressor. We believe that orientation and onboarding to a new role or career is a critical part of having a successful experience at Envision. When clinicians begin working with us, fellow clinicians or peers work alongside them to provide feedback on patient communication best practices and guide our new colleagues to reflect on their communication skills. Newly hired clinicians have a chance to meet colleagues, learn performance norms around relationship building and receive constructive feedback on connecting with patients at their site.

Formal programs such as these use evidence-based practices to train clinician facilitators and coaches, ensuring more successful and healthy peer-to-peer dialogue. According to the [American Medical Association](#), peer emotional and intellectual support represents an organizational shift away from a culture of silence, expected perfectionism and shame. Instead, it fosters a culture of sharing, acceptance of vulnerability and psychological safety, encouraging clinicians to learn from each other. By providing well-being support during times of stress, Envision is working to overcome the stigmas associated with seeking mental health support among healthcare workers. Peer support is an important component of comprehensive clinician support.

2. Advocating for clinicians’ mental health and wellness

In addition to making cultural shifts and designing programs to meet the evolving needs of clinicians, as a national medical group, we have the responsibility to advocate for legislative action on a local, state and national scale. Regulatory changes that focus on the clinician have an impact on clinician well-being, and medical groups must do their part in supporting professional well-being through these channels. One example is the push to reform licensing and credentialing questions that ask about lifetime history of mental health or substance abuse instead of recent diagnoses or treatments that could

impact the provision of medical care. These questions are one source of the stigma surrounding mental health treatment in the healthcare community.

Envision also supports the Dr. Lorna Breen Healthcare Provider Protection Act and similar bills that foster clinician well-being. The Lorna Breen Act urges governments and health systems to prioritize clinician well-being through education and awareness campaigns, grants and a comprehensive study on the mental and behavioral health of healthcare professionals, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Named after a New York City emergency physician who tragically died by suicide after working in a COVID-19 hot spot, the Lorna Breen Act states that clinicians should be cared for with the same research-backed methods they use to take care of their patients.

National medical groups must include advocacy as part of their professional well-being plan, calling upon local, state and federal officials to protect healthcare workers. Our clinicians have faced enormous physical and mental health risks during the pandemic and deserve respect and gratitude. Advocacy to reduce stigmas against mental health and substance abuse care and promote the study of professional well-being is a core part of our commitment to reinvigorate meaning in work and nurturing the joy of medicine.

3. Measuring success for clinician well-being

Evaluating clinician well-being can help identify areas where clinicians are struggling and need additional support and resources. Confidential, anonymous and accurate assessments of well-being help clinicians self-assess their need to seek additional resources. Clinicians will have access to individualized and anonymous resource recommendations based on their assessment responses.

Professional well-being tools that allow self-assessment and anonymized reporting of the well-being of groups and individuals represent an ideal balance of anonymity and data for organizations to use in planning change. Envision will deploy such a tool in the coming months to evaluate our efforts and hold ourselves accountable for assessing and measuring clinician well-being. The survey will measure and provide resources on the likelihood of stress, severe fatigue, work-life integration, meaning in work, the risk for medical error and suicidal ideation. By measuring clinician well-being, medical groups can assess the impact of their actions and determine whether changes need to be made to better support clinicians.

4. Reducing the stigma of mental healthcare and mental health conditions

The stigmatization of mental healthcare and mental health conditions is a barrier to clinicians seeking appropriate care when needed. For too long, clinicians have suffered in silence in fear of retribution, bottling up their anger, sorrow, shame, guilt and other negative symptoms of fatigue and overwhelming stress. Through measurement of current governmental and regulatory advocacy and programs, such as formal peer support networks and coaching, medical groups can start to normalize conversations about clinician well-being. Every human being faces a time when they require support

and time to reflect on their experiences. We encourage clinicians to share their stories with each other to normalize this need and fight the myth that clinicians, who are driven to perfectionism in their care of patients, must also be personally perfect.

5. Committing to professional well-being resources and programs

A common misconception surrounding professional well-being is that it does not align with patient care and organizational goals. Investing in clinicians has a wide range of benefits to patients, hospitals and communities. By valuing professional well-being as a marker of clinical quality and efficient care, leaders can appropriately allocate time and resources into programs that affect clinician well-being. These effects dovetail directly into operational efficiency and excellent patient experience. In other words, serving the patient and meeting the medical group's goals go hand in hand with clinician wellness.

Envision is a change leader in healthcare. We will continue to optimize work environments for clinicians, keeping the patient-clinician relationship at the center of discussions. We must continue to offer innovative and effective psychological and intellectual resources, advocate on behalf of our physicians and advanced practice providers and use fair metrics to measure clinician well-being. This way, we can hold ourselves accountable for continuous improvement in our clinicians' work environment.

Our Commitment

Envision is determined to improve professional well-being and shift the practice of medicine to one that benefits the health of both patients and healthcare workers. We will achieve this by providing research-backed resources to clinicians, creating support and accountability and focusing on measuring impact while protecting data privacy. With more than 25,000 clinicians caring for more than 32 million patients yearly, this commitment has a massive potential impact.

We will face challenges in our pursuit, and despite our size and scale, we will need help from governments, health systems, health plans and others to provide resources and alleviate pain points for clinicians. We are confident that in partnering with these organizations to support professional well-being, clinicians and patients across the entire care journey will experience the positive effects. The mental health, professional success and career longevity of our clinicians are all part of who we are at Envision. It is imperative we care for those who care for us.