



# Reimagining Workplace Resiliency Across Generations

SABRINA SPITALETTA, GABBY HINES, AND MADELYN MCLAUGHLIN

The Milken Institute [Employer Action Exchange](#) (EAE) recently launched an action-based research project, [in partnership with The Hartford](#), focused on how employers are uniquely equipped to implement upstream interventions that bolster the well-being and performance of their employees, the communities in which they are located, and ultimately their businesses. By translating the insights gained from this project into action, employers can redefine the next era of work to create resiliency for employees across generations.

In early 2025, as part of this project, the Milken Institute EAE team met with members of [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) Next Gen](#), an advisory group that represents the voices of youth and young adults across the United States, to glean their insights and perspectives on resiliency and whole-person health in the workplace, with a particular emphasis on mental health. Employers are uniquely positioned to address barriers to mental, physical, and financial well-being, and by centering youth voices in their strategies, they can promote cascading whole-person health improvements across generations. Further, addressing whole-person health in the workplace can strengthen businesses because mental health alone costs the US economy [\\$282 billion](#) annually.

## Economic Impact

Gen Z, consisting of 70 million individuals, is expected to have spending power of [\\$12 trillion by 2030](#) and tremendous influence on the future of business across sectors. The following generation, Gen Alpha, is expected to be the largest generation ever, reaching nearly [2 billion globally by 2025](#), which highlights the imperative for employers to anticipate the needs of the workforce in the decades to come.

The following key takeaways and actions for employers—grouped into three main themes—emerged from the meeting between the EAE team and the NAMI Next Gen members.

## Creating Resiliency in the Workplace and Greater Community

NAMI Next Gen advisors suggested four key actions that employers can take to instill resiliency in employees of all generations and the larger community, which will ultimately lead to improved business performance. These actions are validated by existing research and evidence demonstrating their impacts in the workplace.

### Wellness as a business strategy

- Building whole-person health into the strategic plans of businesses enhances the wellness of employees and allows individuals to flourish both inside and outside of the workplace.
- Embedding wellness into business strategies also improves recruitment of top talent because [89 percent of employees say they will only consider companies that prioritize employee well-being when seeking new employment](#).
- According to [The Hartford's recent national survey of US workers](#), employers can improve employee resiliency by providing more flexible work schedules (53 percent of respondents), new or improved reward and recognition programs (43 percent), and additional learning and development opportunities (34 percent).

### Unwavering commitment to values

- When employers demonstrate through actions, not just words, that they are dedicated to their company values, they cultivate trust for employees and the communities in which they operate.

### **Proactive preparedness**

- Proactive cultivation of an environment that can navigate uncertainty by fostering a sense of community among employees protects businesses, individuals, and communities. This environment helps to establish individual and organizational resiliency and better equips employees and businesses to flourish.

### **Transparency**

- Honest communication from employees about what they need to thrive and transparency from employers about what can feasibly be implemented are critical as organizations navigate changes at the individual, community, and organizational levels.

## **Importance of Allyship**

NAMI Next Gen advisors identified three core components of allyship, which is critical to fostering resiliency and supporting well-being in the workplace.

### **Consistency**

- Employers and organizational leadership must move beyond one-time supportive actions or comments and maintain a whole-company approach to a healthy workplace.
- Consistently showing up and checking in on employees is important to establishing trust and creating open dialogue to proactively maintain mental health in the workplace before a conflict arises.

### **Vulnerability**

- In the workplace, allies can openly share their own mental health journeys to model transparency, empathy, and inclusion and encourage others to do the same.
- This action can reduce the stigma associated with mental health and encourage individuals to seek support.
- Seventy-five percent of employers acknowledge the presence of stigma in their organization.

### **Anonymity**

- Although transparency is valuable to end stigma, nobody should have to publicize their personal mental health experiences to access resources.

- Employees should not be pressured to disclose mental health conditions, and their privacy should be protected.
- Allies should be able to anonymously refer someone they perceive to be in need for support.

## Benefits and Practices to Bolster Whole-Person Health

NAMI Next Gen advisors offered thoughtful recommendations, which are supported by research from distinguished institutions, about benefits and practices that reflect a comprehensive investment in whole-person health by employers.

### Wellness days

- Mental health should be a nonnegotiable reason to take a day off, akin to a sick day for physical health concerns but without the need for a doctor's note.
- According to the Mayo Clinic, mental health days offer numerous benefits, including reduced feelings of burnout, improved morale and attitude, improved resiliency, increased productivity, reduced presenteeism and long-term absenteeism, and even prevention of mental health crises.

### Multifaceted mental health resources

- At the individual level, research has established a dose-response relationship between workplace mindfulness programs and an increase in individual resilience.
- Employers can provide access to mental health resources such as meditation, mindfulness practices, and digital therapy through subscriptions to wellness platforms such as Calm, Headspace, and Talkspace. Digital resources can be more accessible for employees and can be utilized in the privacy of their own homes.
- The multifaceted approach could include in-person, on-site services similar to those that Gen Z experienced in school, carrying that expectation into the workplace.
- A common barrier to service utilization is awareness. Company trainings can help ensure employees are aware of the services and equipped to access them whenever needed.
- Eighty-three percent of employees agree that mental health and well-being training is, or would be if offered, key to fostering a positive workplace culture.
- Seventy-three percent of employees and 81 percent of managers report being more likely to stay at a company that offered high-quality mental health resources.

### Financial support for wellness practices

- Similar to transportation stipends that offset commuting costs, employers could provide wellness stipends that are applied toward activities that improve well-being, such as fitness memberships or exercise equipment, creative outlets such as art or creative writing classes, or interests such as cooking, gardening, or learning a new language.
- This approach provides employees the flexibility to find activities and resources that proactively support their mental well-being while mitigating their costs. Demonstrating the impacts of these initiatives, 79 percent of employees believe that the wellness programs available to them helped them be as productive as possible at work.
- Organizations can even sponsor company teams in recreational sport leagues so that employees can exercise and connect outside of the workplace, both of which are known to impact performance and engagement at work positively. The University of Otago in New Zealand found that employees who exercise regularly are 13 percent more productive than those who do not. Similarly, a Harvard University study found that physical activity improves next-day job performance.

### Revising or expanding existing workplace policies

- Employers must be both proactive in thinking about the future of work and responsive to employees' evolving needs by revising or expanding existing policies to reflect new priorities and initiatives.
- For example, in recent years, several large employers have adopted a more pet-conscious workplace culture, even expanding their bereavement policies to include pet bereavement. This offering acknowledges that many employees consider their pets to be family (about 51 percent of pet owners say their pets are as much a part of their family as a human member, according to Pew Research) and signals to employees that their employers care about their whole-person health.

Gen Z is the first generation to be proactively vocal about whole-person health and resiliency in the workplace, but every previous generation has grappled with these topics. Gen Z recognizes that employees face myriad challenges to peak performance and engagement in the workplace and that those challenges present differently across careers and lifespans.

By engaging in shared learning across generations, organizations can revitalize policies that drive health and performance, leading to better business results. The insights gleaned from the NAMI Next Gen advisors highlight the critical role that employers play in advancing whole-person health, underscoring the subsequent benefits that transcend economic and social realms for individuals, communities, and businesses.

# Resources

- [Employer Investments: Mitigating Risk to Maximize Business, People, and Community Resilience and Performance](#)
- [Employer Social Impact: Promoting Upstream Prevention through Educational Investments for K-12 and Beyond](#)
- [Employer Action Exchange: Listening to Executive Insights on Whole-Person Health Investments](#)
- [Milken Institute's Employer Action Exchange Elevates the Role of Employers Prioritizing Public Health Priorities](#)
- [Forging a Climate-Resilient Workplace for Next-Generation Employees](#)
- [Making Waves: Next Gen Making a Difference in Mental Health in the Workplace](#)
- [A Thriving Workplace: Belongingness as a Tenet of Workplace Mental Health](#)
- [How the Workplace Can Support Caregivers of Youth with Mental Health Conditions](#)
- [Mental Health Resources for Employees](#)

# About the Milken Institute

The Milken Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan global think tank focused on accelerating measurable progress on the path to a meaningful life. With a focus on financial, physical, mental, and environmental health, we bring together the best ideas and innovative resourcing to develop blueprints for tackling some of our most critical global issues through the lens of what's pressing now and what's coming next.

## About Milken Institute Health

Milken Institute Health bridges innovation gaps across the health-care continuum to advance whole-person health throughout the lifespan by improving healthy aging, public health, biomedical science, and food systems.

## About Public Health at the Milken Institute

Public Health at the Milken Institute develops research, programs, and initiatives to activate sustainable solutions leading to better health for individuals and communities worldwide. To catalyze policy, system, and environmental change in public health and sustain impact, we approach our work in four interconnected areas: Prevention and Chronic Disease, Mental Health, Health Equity, and Employers and Public Health Priorities, which includes the Employer Action Exchange.

## About the Milken Institute Employer Action Exchange

The Employer Action Exchange provides a trusted platform and includes expert guidance from key opinion leaders, briefings, and networking to advance customized, tangible actions on whole-person health priorities and investments. It offers a cultivated experience for employers representing diverse sectors and industries.

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