



WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH IN PRACTICE

FOCUS ON: LATHAM & WATKINS LLP



The Workplace Mental Health in Practice series showcases the work of City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong (CMHA HK) members to create a culture of good mental health in their organisations.

The second edition of our series focuses on Latham & Watkins LLP, a global law firm with offices in Hong Kong and the Asia Pacific region. Mark Goldberg, Senior Manager of Global Health & Well-Being, shared the firm's multifaceted approach to building resilience and mental well-being.

How has your organisation approached workplace mental health?

From the beginning, we have had buy-in from senior leadership, which has added momentum to our efforts. Additionally, our LiveWell Latham well-being platform has been in place for over a decade, and offers a solid foundation for expanding mental-health related programming and resources.

Over the past five years, we have taken a proactive approach to addressing the mental health of our lawyers and staff — initially providing programs and training that built our employees' capacity for resilience through techniques such as kindness, gratitude, and mindfulness.

We are now building on this work by developing mental health training initiatives targeting all levels at the firm, fostering an environment where colleagues feel supported in seeking help, encouraging our people to prioritise self-care, and providing easy access to high quality support.

Has stigma presented a barrier?

While the legal profession as a whole has begun to focus more seriously on mental health, we have found that there is still stigma surrounding mental health more generally. Our approach of easing into the topic by first focusing on positive psychology, resilience, and mindfulness has been well received in the APAC region and has provided an entryway for us to engage employees around mental health more broadly.

Do you provide mental health training to employees?

We partnered with a corporate-based mindfulness provider to teach our employees how to apply mindfulness principles in the workplace and their daily lives. Currently, we have three new mental health training programs in development. The first is a mental health first aid-type program to train our Human Resources and other key personnel in each of our offices to be able to respond to signs of mental health issues. The second is a mental health allies program that will train a cadre of colleagues across the firm who are interested in increasing mental health literacy, either for themselves or to help others. The third program in development is mental health training for managers and supervisors, which will help them increase their mental health literacy, build emotional intelligence, and learn how to support employees experiencing mental health issues.

What role does an EAP play in supporting wellbeing?

This year, we replaced our former EAP with a robust new employee support service — called CareConnect — that integrates counselling, coaching, firm resources, and work/life referrals to address the whole person. CareConnect uses a highly personalised, holistic approach to care. Whether an individual needs help overcoming a challenge, motivation to reach their goals, referrals for daily life needs, or just someone to talk with, mental health clinicians are available 24/7 to deliver immediate support and connect individuals directly with relevant resources. Before it launched, we delivered cultural training to the provider about our legal professionals and the intricacies of life in a law firm, so they have a strong understanding of the people they support. We felt that offering this new resource was critical to removing any barriers to care and making it seamless for our employees to access mental health support.

Do you take a global or regional approach?

We are a global firm, so we launch programs with scalability in mind. We tend to develop programs that can be used in multiple regions. In close partnership with renowned experts and providers, we tailor our programs and resources specifically to the needs of Latham & Watkins lawyers and staff.

Have you faced any challenges in this work?

One of the challenges that we face is ensuring that our personnel are aware of available resources, whether for themselves or others in need. While we market our resources internally using a variety of methods, we are also working to train and raise awareness among key populations such as our supervisor, leadership, HR, and Attorney Development communities, so they can recognise signs of distress and signpost resources for colleagues who may be struggling.



What is your key advice for other organisations who want to prioritise mental health?

Certainly, having visible and vocal support from leadership can help pave the way for making mental health an organisational priority. But executive support alone is not enough — it is critical to make workplace mental health the responsibility of every colleague and help them understand that each individual has a role to play.

We also encourage people to be mindful of not treating mental health differently. Everyone has mental health, and it is important to convey that anyone experiencing a mental health issue should be treated in the same way as someone suffering from a physical health issue. The more people in the organisation can talk openly about these topics and support one another, the more you can chip away at the stigma that is often associated with mental health issues.

We have also had success with integrating mental health into other verticals in the firm, so that it is more deeply embedded in our everyday practices. Mental health efforts are no longer led solely by our Well-Being team; we work closely with many functions across the firm to integrate mental health and well-being messaging into our recruiting, onboarding, events, training academies, and more. Our lawyers and staff have been very receptive to this approach and we are excited about its prospects.

