3 steps to recognition for your health system's work on burnout

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The last 12 months have been marked by hope, disappointment, frustration and—perhaps most of all—exhaustion. Doctors and other health professionals have been hit by the stark juxtaposition between the daily toll of sickness and death caused by COVID-19 and the general public’s seemingly nonchalant disregard for science-based advice to get vaccinated, mask up, and practice physical distancing.

All of this has presented health systems around the nation with a major challenge. But it’s also been a giant opportunity to use the evidence-driven tools at their disposal to attack the systemic drivers of burnout and improve well-being within their organizations when the help is most badly needed.

For those health systems that are rising to meet the challenge, acknowledgment awaits in the form of the 2022 Joy in Medicine™ Health System Recognition Program. Applications are now open and will be accepted through March 31.

Read the program guidelines (PDF) for a comprehensive look at the criteria and apply for recognition today.

“While it is always important for health systems to focus on the well-being of care teams, the imperative is greater than ever as acute stress from combatting the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to higher rates of work overload, anxiety and depression,” said AMA President Gerald E. Harmon, MD.

Launched in 2019, the recognition program has three key goals: guiding health system leaders in fostering well-being, uniting the health care community by promoting joy in the profession, and building awareness of solutions to reduce burnout.

The program honors outstanding efforts to address systemic causes of physician burnout in areas such as assessment, leadership, teamwork, peer support and practice-environment efficiency.
Temporarily derailed by COVID-19 in 2020, the Joy in Medicine program got back on its feet in 2021, honoring 44 health care organizations that “are true leaders in promoting an organizational response that makes a difference in the lives of the health care workforce,” as Dr. Harmon said at the time. The 2021 awards doubled the number of awards from the program’s inaugural year.

Learn more about the opportunities to tackle physician burnout in 2022.

How to apply for recognition

The program is geared toward health systems with 100 or more physicians or advanced practice providers (APPs), meeting these eligibility criteria and following these three steps.

Step one

Systems with at least 100 physicians or APPs can proceed to step two. Those with less than 100 physicians or APPs must sign the Collaborative for Healing and Renewal in Medicine (CHARM) Charter and engage with other resources offered by the AMA.

Step two

Sign the CHARM Charter on physician well-being.

Step three

Complete an assessment of physician well-being conducted in the last three years using one of the following validated tools:

- Mini-Z (or single item Mini-Z burnout question).
- Maslach Burnout Inventory.
- Mayo Well-Being Index.
- Stanford Professional Wellness Survey.


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Health systems that have not yet completed step three can learn more (PDF) about the AMA’s no-cost burnout assessment.

Recognition is based on organizational achievement and effort in six competency areas, evaluated through self-assessment and supporting documentation. Criteria include: commitment; assessment; efficiency of practice environment; leadership; teamwork and support.

Committed to making physician burnout a thing of the past, the AMA has studied, and is currently addressing, issues causing and fueling physician burnout—including time constraints, technology and regulations—to better understand and reduce the challenges physicians face.

By focusing on factors causing burnout at the system level, the AMA assesses an organization’s well-being and offers guidance and targeted solutions to support physician well-being and satisfaction.