Amid a culture that is contributing to burnout and a loss of a sense of joy in medicine, a chief wellness officer (CWO) can help an organization systematically improve the well-being of physicians and other health professionals.

One of the crucial steps for a CWO to begin creating a center or program is building a team around themselves early on in their new position. An AMA STEPS Forward® toolkit helps your organization do just that and more.

Building a team is the third step of the “Chief Wellness Officer Road Map” toolkit that outlines a nine-step approach CWOs can follow to implement a leadership strategy for professional well-being.

Reducing physician burnout is a critical component of the AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians. You took care of the nation. It’s time for the nation to take care of you. It’s time to rebuild. And the AMA is ready.

Far too many American physicians experience burnout. That’s why the AMA develops resources that prioritize well-being and highlight workflow changes so physicians can focus on what matters—patient care.

It’s important to build a team early, but there is some flexibility on when exactly the team is put together. Once the CWO determines the scope, role and structure of their position, the specific functions and skill sets that the center needs will become apparent, the toolkit advises.

“The people available to the CWO will determine the scope of work that can be addressed,” said Christine A. Sinsky, MD, vice president of professional satisfaction at the AMA, who co-wrote the toolkit. “A CWO with 20 hours a week allocated to this role (i.e., 0.5 FTE), an administrative assistant and a project manager will be able to accomplish more than a physician with four hours per week allocated to the CWO role (i.e. 0.1 FTE) and no additional support.”
Dr. Sinsky said it can also be helpful for the CWO to form partnerships with operational, safety, medical and technology leaders in the organization.

Who is on the team?

No matter when the team is assembled, it is important to establish a strong internal team as well as liaisons within the organization. The team should include:

- Administrative or operational leaders.
- Administrative assistants.
- Project managers.
- Statistics and methodology experts.
- Event planners.
- Communication professionals to help with external and internal communication.

“While all centers will need to attend to some of these roles, such as communications, other roles are best contracted,” the toolkit says. For example, survey administration and statistical analysis may be areas that are contracted.

Learn more about how to lay the groundwork at your organization with the “Establishing a Chief Wellness Officer Position” toolkit.

AMA?STEPS Forward open-access toolkits offer innovative strategies that allow physicians and their staff to thrive in the new health care environment. These courses can help you prevent physician burnout, create the organizational foundation for joy in medicine and improve practice efficiency.

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.


Copyright 1995 - 2021 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.