Amid a culture that is contributing to physician 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.

Among the crucial steps for a CWO to create a center or program is identifying existing organizational programs working toward the well-being goals that are already in place and recognizing gaps and resources. An AMA STEPS Forward® toolkit helps organizations do just that and more.

Identifying existing organizational programs, gaps and resources is the fourth step of the AMA STEPS Forward “Chief Wellness Officer Road Map” toolkit that outlines a nine-step approach CWOs can follow to implement a leadership strategy for professional well-being. Listen to the AMA STEPS Forward podcast, “Chief Wellness Officer Road Map.”

“One purpose of this fact-finding step is to gather information that will help you and your team develop your mission and strategy,” said Christine Sinsky, MD, vice president of professional satisfaction at the AMA, who coauthored the toolkit.

Reducing physician burnout is a core element 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.

While it’s helpful to see what is being done and figuring out what gaps exist in your organization, it’s important that the CWO doesn’t jump right into tactics.
“Even a highly resourced CWO and team will not be able to lead every individual effort aimed at improving well-being,” Dr. Sinsky said. “The team should be very clear that much of their impact will occur by influencing others who are able to lead specific tactical interventions.”

**Assess the situation**

Many organizations already have training and activities aimed at personal resilience. Some have programs and initiatives that help advance professionalism, leadership development, teamwork and diversity and inclusion.

The goal for the CWO’s team is not to take over the activities or topic areas that already exist. Instead, the team should integrate support and increase who and how people use the programs and resources that exist. Teams should also identify important gaps where there’s a need for new efforts.

Additionally, the CWO and their team should learn and understand what initiatives have been tried before, but were discontinued because there was not enough interest, the program didn’t produce the expected results or the costs were unsustainable, among other reasons.

Read about three keys to get physicians back after Omicron pushed them to the brink.

**Meet with other leaders**

The best way to understand what is being done, what has been tried and what areas make sense for future well-being efforts is to meet with other leaders within the organization. Those leaders include the:

- Chief quality officer.
- Chief medical officer.
- Chief experience officer.
- Chief medical information officer.
- Chief diversity officer and other diversity and inclusion leaders.
- Chief human resources officer.
- Chief operations officer and any other key members of the operational leadership team.

“These meetings can provide understanding to what activities and efforts these leaders have in their respective portfolios and allow you as CWO to ensure that new initiatives are complementary and integrated with other efforts,” the toolkit says.


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The meetings are a way to also begin to understand which colleagues in the organization are natural allies, as well as those who may be more resistant to some well-being programs, plans or initiatives.

Learn more about how to lay the groundwork at your organization with the “Establishing a Chief Wellness Officer Position” toolkit. Discover more in this AMA STEPS Forward webinar.

AMA?STEPS Forward open-access toolkits offer?innovative strategies that allow physicians and their staff to thrive in the new health care environment. These resources 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.?