

# Is your CWO making the grade? How you can tell

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In organizations outside of health care, chief wellness officers (CWO) typically oversee all employees. But the health care CWO has a dramatically different role and function, focusing on the unique needs of physicians and other health professionals. Knowing how to assess a CWO's performance compared to that of the organization's will be key to understanding progress.

After a CWO has assembled a team, defined a mission, developed a strategy to achieve it, established partnerships with other leaders in the organization and developed a bidirectional communication strategy, it's time for the CWO to make sure everyone is clear on how success will be measured. An AMA STEPS Forward<sup>®</sup> toolkit helps guide CWOs on how to do just that and more.

"Set Performance Metrics for the Organization and the Team" is the eighth step of the "Chief Wellness Officer Road Map" toolkit that outlines a nine-step approach that CWOs can follow to implement a leadership strategy for professional well-being.

"Organizations that measure and respond to physician burnout on a regular schedule every one to two years are in the best position to improve organizational outcomes, including patient experience, financial stability and the recruitment and retention of physicians and other clinicians," said Christine Sinsky, MD, vice president of professional satisfaction at the AMA, who coauthored the toolkit.

Here is how to set performance metrics for the organization and the CWO and their team.

## Assess organization vs team

A chief wellness officer should review and provide input into the performance metrics the organization will use and which the CWO's team will use. The toolkit offers guidance on the critical distinction between the two.

Organizational-level metrics include:

- Professional fulfillment and burnout among physicians within the organization relative to national benchmarks.
- Number of departments with high levels of burnout or low levels of professional fulfillment relative to benchmarks.
- Employee turnover rates.
- Number of physicians reducing clinical effort.
- Satisfaction with the electronic health record system.
- Assessment of values-alignment between physicians and organizational leaders.
- Leadership scores of first-line leaders across the organization.
- Recognition within the AMA Joy in Medicine™ Recognition Program.

Performance metrics for the CWO and team should align with these responsibilities.

- Developing an organization-wide strategic plan to advance well-being and professional fulfillment.
- Providing accurate assessments for well-being, burnout and professional fulfillment across the organization; efficiency of practice and health of organizational culture in domains relative to professional well-being.
- Providing relevant and actionable data on these domains to other organizational leaders.
- Identifying select improvement targets in these domains.
- Identifying struggling work units and helping provide support, recommendations and tactics for these units to improve.
- Advocating for physician well-being in all organizational decisions and for the resources needed to improve physician well-being.
- Developing a portfolio of resources individual physicians can use to cultivate personal well-being, the system-wide safety net for individual physicians in distress and training to help work-unit leaders effectively cultivate well-being in their departments.
- Advancing a sense of shared ownership to improve physician well-being.

## CWO's role isn't to "fix burnout"

It's important to remember that the CWO should not be held responsible for well-being score and cannot be expected to "fix burnout," said Dr. Sinsky.

Other factors that are not under a CWO's control include:

- Productivity expectations.
- Staffing adequacy.
- Compensation models.

- Organizational leadership.
- Teamwork characteristics.
- Transitions to new facilities.
- EHR characteristics.

The CWO and team can help identify these issues and support work-unit-level efforts, but the responsibility of addressing the issues falls to the local work unit leaders.

“Addressing burnout must be a shared responsibility among the leadership teams of the entire organization and of each individual unit,” Dr. Sinsky said. “One role for the CWO is to build the relationships and processes that facilitate this measurement, analysis and reflection.”

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

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.