



ISSUE

Promote well-being in Minnesota's healthcare workforce

MMA Position

Support one-time funding for the *Treat Yourself First* campaign—an initiative dedicated to reducing the stigma around seeking help and ensuring healthcare professionals have access to the care they deserve.

Background

In addition to removing practice hassles that lead to physician burnout, we need to support physicians and other healthcare professionals by ensuring that they get the help and treatments they need. A thriving healthcare workforce is essential for delivering safe, high-quality care. Yet, clinicians have been operating in survival mode for a long time. Even before COVID-19, the National Academy of Medicine found that burnout had reached “crisis levels” among the U.S. healthcare workforce, with 35-54% of nurses and physicians, 61-75% of pharmacists, and 45-60% of medical students and residents reporting burnout symptoms.

The well-documented problem of burnout is further exacerbated by the fact that many mental health programs, even when implemented, face resistance from clinicians who are reluctant to disclose details about serious issues affecting their own mental health or that of colleagues. As a result, these resources have been widely underutilized. A 2017 study published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* found that overall, about 40% of physicians reported reluctance to seek formal medical care for treatment of a medical condition. Physicians are not alone in this regard.

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) and pharmacists also struggle with concerns about being perceived as weak or unable to handle the stresses of the job. They shoulder concerns about potential consequences of seeking mental health help, such as jeopardizing their licensure or facing discrimination in the workplace.

The *Treat Yourself First* campaign, funded through the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), is an evidence-informed education campaign designed to address these upstream factors and the barriers to accessing help. The goal is to normalize the process for clinicians and healthcare professionals to seek help for work-place related stresses and increase clinicians' awareness of mental health issues and services. The *Treat Yourself First* campaign is being designed and implemented with input from a multi-disciplinary clinician advisory committee of well-being experts from the Minnesota Medical Association, the Minnesota Nurses Association, the Minnesota Dental Association, the Minnesota Pharmacists Association, the Minnesota Advance Practice Registered Nurse Coalition and many physician specialty societies.

A one-time investment is needed to 1) fully implement the campaign; 2) educate the healthcare workforce about the importance of healthcare worker well-being in maintaining a strong and resilient workforce; 3) reduce the stigma of mental health treatment; and 4) encourage early intervention and promote mental health support services for clinicians; and help foster a culture of safety.

Talking Points

- For Minnesota's healthcare professionals, burnout is a fundamental barrier to professional well-being. Legislation is needed to support those in this critical workforce.
- Physicians and other healthcare professionals who seek professional support to address career fatigue, burnout and behavioral health concerns should have confidentiality and civil immunity protections to encourage them to get the help they need.
- The stigma related to receiving needed care must be eliminated to encourage treatment.
- The *Treat Yourself First* campaign has been developed through a one-year MDH grant. State funding is needed to implement the campaign and encourage all health professionals to “treat yourself first.”