



APPLICATION QUESTIONS



HOW TO APPLY

Follow these steps to apply:

1. Submit an [employer information form](#) (available online at <https://bit.ly/EmployerInfoForm>). You will receive an email with the link to the online application within one business day. Please save this link for future submission.
2. Prepare and submit your application online. The application takes an estimated two hours to complete.
3. Pay the application cost by check or credit card online at the time of submission. Depending on the organization's staff count, the application cost ranges from \$99 to \$299.
4. Submit the application between January and March 2024 to be considered for the 2024 application cycle. **The submission deadline is COB Friday, March 29, 2024.**

Please note: MHA reserves the right to refuse to certify an employer that is actively engaged in any effort — through legislation, regulation, litigation, or other advocacy — to create public policies that weaken the rights of employees living with mental health or substance use conditions or discriminate against persons with mental health or substance use conditions. MHA also reserves the right to withdraw previously granted certification from an employer engaged in the above activities.

REVIEW AND RESULTS

After submitting the application, please allow up to **30 business days** to receive the results via email, including which level of recognition — Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum — the employer qualifies for and how the employer scored in each section. Then, the employer has the option to schedule a **30-minute virtual meeting** with Mental Health America to review the results and provide additional resources, if applicable.

Employers with Bell Seal certification, at their discretion, will receive the following:

- Recognition via logo inclusion on [MHA's Bell Seal website](#);
- Recognition on MHA's social media and national newsletter;
- Recognition during MHA's Annual Conference;
- Bell Seal recipient promotion toolkit;
- Access to the quarterly Workplace Wellness Newsletter; and
- Opportunities to collaborate with MHA on projects that promote recipients' achievements, such as panel discussion invitations, speaking engagement, or blog spotlights.

If the employer does not qualify or wishes to achieve a higher level of recognition, MHA and its network of workplace partners can provide resources to assist the employer in improving their score before the submission deadline or after the deadline in preparation for the following application cycle. Certified employers will be asked to renew their certification annually in January.

Are you interested in learning more about MHA's past Bell Seal recipients? Check out the 2023 application cycle outcomes and the full list of recipients in the [Bell Seal for Workplace Mental Health 2023 Brief](#).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Name of Applicant on Behalf of Organization

First

Last

Organization/Company

Job Title

Email



SECTION I: SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

1. Has the employer conducted a survey that evaluates employee mental health in the last 12 months? *Examples include engagement, satisfaction, or pulse surveys.*
 Yes No
2. Please list at least three survey items that explicitly reference stress, burnout, mental health, or well-being from the survey.
3. What percentage of employees completed the survey? *If more than one survey evaluating mental health was administered in the last 12 months, select the survey with the highest participation percentage.*
4. If the employer used an alternative approach to measure employee mental health, please describe the approach. *Examples include listening sessions, town hall forums, or 1:1 meetings.*
5. Please describe one organization-wide policy, procedure, or program change made directly from employees' feedback in the survey in the last 12 months.
6. Does the employer have a designated team or individual to identify and address mental health concerns in the workplace? *Examples include a committee, work group, employee resource group, task force, wellness coordinator, wellness champion, or mental health ambassador.*
 Yes No
7. Please describe one concrete example of how leadership empowers or supports the above team or individual. *Support includes budget, allocated staff time, executive sponsorship, or representation.*
8. Please describe the employer's organizational strategy to address employee mental health and well-being or improve workplace culture.
9. Does the employer educate new employees about mental health benefits and other support during its orientation or onboarding process? *Examples include sharing information about online mental health screening, crisis lifelines, warmlines, or virtual or local in-person support groups.*
 Yes No

10. Has the employer provided at least one in-person or online mental health training for managers or employees in the last 12 months? *Training can address well-being or other related mental health topics.*
- Yes No
11. Which of the following topics do the training(s) address? Please check all that apply.
- Effective people management skills
 - Emotional intelligence in the workplace
 - Life-work balance or stress management
 - Suicide awareness and prevention
 - Supporting employee mental health concerns
 - Toxic work environment and bullying prevention
 - Other: (Please describe)
12. Please describe the employer's organizational strategy to promote fair and effective people management practices.
13. Does the management strategy actively encourage the following practices for people managers? Please check all that apply.
- Be accessible with open-door and flexible policies
 - Build trust and collaboration as part of a manager and direct report working relationship
 - Check-in with direct reports regularly (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly)
 - Evaluate and assist with direct reports' workload
 - Notice the signs of acute stress or burnout in direct reports
 - Provide emotional support to employees
 - Providing employees with autonomy over their work (e.g., flexible working hours, focus on outcomes instead of tasks completed)
 - Set clear and realistic expectations about job responsibilities
14. Are employees encouraged to provide feedback about their managers' performances to their manager?
- Yes No
15. Are employees encouraged to ask their manager for specific support needs, such as regular 1:1 meetings or stress check-ins?
- Yes No
16. Can employees negotiate aspects of their position — such as title, role, or responsibilities — with their manager?
- Yes No
17. Does the employer provide employees with professional growth opportunities? Please check all that apply.
- Conference registration or travel stipends
 - Education or certification reimbursement
 - Internal promotions
 - Mentorship program
 - Merit-based salary increases
 - Professional courses or training
 - Other: (Please describe)



SECTION II: BENEFITS THAT SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH

1. Does the employer offer health insurance?
 Yes No
2. If the employer does not offer health insurance, please describe how the employer alternatively contributes to employees' health care needs. *Examples include increasing pay to supplement costs for insurance purchased on the exchange or offering onsite health clinic services at no cost.*
3. Does the employer ONLY offer short-term health insurance?
 Yes No
4. Please select the highest-level health plan (or equivalent, for self-funded plans) offered to all eligible employees with the highest percentage of cost covered by the employer:
 - Platinum plan, 50% or more
 - Gold plan, 80% or more
 - Gold plan, 60 - 79%
 - Silver plan, 80% or more
 - Silver plan, 50 - 79%
 - Bronze plan, 80% or more

The 'metal' levels (bronze, silver, gold, and platinum) are determined by how the insured employee and insurance plan split healthcare costs, as defined by the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

5. Does the employer cover at least 50% of health insurance costs for a silver or higher-level plan for an employee's family members? *Family members are defined as spouse, domestic partner, children, and other dependents.*
6. Please describe at least one concrete example of how the employer verifies that employees can access mental health care providers who are (1) in-network, (2) accepting new patients, and (3) scheduling timely in-person or virtual appointments.
7. Does the employer regularly monitor, evaluate, or report the following anonymized data to ensure parity between its plans' physical and mental health care services? Please check all that apply.
 - Actual participation rates by mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) providers listed in health plans' directory
 - Denial rates for MH/SUD services versus medical/surgical (M/S) services
 - In-network reimbursement rates for MH/SUD providers versus M/S services
 - The use of out-of-network providers for MH/SUD care versus M/S care

These quantitative measures evaluate MH/SUD network adequacy as outlined in the Model Data Request Form (MDRF) by the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions and the HR Policy Association. [Learn more about the MDRF.](#)

8. Do the employer's health insurance plans cover various mental health and substance use services? Check all that apply.
 - Dual diagnosis treatment
 - Outpatient care
 - Peer support
 - Psychiatry
 - Psychotherapy
 - Residential care
 - Substance use rehabilitation
 - Other: (Please describe)

9. Does the employer offer the same health insurance options to frontline workers as executive leadership and upper management?
 Yes No
10. Does the employer offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), or a similar program, that provides mental health and substance use services?
 Yes No
11. Does the EAP provide at least six free, in-person or virtual appointments per year? *The appointments can apply to more than one workplace issue per year.*
 Yes No
12. Does the EAP have an **initial response** time of less than one business day?
 Yes No
13. What percentage of employees used the EAP in the last 12 months? *Usage includes in-person and virtual appointments and phone calls for information and services. The percentage may be pulled from a recent monthly, quarterly, or yearly report in the last 12 months.*
14. How many days of paid time off (PTO) are offered to eligible employees in their **first year** of employment? *PTO includes vacation, sick time, mental health days, federal and administrative holidays, and personal time. Eight hours is equivalent to one day of PTO. Please round to the nearest whole number.*
15. Can employees use their PTO to care for family members with mental health conditions? *Family members are defined as grandparents, elderly parents, spouse, domestic partner, children, or other dependents.*
 Yes No
16. Please describe one concrete example of how the employer actively encourages employees to use PTO to care for their mental health and well-being.
17. Does the employer offer **paid** family leave at a minimum of 12 weeks? *This policy should be separate from a Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) policy. Any percentage of pay coverage is acceptable.*
 Yes No
18. Does the employer offer short-term disability (STD) insurance (or a sick leave bank equivalent) that covers mental health or substance use condition recovery?
 Yes No
19. Which statements are true about the employer's short-term disability insurance? Please check all that apply.
 The STD policy covers at least 60% of an employee's base salary.
 The STD policy covers at least 12 weeks of leave.
 The STD policy **does not** limit coverage for suicide attempts or self-harm.
20. Does the employer offer long-term disability (LTD) insurance (or a sick leave bank equivalent) that covers mental health or substance use condition recovery?
 Yes No
21. Which statements are true about the employer's long-term disability insurance? Please check all that apply.
 The LTD policy covers at least 60% of an employee's base salary.
 The LTD policy covers at least 25 weeks of leave.
 The LTD policy **does not** limit coverage for suicide attempts or self-harm.

22. Does the employer offer benefits to part-time employees? Please check all that apply.
- Employee assistance program services
 - Health insurance
 - Long-term disability insurance
 - Paid time off
 - Short-term disability insurance
 - Other: (Please describe)
23. Does the employer place employees at part-time or contract status to render them ineligible for health insurance or other benefits?
- Yes No



SECTION III: CARING BEYOND COMPLIANCE

1. Please describe at least one concrete example or practice of how the employer addresses equity and inclusion in its organizational mental health strategy.
2. Please describe at least one concrete example or practice of how the employer increases diversity, equity, and inclusion in its **recruitment and retention efforts**.
3. Does organizational leadership include an individual(s) who talks openly about their lived experience with a mental health or substance use condition? *Leadership is defined as board members, executive leadership, human resources, or upper management.*

Yes No
4. Have human resources or managers received in-person or online training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and accommodations for employees who disclose living with a mental health or substance use condition in the last 12 months?

Yes No
5. Does the employer explicitly educate employees about their rights under ADA, specifically regarding mental health or substance use conditions?

Yes No
6. Does the employer have an FMLA (or equivalent policy) that allows employees to take unpaid leave for mental health or substance use condition recovery and guarantees their position upon return?

Yes No
7. Does the employer have a formal or informal return-to-work procedure for employees who can no longer perform their responsibilities due to a mental health or substance use condition? *Examples of return-to-work activities include providing accommodations, alternative positions, or career transition services.*

Yes No
8. Does the employer have a clear and accessible procedure for employees to report unfair or unsafe practices?

Yes No



SECTION IV: HOLISTIC WELLNESS AT WORK

1. Does the employer offer a colleague-to-colleague support program? Please check all that apply.
 - In-person or virtual mental health support groups
 - Peer support specialist program
 - Virtual communication channels for mental health topics
 - Other: (Please describe)

2. Does the employer offer additional resources that support life outside of work? Please check all that apply.
 - Ability to bring a pet to work
 - Adoption or fertility assistance
 - Financial education and planning
 - Onsite childcare or subsidized childcare costs
 - Onsite health clinic or mental health services
 - Student loan repayment
 - Substance use recovery-friendly workspaces
 - Other: (Please describe)

3. Does the employer offer eligible employees the option to work remotely on a permanent or semi-permanent basis?
 - Yes No

4. Does the employer offer flexible work arrangements to eligible employees? *Examples include flexibility in structuring an employee's work schedule around start and end times, appointments, or other personal matters.*
 - Yes No

5. Does the employer offer a physical health program that addresses nutrition, fitness, or smoking cessation?
 - Yes No

6. Optional: Please describe relevant information or address previous questions requiring further explanation.