

# Preventing suicide and promoting mental health in the construction industry

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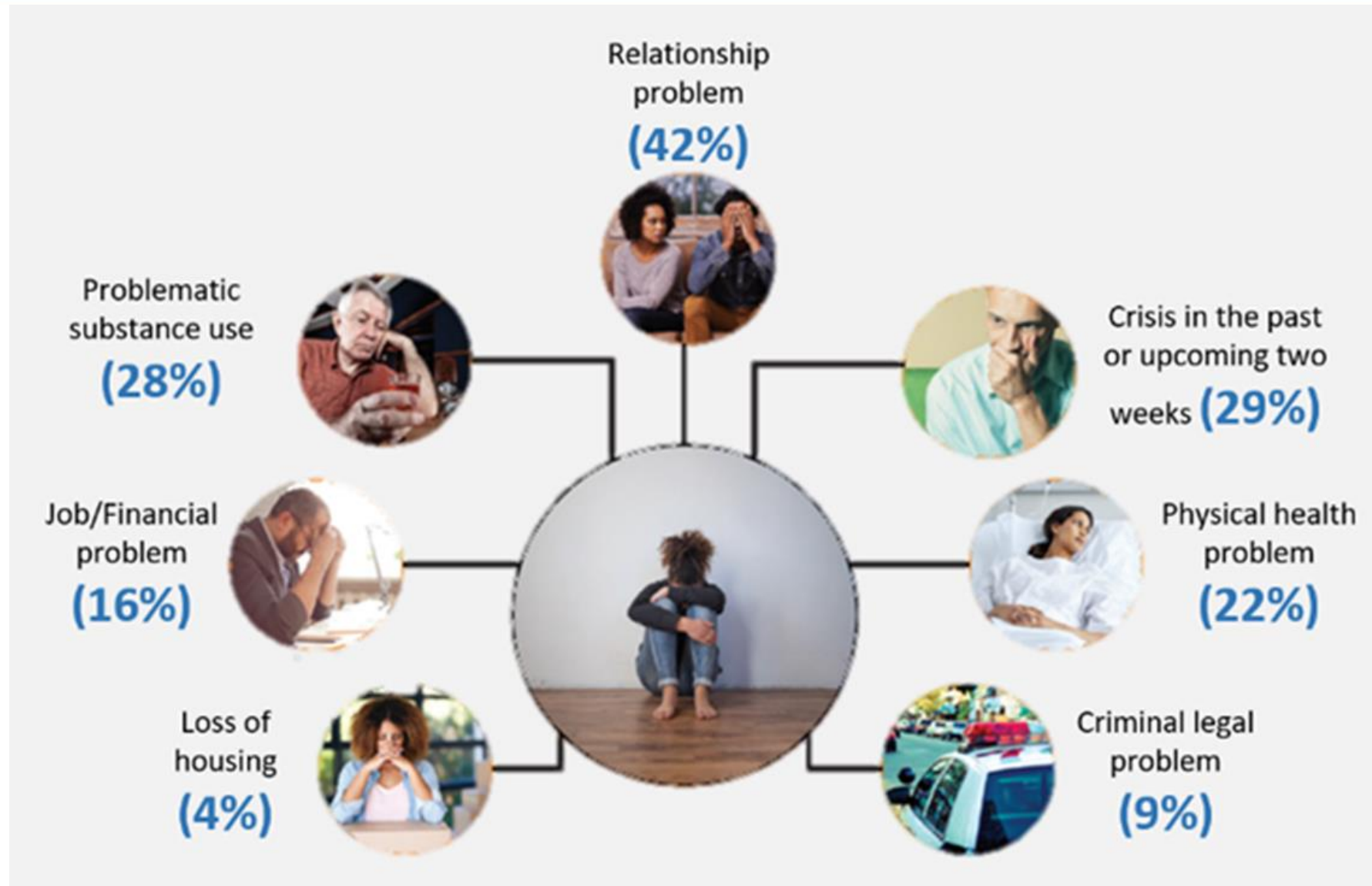


Healthy Work Center

# The construction industry has very high rates of suicide

- Suicide rate for men in construction and extraction 49.4/100,000 (2016)
- ~Twice as high as for all male workers (27.4/100,000)
- Accounted for ~20% of all suicides among working men
- Suicide deaths are five times greater than the rate of all fatal work related injuries in construction! (9.5/100,000)
- <https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2020/09/09/suicide-in-construction/>

# Stressors Contributing To Suicide

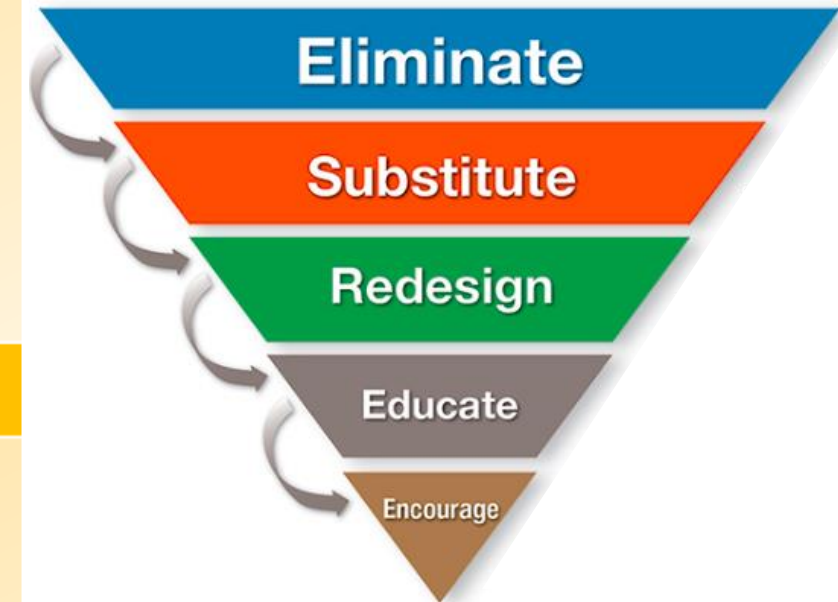


# Organizational and cultural factors in construction increase the risk of mental health problems and decrease help-seeking:

- Long working hours, hard physical labor, high injury rates
- Cultural norms / stigma inhibit help-seeking
- Precarious employment creates additional stress
- Complex nature of construction projects creates additional psychological stress and job strain
- Highly fragmented health care – each employer and each union has its own health plan and health benefits structure
- Existing mental health resources such as EAP, MAP are underutilized
  - Stigma
  - Lack of knowledge of available resources, quality of resources
  - Concerns about confidentiality

# Workplace Hazards

Job Design	Organizational Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long hours</li> <li>Low pay</li> <li>Unrealistic deadlines</li> <li>Fear of layoff</li> <li>Frequent turnover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory overtime</li> <li>Inflexible rules</li> <li>Poor supervision</li> <li>Job insecurity</li> <li>Multiple supervisors</li> <li>Lack of recognition</li> <li>Poor communication</li> </ul>
Physical Stressors	Interpersonal Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chemical agents</li> <li>Noise, heat, vibration</li> <li>Poor air quality</li> <li>Improper lighting</li> <li>Poorly designed equipment</li> <li>Repetitive motion</li> <li>Awkward postures/Heavy lifting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distant, uncommunicative supervisors</li> <li>Poor performance from subordinates</li> <li>Bullying or harassment</li> <li>Problems caused by excessive time away from family</li> </ul>



Hierarchy of Controls Applied to NIOSH Total Worker Health

# Multi-level, multi-component programs are needed to effectively change risk

- Effective workplace mental health programs address both personal and organizational determinants of workplace mental health, identify those most at risk, and provide timely treatment
- Increase willingness to seek help (increase awareness, decrease stigma, normalize help-seeking).
- Ensure that workers and supervisors know how to find help and how to direct their co-workers for help (When I talk to a worker in crisis, what should I do?)
- Peer based programs may increase help-seeking

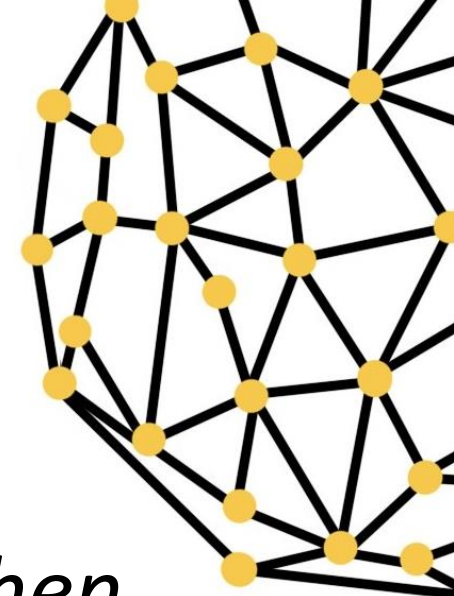
# MATES in Construction

- Raise awareness
  - Industry engagement, Awareness training for all workers
  - Fact sheets, toolbox talks
- Build capacity on sites
  - Train Peer Connectors
  - Some people onsite with more advanced skills
- Improve connection to help
  - On-site support
  - 24/7 Support line
  - Case managers



## Success:

*We have succeeded when  
MATES in Construction is no  
longer a program run on sites,  
but the way our industry does  
business.*





# Efforts in US

- Awareness is growing
- A few individual companies have put in comprehensive programs
- Unions, Contractor Associations working to provide mental health first aid, other training
- National efforts through CPWR, AGC, other groups
- OSHA recognition of mental health as a work-relevant condition
- Regional efforts

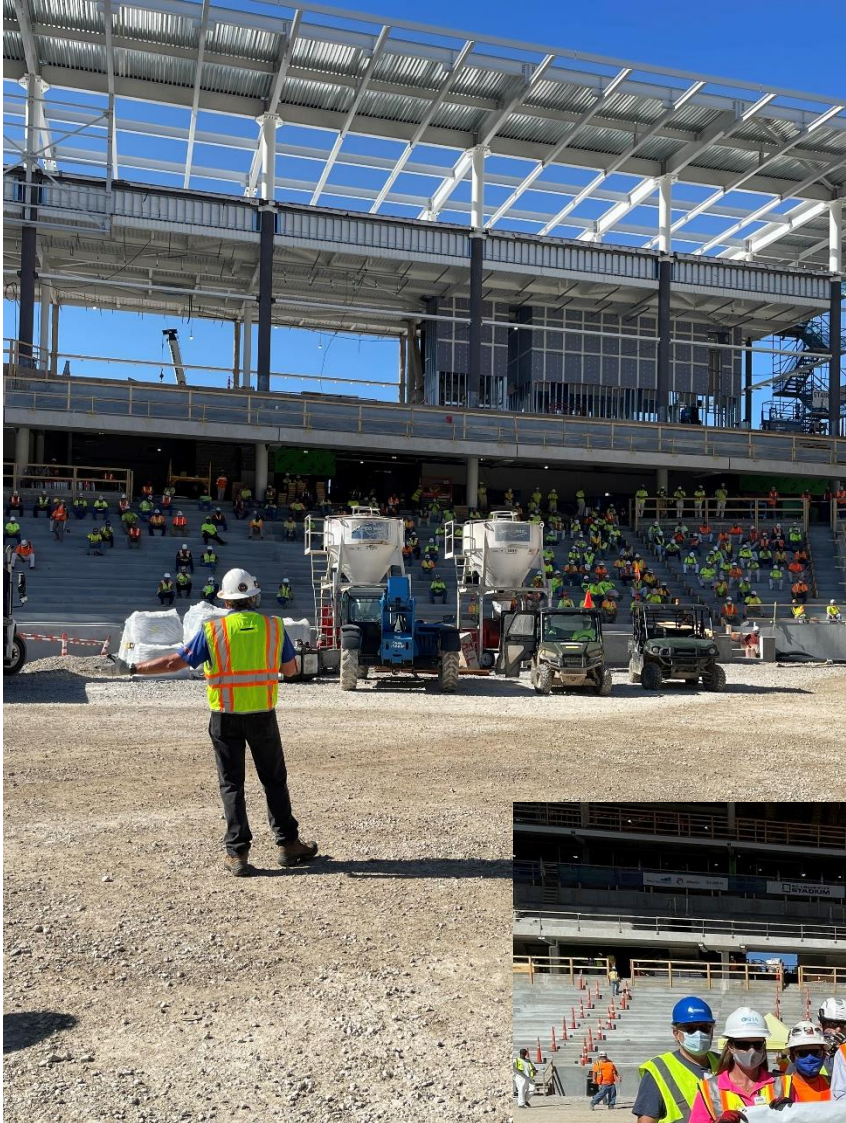


**YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

SUICIDE PREVENTION & AWARENESS



**AGCMO**  
MISSOURI CHAPTER  
THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION



Mental Health Monday's



## Mental Health vs Mental Illness



### Mental Health:

- Emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing
- Affects how we think, feel, and act
- Helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices
- Changes over time and is impacted by many factors:
  - » genetics
  - » life events
  - » environmental stressors
  - » poor physical health
  - » change in routine

### Mental Illnesses:

- Conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior, such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder.
- May be occasional or long-lasting (chronic) and affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day
- Among the most common health conditions in the United States - more than 50% of Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime

*"I spent most of my life feeling on edge and irritated. I'd blow up at my co-workers and family over trivial things. It wasn't until my wife made me go to marriage counseling that I realized I had anxiety. And I realized that it got a whole lot worse when project deadlines approached.*

*I feel a lot of people in construction have mental health issues, and working in construction compounds it. Even if you realize you have these problems, there's no way to treat or deal with them, so it becomes worse and worse.*

*If you're working 60 hours a week, you're setting yourself up to fail. Toxic masculinity is an easy thing to pin it on, but the issues are more complex.*

*- Anonymous*

Take action to create living conditions and environments that support mental health and a healthy lifestyle.

Our industry and region are coming together to promote good mental health in construction. Below are things you can do to support the mental health of you and your coworkers.



**Recognize It**  
Look out for common signs someone is struggling



**Talk About It**  
Connect with someone you trust to share your concerns



**Support Others**  
Let them know you're there to listen and find help if needed



**Get Help**  
Reach out to your doctor for support and guidance

800-273-TALK  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)



Scan for survey access and mental health resources



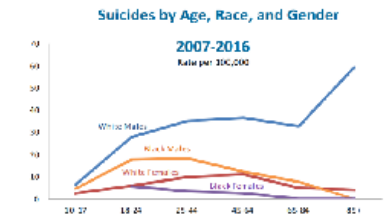
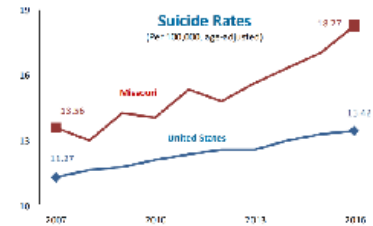
Call 800-273-8255  
Text HELLO to 741741

**Suicide Prevention Week – Day 1**  
Addressing Suicide and Mental Health in Construction

## Topic of the Day: The State of Our Industry

### How big is the suicide problem?

- Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the US and it's getting worse.
- Nearly 45,000 suicides in the US in 2016 (more than deaths from motor vehicle crashes).
- Missouri is ranked 13 highest in suicides.
- Males account for almost 4 out of 5 suicide deaths.
- Construction has 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate of suicides among all occupations, 4 times higher than in the general population.



### Why the construction industry?

- Male dominated industry with a macho culture
- High job stress – demanding schedules, seasonal work, layoffs, long hours, frequent travel
- Injuries and chronic pain; sometimes treated with opioids
- High rates of alcohol and drug use



*"I know one person who killed himself and three more that OD'd. That's a lot. A lot of guys just don't think that they measure up, and all day they are just told to get it done, get it done, get it done."*

- Field Manager

### So what do we do?

- Talk about it! Make it part of the safety conversation.
- Learn to recognize the warning signs in yourself and others.
- Seek help from national and local resources.



#youarenotalone



# YOU ARE NOT ALONE



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THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

Toolbox Talks

# PLEDGE OF HOPE CAMPAIGN

HELP RAISE AWARENESS FOR SUICIDE & MENTAL HEALTH IN CONSTRUCTION

CHOOSE A LEVEL:

\$2500+

PLATINUM LEVEL

\$1000-  
\$2499

GOLD LEVEL

\$500-  
\$999

SILVER LEVEL

\$250-  
\$499

BRONZE LEVEL



MAKE THE PLEDGE  
& RECEIVE:

- Company name/logo on signage displayed at select AGCMO events throughout 2021
- Recognition on our Suicide Prevention webpage
- Discounted Mental Health Training
- Suicide Prevention/Mental Health Marketing Materials

*All sponsorship funds will be used for Suicide Prevention in the Construction Industry campaign efforts.*

#YOUARENOTALONE



**YOU ARE NOT ALONE**



# HOPE.

SUICIDE ISN'T THE ANSWER

**HOLD ON PAIN ENDS**



TEXT "HOPE" TO:

**741741**

CALL 24 HOURS A DAY:

**800-273-TALK**

Brought to you by a partnership between:

 <b>AGCMO</b> MISSOURI CHAPTER THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION	 Washington University in St. Louis HEALTHIER WORKFORCE CENTER of the MIDWEST
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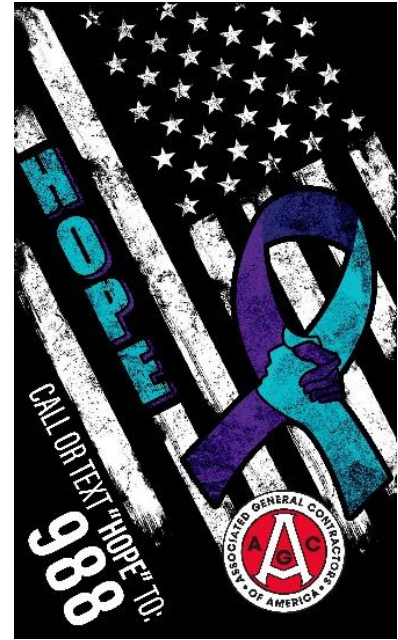


Helplines are free, confidential and are not affiliated with AGCMO.

Scan for survey  
access and  
resources



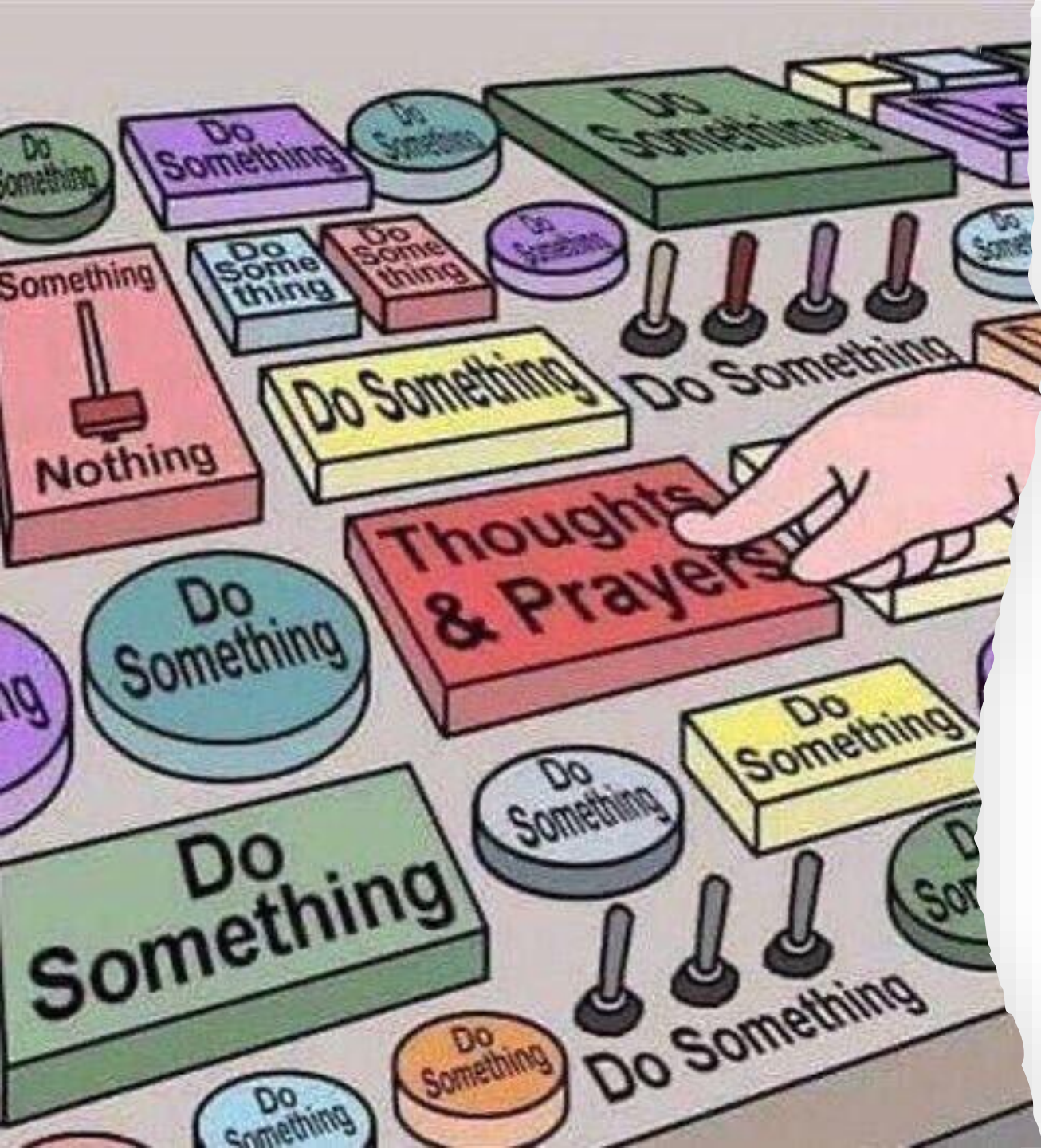
**STEP IN.  
SPEAK UP.**





# Potential employer responses

- Find out how your employees are doing and what they need
- Do more active outreach, with better communications to improve uptake of existing resources.
- Enhance supervisor training to increase perceived support by employees
- Enhance & encourage peer support
- Normalize help-seeking, reduce stigma



Acknowledge and address systematic workplace hazards

Move beyond prevention focus on “resilience”

## YOU OK?

### Suicide Prevention Campaign for the Workplace



As a leader, you play an important role in creating a safe and open atmosphere where employees can feel comfortable talking about sensitive topics such as suicide and mental health.



**HEALTHIER WORKFORCE**  
CENTER of the MIDWEST

Access campaign materials at:

<http://www.healthierworkforcecenter.org/you-ok-campaign>

A partnership between the Hawkeye on Safety Planning Committee, AGCMO, and the Healthier Workforce Center

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**Healthy Work Center**

<https://oshr.wustl.edu>

<https://hwc.public-health.uiowa.edu>

