



WELLNESS POLICY SERIES

Wellness Policy Toolkit: Mental Wellness Executive Summary

About the *Mental Wellness Policy Toolkit*

Wellness policy is a set of cross-cutting actions that encourage healthy lifestyles and create supportive environments for human health and well-being. The Global Wellness Institute's (GWI's) *Mental Wellness Policy Toolkit* explains why we need to promote our mental wellness and offers specific policy actions that many stakeholders (governments, local communities, business leaders, health professionals) can take to support it. This is not another mental health policy report. This toolkit presents mental wellness as a coherent domain of wellness policy that is separate from, and complementary to, mental health policy. It clarifies the distinction between mental health and mental wellness, presents key arguments for promoting wellness policies, and highlights a variety of mental wellness strategies to support all populations.

Mental wellness and the role of mental wellness policies

GWI defines **mental wellness** as a dynamic, renewable, and positive resource; an active process that requires initiative and conscious action; and an internal experience that encompasses multiple dimensions (mental, emotional, social, psychological). Mental wellness is not just the absence of a mental health condition; it is a key resource that can promote mental health and enhance our well-being.

Mental wellness policies are programs, strategies, and initiatives designed to encourage individuals and communities to promote mental wellness. Around the globe, populations are struggling with growing threats to their mental well-being, and communities are overwhelmed by the costs associated with our escalating mental health crisis. Mental wellness policies can help to decrease the current damage to our social and economic welfare in two important ways:

- 1) They strengthen both the internal resources and community support systems necessary to face life's challenges;
- 2) They can lessen the suffering that stems from insufficient mental health services, by supporting those at risk for mental health issues, and by introducing evidence-based wellness techniques and practices to use for treatment.

Policy actions for mental wellness

To promote mental wellness, we need policies that address the common barriers experienced across nations and cultures, including a lack of awareness and interest, inadequate access, and declining social support. In this toolkit, we propose a set of cohesive mental wellness policies that seek to increase knowledge, provide more opportunities to promote mental wellness, and encourage stakeholder engagement and collaboration. After discussing the most significant challenges to mental wellness, we offer a wide variety of policy recommendations, such as social prescribing, arts and cultural engagement, access to nature, incorporating technology, and restructuring our built environment (see *summary table*). Whether seeking to design policies, advocate for change, or utilize existing community resources, this toolkit provides stakeholders with the knowledge and ideas to support mental wellness and enhance overall well-being.



Summary of key policy objectives and actions: Mental wellness

POLICY OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
1	Improve mental wellness literacy.	<p>Action 1: Improve knowledge and understanding of mental wellness to nudge its adoption by individuals and communities.</p> <p>1.1. Improve individual knowledge of mental wellness pathways and practices. 1.2. Engage and support all community stakeholders in mental wellness education and promotion. 1.3. Strengthen research, standards, and guidelines on mental wellness modalities, products, and services.</p>
2	Increase access to activities and spaces that promote mental wellness.	<p>Action 2: Leverage community infrastructure, nature, arts/culture, and technology to expand access to mental wellness, especially for underserved groups.</p> <p>2.1. Utilize existing spaces to support mental wellness. 2.2. Widen access to nature. 2.3. Increase engagement with arts and culture. 2.4. Foster equitable access to mental wellness spaces and activities. 2.5. Empower communities to design and deliver their own mental wellness activities. 2.6. Use technology responsibly to increase access to mental wellness modalities.</p>
3	Create more socially connected communities.	<p>Action 3: Strengthen social connections through programs, social prescribing, built environment, and technology.</p> <p>3.1. Raise awareness of the dangers and costs of loneliness. 3.2. Prioritize social support for vulnerable and marginalized groups. 3.3. Strengthen connections through social, cultural, and arts engagement programs. 3.4. Use the built environment to connect people and foster social interaction. 3.5. Utilize digital infrastructure to connect people and foster social interaction. 3.6. Leverage existing collaboration and community care resources.</p>
4	Promote mental wellness among children and youth	<p>Action 4: Teach coping skills to children and youth and build social networks to improve their mental resilience.</p> <p>4.1. Help parents and adult caregivers to create a supportive environment for mental health and well-being. 4.2. Use school-based programs to build mental wellness skills. 4.3. Support community activities that engage, connect, and empower children and youth. 4.4. Use technology carefully to support youth mental wellness and provide social connections in safe online environments.</p>
5	Integrate mental wellness-supporting policies into healthcare and other wellness sectors.	<p>Action 5: Embed mental wellness activities across many other wellness sectors and domains to support holistic mental well-being.</p> <p>5.1. Incorporate mental wellness into the health system. 5.2. Reshape our built environments to support mental wellness. 5.3. Prioritize mental wellness at work. 5.4. Encourage physical activity for mental wellness. 5.5. Promote healthy eating for mental wellness.</p>