

Business Group on Health

Driving Change Together

REGIONAL MEETING INSIGHTS

Asia Pacific

September 2024



Business Group on Health brought together health and well-being leaders from across the Asia Pacific (APAC) region on September 11, 2024, to share top priorities and regional trends impacting workforce and benefit strategies.

Key Takeaways:



Localization and Cultural Sensitivity

Tailoring well-being programs to regional cultural norms and legal frameworks is essential for engagement and adoption, especially across diverse countries in the APAC region.



Mental Health Focus

Addressing mental health stigma and promoting psychological safety are shared priorities. Organizations are working to break down barriers by introducing mental health resources such as counseling and support groups.



Inclusive Family Support

Gender-neutral, inclusive parental leave policies reflect evolving family structures and roles, while holistic support throughout the parental journey builds employee loyalty.



Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Leadership plays a critical role in driving employee well-being initiatives, fostering a safe environment for employees to utilize benefits without stigma.



Technology as an Enabler

Digital platforms are crucial in expanding access to mental health and well-being services, particularly in regions with limited in-person resources or where stigma is high.

Driving Change and Fostering a Culture of Well-being

In this session, participants explored how well-being leaders can serve as changemakers across their organizations. By highlighting employer examples, the session demonstrated how regional and in-country benefits initiatives create corporate alignment and help build momentum, ultimately influencing global benefits strategies and efforts.

Listed below are some of the top approaches gleaned from these case studies followed by considerations for employers:

- **Bridging Health Care Gaps:** Organizations are addressing health coverage gaps by offering benefits for routine medical visits and wellness programs, reducing strain on secondary insurance and emphasizing early intervention.
- **Proactive Employee Well-being:** Shifting from reactive to preventive care, employers are emphasizing regular checkups, mental health support and physical activity. For example, one employer's holistic approach highlights the growing importance of addressing physical, financial, emotional and mental health together.
- **Cultural Shift in Leave Policies:** By reframing annual leave from an employee cash supplement to an important well-being tool, organizations are using communication campaigns to emphasize its role in stress management and mental health improvement.
- **Mental Health Focus:** Mental health remains a top priority and employers are focusing on destigmatization and improved access to resources, reflecting a growing recognition of stress and burnout post-pandemic.
- **Evolving Parental Support:** Gender-neutral parental leave reflects shifting workplace norms, promoting shared caregiving responsibilities and inclusivity.
- **Leadership and Accountability:** Leadership involvement is critical, with employers using dashboards to track leave usage and promote a culture of well-being.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

Implement Preventive Care Programs: Create or enhance benefits that cover routine medical visits and wellness programs to encourage early intervention.

Promote Mental Health Resources: Regularly communicate the availability of mental health resources to reduce stigma and encourage utilization.

Reframe Leave Policies: Shift the narrative around leave from a burden to a well-being opportunity through campaigns educating employees on its benefits.

Encourage Leadership Involvement: Develop tools for leaders to monitor and promote employee well-being, making it a shared responsibility.



Addressing Mental Health Needs Through Leadership and Technology

Industry experts facilitated a roundtable for employers to discuss opportunities and approaches to address mental health issues (e.g., burnout, stigma, suicidal ideation) impacting employees in the APAC region. During this session, employers shared various strategies they are implementing to support the mental health needs of employees and marginalized groups.

The following approaches and strategies offer areas of consideration for multinational employers:

- **Localized and Inclusive Mental Health Support:** Companies in the region are tailoring mental health programs to local cultures and vulnerable groups, including LGBTQ+ employees and those with disabilities, using local counselors and adapting to country-specific needs and regulations.
- **Breaking Stigma and Promoting Psychological Safety:** Despite progress, mental health stigma persists, and companies are working to normalize conversations, offering confidential counseling services to increase employee comfort in seeking help, in line with local laws and regulations to ensure safety.
- **Role of Leadership in Mental Health:** Senior leadership plays a crucial role in embedding mental health into company culture through support and sponsorship of top-down initiatives and creating cultures that embrace employee mental health.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

Tailor Mental Health Initiatives: Develop culturally relevant mental health strategies by engaging local experts and counselors to meet specific regional needs.

Foster Psychological Safety: Encourage open discussions about mental health through workshops and training sessions to help normalize the conversation and reduce stigma.

Support Vulnerable Groups: Create inclusive mental health programs that specifically address the needs of marginalized communities within the workforce.

Utilize Technology for Access: Invest in technology-driven solutions to provide discreet access to mental health resources, particularly in regions where stigma is high.



Moments that Matter: The Future of Family Forming in Asia Pacific

Family-forming benefits and parental support are an emerging area of focus for multinational employers interested in crafting a globally consistent approach to health and well-being. Local laws and regulations, coupled with cultural nuance and sensitivities can present unique challenges when developing a global family-forming approach. This session highlighted the intricate employer journey of establishing a globally consistent benefit that looks after parents through every stage of their family forming journey.

The text below lists top approaches shared by multinational employers during the session, followed by several related considerations for employers:

- **Comprehensive Reproductive Health Support:** Broader reproductive health support from vendors highlight the increasing complexity of family formation, moving beyond IVF to support a wider range of employee reproductive needs (e.g., egg freezing).
- **Addressing Productivity Concerns:** One employer balances increased parental leave with productivity by allowing voluntary job transfers during leave, providing growth opportunities while maintaining business continuity.
- **Cultural Norms and Parental Leave:** Addressing cultural norms—such as resistance to men taking parental leave—requires thoughtful communication and linking policies to company values.
- **End-to-End Leave Support:** Focusing on the entire parental leave experience, from pre-leave to reintegration, ensures that employees and their families are supported throughout the process.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

Expand Reproductive Health Benefits: Consider offering comprehensive reproductive health support that goes beyond traditional methods to accommodate diverse family-forming journeys. This may include leave for family care, adoption leave or bereavement leave.

Adopt Gender-Neutral Policies: Implement gender-neutral parental leave policies to reflect changing family dynamics and support all employees equally.

Create Flexible Work Arrangements: Allow employees to volunteer for temporary job transfers during parental leave to maintain productivity and provide development opportunities.

Engage in Cultural Sensitivity Training: Conduct training to help employees understand and embrace new policies, particularly regarding gender roles in family leave.

Support the Full Leave Journey: Develop a holistic approach to parental leave that includes pre-leave preparation and post-leave reintegration strategies.



Final Thoughts

Around the world, employers remain committed to driving positive organizational changes and offering comprehensive benefits that support the overall well-being of employees. As such, employee well-being initiatives in the APAC region are becoming more localized, inclusive and responsive to workforce needs. By addressing mental health stigma, evolving family support policies and leveraging advancements in technology, companies are creating more supportive environments that reflect cultural nuances and regional complexities. Leadership commitment and thoughtful communication are key to ensuring the success of these programs across diverse markets.

