Vital Signs of a Healthy Workplace: Connection, Communication, Culture and Capacity

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Presenters

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Executive Summary

The Department of Medicine Wellness Council presented a framework for evaluating and improving workplace well-being through four interconnected vital signs: **Connection, Communication, Culture, and Capacity**. The Wellness Council emphasized that employee well-being is shaped not only by individual wellness activities but also by workplace systems, leadership practices, onboarding experiences, access to resources, and organizational responsiveness.

Three Wellness Council initiatives were highlighted:

- **Leadership Evaluation**: Developing structured processes for confidential feedback that helps leaders improve communication, transparency, and professional development opportunities.
- **Onboarding & Retention**: Identifying onboarding best practices across divisions and creating standardized approaches to improve employee engagement, retention, and early-career success.
- **Access Center**: Improving patient access, scheduling efficiency, provider engagement, and referral processes while reducing no-shows and delays.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate how listening to stakeholders, implementing improvements, and scaling successful approaches can create a healthier workplace culture and stronger organizational performance.

Key Takeaways from Each Section

1. Healthy Workplace Framework

Four Vital Signs

- **Connection:** Employees feel supported and experience a sense of belonging.
- **Communication:** Employees are informed, listened to, and able to speak up.
- **Culture:** Recognition, fairness, respect, and well-being are valued.
- **Capacity:** Employees have access to the resources needed to perform effectively.

Key Message

Well-being exists at the intersection of individuals, teams, and systems. Sustainable improvement requires both personal resilience and organizational support structures

2. Leadership Evaluation Initiative

Objective

Create a sustainable leadership feedback process that supports growth and continuous improvement among division and departmental leaders.

Accomplishments

- Pilot conducted in Nephrology in 2024.
- Expanded to Endocrinology and Hematology/Oncology in 2026.
- Operations Manual developed to support long-term implementation.
- Survey redesigned to provide role-specific feedback.

Lessons Learned

Leadership feedback revealed opportunities to improve:

- Transparency
- Communication
- Professional development
- Employee engagement
- Responsiveness to concerns

Future Goals

- Expand evaluations across divisions.
- Implement a three-year review cycle.
- Improve survey targeting and relevance.
- Clarify leadership expectations and development plans.

3. Onboarding & Retention Initiative

Purpose
Assess onboarding practices across Department of Medicine divisions to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for standardization.

Findings Across Divisions
Common strengths included:

- Structured onboarding programs
- HR involvement
- Scheduled check-ins
- Mentoring and peer support efforts

Common challenges included:

- Lack of standardization
- Technology and system access delays
- Limited supervisor training
- Inconsistent tracking of employee follow-ups
- Capacity constraints within HR functions

Recommendations

- Create a department-wide onboarding checklist.
- Standardize 30-, 60-, 90-day and 6-month check-ins.
- Develop supervisor onboarding training.
- Build a centralized onboarding resource hub.
- Establish buddy/mentor programs.
- Standardize technology access processes.

Retention Focus
Future work will emphasize:

- First-year retention
- New hire satisfaction
- Mentorship participation
- Analysis of exit interview themes
- Reduction of voluntary turnover during the first year of employment

4. Access Center Initiative

Purpose

Improve access to care, clinical scheduling processes, communication, and coordination between clinics and the Access Center.

Current State

- Access Center schedules approximately 95% of new patient appointments.
- Call center, capacity management, and pre-certification functions are centralized.
- Challenges include no-shows, cancellations, extended wait times, provider scheduling burdens, and incomplete referral information.

Improvement Strategies

- Provider engagement in division meetings.
- Better provider-to-patient matching.
- Appointment backfill processes.
- Outreach efforts by nurse coordinators.
- Scheduling template improvements.
- Use of technologies such as Phreesia and TeleVox.
- Simplified referral processes.

AI Opportunities

The Department's APEX (AI-Powered Excellence) initiative is piloting an AI solution to review outside records and determine referral appropriateness. If successful, the model could be expanded to additional specialties.

Closing Message

The three initiatives collectively reinforce the Wellness Council's approach:

- **Listen & Respond** through Leadership Evaluation.
- **Connect & Belong** through Onboarding & Retention.
- **Identify & Access Support** through Access Center improvements.

The Council emphasized an improvement cycle of: **Need** → **Listen** → **Act** → **Learn** → **Scale**.

Interested in participating?

Applications for the 2027 Wellness Council opened October 21, 2026, with a stated deadline of November 20, 2026. Faculty and staff are encouraged to contribute ideas and help shape workplace wellness initiatives across the Department of Medicine.