



What Supports Are Available to MDI Professionals for Managing Work Stress? Results from RTI's National Survey



WORK-RELATED STRESS
AMONG MDI PROFESSIONALS:
A NATIONAL SURVEY



NIJ National Institute of Justice
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Medicolegal Death Investigator (MDI) professionals experience high levels of work-related stress, but relatively little is known about its impact and the kinds of supports and resources needed to address it. RTI International partnered with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) and the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IACME) to develop this national survey. Nearly 1,000 MDIs participated.

Overall, MDIs' access to work-based health and wellness resources is limited. The most widely available resource (employer-provided therapy or counseling) is available to less than half of respondents.



18% of respondents reported that they do not have access to ANY health and wellness resources at work.

Percentage of Respondents with Access to Work-Related Resources

PROGRAM	PRE-COVID	CURRENT
Informal Gatherings with Colleagues at Work (e.g., lunches)	33.5	33.6
Employer-Provided Therapy or Counseling	33.1	47.3
Colleague Gatherings (e.g., work parties)	29.6	18.8
Physical Health/Wellbeing Training	21.9	28
Stress/Mental Health Training	21.4	32.5
Critical Incident Stress Debriefing	18.9	24.5
Sharing Accomplishments and Announcements*	7.5	7.9
Exercise (e.g., on-site equipment or exercise facilities)	18.1	20.4
Meditation, Yoga, or Mindfulness Training	14.8	16.9
Informal Mentoring	11.1	16.7
Peer Support Program	10.9	16
Formal Mentoring Program	7.5	7.9

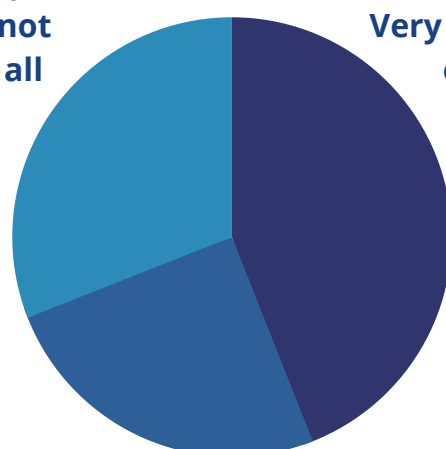
*(e.g., through a newsletter or website)

27% of respondents who have access to employer-provided therapy or counseling use it. Perceptions of effectiveness among those who use it are mixed:

Only slightly effective or not effective at all
31%

Very or extremely effective
44%

Somewhat effective
25%



5 most common strategies for coping with work-related stress outside of work:

Engaging in hobbies	87%
Zoning out (e.g. watching TV, surfing the internet, napping)	84%
Travel/vacation	82%
Physical exercise	81%
Seeking support from family	73%



Of those who have access to some work-related resources...



18% do not use any of the available resources

59% use some of the available resources

23% use all of the available resources

The work-related resources viewed as most effective were:



Peer support program	68%
Formal mentoring program	66%
Outside gatherings	63%
Informal gatherings during work time	54%
Informal mentoring	54%



Recommendations for Employers of MDI Professionals

The work-based resources MDIs find most effective involve opportunities for social support. Take the following steps to reduce the impact of work-related stress on your employees:

- Implement a formal peer support program.
- Provide opportunities for mentoring.
- Help colleagues connect through social events and opportunities to interact during the workday.

Tips for MDIs



- Find out which mental health resources are provided through your employer. Try them out and see what works for you.
- Access wellness resources available through professional organizations in your field, such as the IACME and the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME).
- Engage in activities outside of work time that help you mentally detach from work and boost your wellbeing, such as hobbies or physical exercise.
- If you or someone you know needs help, reach out. SAMHSA's National Helpline, for example, is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders. 1-800-662-HELP (4357)



In the coming months, RTI and our partners at ABMDI and IACME will be sharing additional survey findings and recommendations for agencies and MDI professionals. Visit our website to stay informed of future publications, conference presentations, podcasts, and more: <https://forensicrti.org/understanding-work-related-stress-mdi-professionals/>.