

Are you prepared to handle cancer in the workplace?

Your plan to better support employees diagnosed with cancer – and the role you play



It can be hard to know what to do next when an employee is diagnosed with cancer, but as a business leader, you have the chance to provide critical support during a difficult time. **Cancer survivors exceed 18 million – and about half are of working age.**¹ So, it's a health concern you will likely address in your role. Use this checklist to take action on cancer care in the workplace and improve outcomes.

Create a proactive plan

Review company policies, procedures, and health care benefits as a preemptive measure to ensure your workplace can support a cancer diagnosis or other serious illness. Employees will likely ask about:

- Comprehensive cancer benefits plan – routine screenings, personalized care, clinical trials, and access to cancer specialists.**
- Modifying working hours or responsibilities**
- Wellness programs supporting total well-being**
- Community-based resources (local American Cancer Society chapter)**
- Programs connecting those in treatment and survivors**
- Cancer or health navigator**
- Medical leave**
- Health insurance coverage education**
- Affordable mental health support**

When you receive the news

It is important to respond to your employee's diagnosis with care. Approach the topic in a way that makes it clear you care about their well-being. In the end, ensure you both understand the situation, feel at ease, and have an open line of communication.

Here are some supportive statements if you're at a loss for words:

“ I’m sorry that you’re going through this. ”

“ Let’s check-in regularly to see how you’re feeling. ”

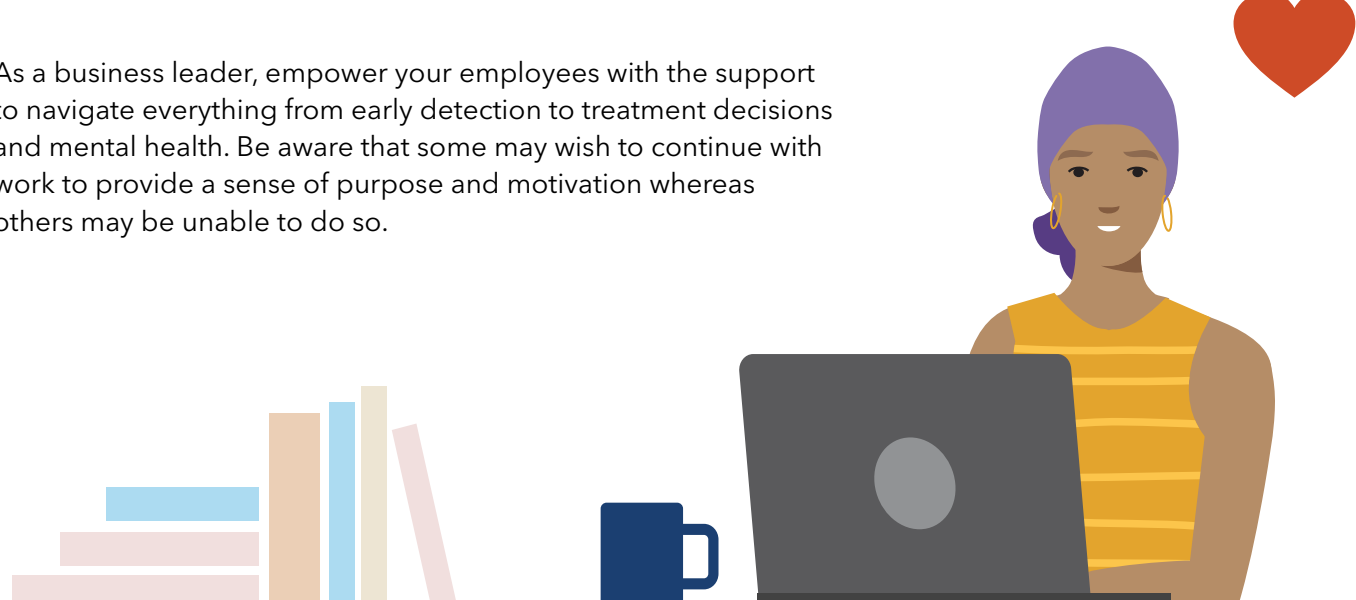
“ If you need to talk, I’m available. ”

“ You’re a valuable member of this team. We’ll work together to figure out the next steps. ”

“ Tell me what you think we can do to make your workload more manageable. ”

Provide employees with resources to thrive

As a business leader, empower your employees with the support to navigate everything from early detection to treatment decisions and mental health. Be aware that some may wish to continue with work to provide a sense of purpose and motivation whereas others may be unable to do so.



Here are some ways you can support employees:



- ### During Treatment
- Offer flexible working schedules that fit with their treatment plan
 - Organize a meal train
 - Provide guidance for sharing the news with coworkers

- ### After Treatment
- Educate survivors about external resources for receiving counseling
 - Provide survivors with financial-advice resources, as cancer can be costly
 - Continue schedule-flexibility as survivors may still be dealing with side effects and follow-up screenings



Legal requirements

Give employees peace of mind by ensuring they are made aware of their legal rights under the following and note there may be additional state-specific requirements:

ADA

Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA protects cancer survivors from workplace discrimination and requires employers to make reasonable accommodations to perform their job (i.e. modifying work schedules, reassigning to less physically taxing positions).

FMLA

The Family and Medical Leave Act

The FMLA gives employees the right to take time off due to illness or to care for an ill dependent, without losing their job. This law gives employees up to 12 weeks of annual unpaid, job-protected leave.

Need more resources?

Kaiser Permanente cancer care

Learn about different cancer types and search for oncologists

Mental health & wellness tools

Explore our mental health resources to help you thrive in mind, body, and spirit.

Cancer Caregiver Support

Ensure caregivers of those diagnosed with cancer have the resources to care for themselves

Footnotes:
1. Cancer Treatment & Survivorship Facts & Figures 2022-2024. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, 2022.