

mentalhealth  
*taskforce*

## 2021 Mental Health Summit





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2021 Mental Health Summit

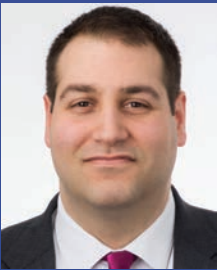
On May 19, 2021, Reed Smith hosted one of the first law firm conferences to address mental wellness in the legal profession and wider business community.

A note from our Mental Health Task Force Partner Chair

Progress. Inclusivity. Support. At its core, those are the bedrock principles upon which Reed Smith’s Mental Health Task Force is built. And nothing personifies those principles more than the ground-breaking Mental Health Summit.

The Summit touched upon critical issues relating to mental health within the legal industry, including support from leadership, as well as how diverse employees may be disproportionately impacted by mental health-related issues. We were fortunate to be joined by several outstanding thought leaders, and the post-Summit feedback has been beyond my wildest imagination.

I want to thank all of the Summit’s speakers and attendees, and all of the amazing individuals who comprise and support the firm’s Mental Health Task Force. It is only because of you that we are able to achieve progress, facilitate inclusivity, and provide support to those in need.



**Mark Goldstein**  
Partner and Chair of the  
Mental Health Task Force,  
Reed Smith



## Background: The development of a concept, an idea, and aspirations

Just five years have passed since the landmark 2016 ABA and Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation study revealed a mental health crisis in the legal profession. Even before the global pandemic brought a new wave of psychological distress, attention had been building around how employers could shift toward a culture of mental wellness and away from the stigma that keeps people from getting help.

The goal of the Summit was to hear expert insight and first-person accounts about recovery from mental health issues, and what law firms, businesses, and individuals can do to improve mental health in the workplace.

In our inaugural Mental Health Summit, we endeavored to shed further light on the stigma associated with mental health concerns, and to provide insights to internal employees and external organizations and clients about the importance of addressing, head-on, the subject of mental health issues in the workplace. This year has brought many challenges that have affected us in various ways and have caused an increase in mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, substance use, grief, and isolation to name a few.

We are grateful to our panel of experts for their dedication, useful insights, and contributions, as well as for their valuable time speaking at the summit.



[View panel](#)

### Welcome remarks

The Summit began with opening remarks from Casey Ryan, Partner and Global Head of Legal Personnel, and Tamara Box, Managing Partner of Europe and Middle East.



**Casey Ryan**  
Partner and Global Head  
of Legal Personnel,  
Reed Smith



**Tamara Box**  
Managing Partner  
of Europe & Middle East,  
Reed Smith



Reed Smith is committed to improving mental health at our firm and in our industry by destigmatizing mental illness and substance use issues and has been a leader in addressing the mental health of our attorneys and employees. I am proud that Reed Smith was an early signatory of the American Bar Association's Well-Being Pledge and we are also a founding member of the newly formed Institute of Well-Being in Law (IWIL), which further illustrates our commitment to our employees' mental health.



We are dedicated to encouraging an open dialogue at all levels of the firm and to providing comprehensive training to our people so that we may spot the signs of a mental health crisis in our colleagues and know how to get them the help they need and deserve. We know that breaking down the barriers associated with mental health and substance use issues is not just key to being a compassionate employer, we believe it's also key to being a true leader in the legal industry. It's not only good for us as a firm, but it's also just the right thing to do.



# Panel 1



[View panel](#)

## Compassionate compliance

Our CLE session, “Compassionate compliance,” addressed the prevalence of mental health issues in the legal industry, with consideration to support employees with mental health disabilities. Our moderators shared their personal stories of living with depression, anxiety, OCD, and substance use in an effort to destigmatize mental health issues in the legal field.

A 2016 study by the ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation shows that lawyers are disproportionately expected to suffer from mental health issues. The frequency of mental health challenges in lawyers is higher than in the general population. And, 21 percent to 36 percent are problem drinkers. Studies have shown that the first 10 years of being a lawyer demonstrate the highest rates of substance abuse.

*“Leaders can create and support change through their own demonstrated commitment to core values and well-being in their own lives and by supporting others in doing the same.”* (National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, 2017, pg. 14)

The stigma and fear associated with speaking up often stops people from seeking help. Many feel as though asking for help is seen as a weakness or can be viewed as a roadblock to advancing in the workplace. *“The stigma and fear about speaking up, that’s the number one issue that stops people from seeking help. What are my colleagues and clients going to think? What impact is that going to have on my career? It took me a long time to accept that.”*

Employers can be compassionately compliant by having clear policies in place and by offering relevant supervisor training. Expressing empathy can go a long way: *“I’m concerned about you,” “I’m here to listen and support you,” “I’m on your side.”* Employers should establish confidential reporting procedures by recognizing personal needs and accommodate schedules and vacations when possible.

This panel also discussed the importance of employment law issues and disabilities, such as making sure employers follow the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which includes state and local counterparts.

Lastly, our moderators touched on self-care within our industry. Whether it is skipping the subway and walking to work or listening to music, trying to weave in personal time into your professional life is important for your mental health. It is essential to establish good habits and take time for yourself.

### Panelists:



**Mark Goldstein**  
Partner, Reed Smith



**Mike Joyce**  
Partner, Vinson & Elkins LLP

## How to encourage self-care

Establish confidential reporting procedures and procedures for help

Reduce expectations of alcohol use at events

Avoid rewarding extreme behavior

Set realistic deadlines based on true needs

Recognize personal needs and accommodate schedules and vacations when possible

Evaluate 24/7 and face time expectations



## Panel 2



[View panel](#)

### Building a culture of understanding for mental health and wellness

This panel focused on how to work together to build a culture of empathy and understanding where business leaders recognize the need to build an environment where mental health issues are normalized and supported. This is especially important when you consider that one in four people experience or live with a mental health condition.

The pandemic has had a major impact on mental health. We have seen the erosion of boundaries between work and home. Going from an office environment to working from home and then the expectations of going back into the office will be challenging for a lot of people. Recognizing and remaining flexible is key in helping employees make the necessary transitions and ensure success for the individuals and the company.

*"I would argue nothing is more important in your life than your well-being. Take the initiative to take care of yourself. You will be more productive, efficient, happier, and a better human."*

In terms of achieving a cultural shift, most organizations succeed where senior leaders regionally and globally start to have a dialogue at private and public forums.

*"There is a stigma around mental health in the workplace ... to eradicate that stigma, it is absolutely critical for the messaging to come from the top down."*

There is no one-size-fits-all approach. It is important to meet people where they are. By building an infrastructure that recognizes and commits to meet the needs of those with challenges, you will serve your entire group of constituents. As you build support and awareness, you gain momentum that then grows to people outside of your organization, who then get to know what you are doing. The larger community then learns about your initiatives and you continue to engage and build a reputation for being a safe place for individuals to self-identify and for others to become allies and ambassadors.

One way to start is to do a complete review of policy with a mental health lens. At Reed Smith, we created a Mental Health Tool Kit that puts all of our information and resources together, providing easy access for attorneys and staff. Starting and supporting an affinity group provides a forum for employees at all levels to engage, top-down, bottom-up, and peer-to-peer, and to provide awareness, resources, and education. Understanding that there are things we can do as an organization that can really change people's lives – that's the magnitude of things that can be accomplished.

*"This isn't a one-size-fits-all approach ... but if you can build a structure within your organization that recognizes the commitment to meet the needs of those with the greatest challenges, ultimately you'll serve your entire group of constituents."*

As we move forward, there is a lot of opportunity for partnering, not only within our internal organizations but also with clients, peer organizations, community providers, and vendors. We believe that it's easier to partner on things like mental health and disabilities when you have weaved your commitment into your organization. If you have walked the walk and are outward-facing in terms of your commitment, partners will come to the table.

#### Moderators:



**Richard Ceeney**  
Partner, Reed Smith



**Vicki Tankle**  
Associate, Reed Smith

#### Panelists:



**Katy Basile**  
Partner, Reed Smith



**Domenic Cervoni**  
Vice President and  
Senior Legal Counsel,  
HSBC North America  
Holdings Inc.



**Ryan Hammond**  
Executive Director  
Eagles Autism Challenge,  
Philadelphia Eagles



## Panel 3



[View panel](#)

### Making a positive impact on the mental health of diverse employees

2020 will forever be known as a time of change and reckoning. High-profile racial injustice incidents took place while our personal and work lives were in a state of upheaval as we navigated through a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic.

This year forced corporations and organizations to have conversations about race, racism, and the mental health of diverse employees. *"We were seeing anxiety and depression on the rise within the Black community, seeing traumatic images from the murder of George Floyd and having to have difficult conversations with others. People weren't realizing this trauma was affecting people of color, but not just at that moment, but in our society for over 400 years."*

At some organizations, it became the responsibility of Black employees to lead the internal corporate response to that trauma, leaving little time to grieve, process, rest, and recover. This process can be emotionally exhausting. One panelist commented, *"I was not okay. I had to show up with a smile and set that grief and trauma and hurt aside and be my best self. The day job doesn't stop. It was a separate, full-time job to lead the response to the racial unrest. There was pressure to perform like nothing was happening, even though so much was happening outside the company."*

Because of the stigma against mental illness, many in the diverse community were hesitant to seek counseling. They didn't know how to access it, or they didn't think it was for them. And they couldn't find somebody that looked like them. While people naturally gravitate and want people to help them that look like them or who have experienced similar issues, we have to make sure that people who don't look like us are getting the training and education and understand the work they are asked to do.

Businesses were challenged to support and give voice to our diverse employees. Organizations needed to respectfully address the legitimate concerns, fears, and questions of a diverse workforce that has experienced these problems for decades. Employers had to respond with an increased awareness with regard to the effect that racial inequity has had on the mental health of employees of color.

Every effort should be made to ensure that employees feel heard. The dialogue must result in tangible action with measurable opportunities for improvement on both an individual and corporate level. It is with these goals in mind that Reed Smith launched its Racial Equity Action Plan.

The Racial Equity Action Plan addresses internal well-being and learning, including:

Comprehensive outreach and connectivity with our people, especially Black lawyers and staff

Extension of Reed Smith's Wellness Works program to racial equity issues

Launch of racial equity and sensitivity learning/sharing series

Assess progress and challenges of key metrics for DE&I improvement, especially regarding Black recruitment, retention, and promotion

#### Moderators:



**John Iino**  
Partner and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Global Chair, Reed Smith



**Carole Mehigan**  
Responsible Business Manager EMEA, Reed Smith

#### Panelists:



**Christie Barrows**  
Employee Engagement Program Manager, Intel Corporation Olympic Program Office



**Dr. Charma D. Dudley**  
Associate Director of Behavioral Health Services at Beacon Health Options, Second Vice President of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) National Board of Directors Member of NAMI's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workgroup



**Peter Ellis**  
Partner, Global Chair of Litigation & Dispute Resolution Department, Member of Racial Equity Task Force, Reed Smith



**Sherry C. Wang, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor Department of Counseling, Psychology, Santa Clara University

**REAP**  
RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN

Reed Smith's focus is to take the challenges of racial inequity and its impact on the mental health of diverse employees head-on, to ensure that every issue is addressed transparently and effectively.

The challenge in today's environment is in what happens after this chapter of pandemic and racial injustice. We are teaching organizational leaders to understand that mental illness is common and needs to be normalized. Utilizing established systems and incorporating new mental health resources is important for companies to utilize in supporting the inequalities of specific groups of employees. There is an incredible number of intersectional and diverse communities that need to be recognized and supported. Making sure we understand the needs of all our diverse employees will allow companies to implement successful resources and allow for open and safe discussions that will normalize the challenges and the stigmas attached to mental health. *"To be able to have a space at work to talk about racial trauma is an immediate process that can be put in place in organizations ... it is important to gather information from your employees to make sure work is a safe place to talk about their race and mental health. The next question is: is this space really a safe space? It is an investment you have to put in with funds, with time, with a task force for folks to be tasked with that and compensated accordingly."*



## Closing remarks



[View panel](#)

We closed our Summit with remarks from Carolyn Pepper, partner and co-chair of the LEADRS disability business inclusion group at Reed Smith.

Carolyn touched on the importance of hosting our first inaugural mental health summit and bringing people together to discuss the mental wellness of employees in the workforce. It is imperative that we discuss the mental health challenges we face every day, allowing us to have open conversations.

As highlighted during all of the panel discussions, what has been shared *“is that it really is okay to not be okay.”* Real life can challenge an individual’s mental health, and *“if you are having difficulties with mental health, you are not alone.”*

The pandemic pushed us to ask for help, while at the same time pushing us to find solutions for employees to create a healthy work-life balance. Sharing your personal stories has proven to be a powerful tool for others to feel supported and allow for a safe space to speak about their mental health without judgment. This summit was a call to action that mental health is not only important to talk about, but that it truly matters.



**Carolyn Pepper**  
Partner and Co-Chair of  
the LEADRS Disability  
Business Inclusion Group,  
Reed Smith

### Mental Health Task Force

Reed Smith’s Mental Health Task Force was a natural progression from the firm’s LEADRS Disability business inclusion group that champions the talent of people with disabilities, including those living with mental health concerns, and our Wellness Works program that focuses on the overall well-being of our attorneys and staff.

The Mental Health Task Force was created in December of 2019 and works to ensure that our lawyers and professional staff get the assistance they need to confront mental health and substance use issues, and to challenge the stigma surrounding those issues. Its goal is to cultivate a workplace that promotes psychological wellness and encourages help-seeking behaviors.

The Mental Health Task Force advises the firm on policies and practices, educational programming, services, and resources, and is raising awareness around issues of mental well-being. We are committed to leading the way in the recruitment, retention, and career development of people who experience mental health disabilities.

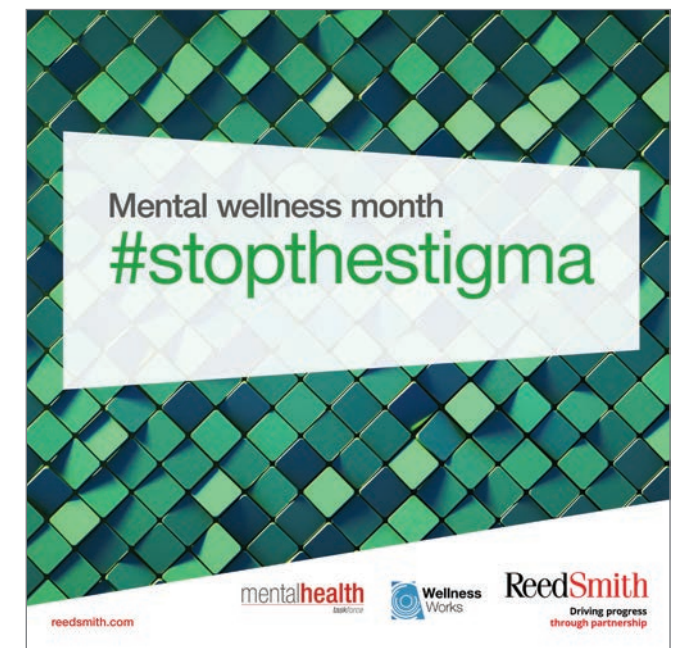
### Reed Smith’s Mental Wellness Month and #StopTheStigma campaign

We celebrate our Mental Wellness Month each March, when we encourage everyone to join us in speaking out to #StopTheStigma about mental health conditions. Particularly during a pandemic, it is hard to know what someone may be going through, and we want everyone to be an ally to their friends, families, and colleagues, and make a difference.

This year, the focal point of our Mental Wellness Month was our #StopTheStigma video campaign. Our Reed Smith “mental health champions” each shared a truth about mental health in a short video, in an effort to chip away at the ongoing stigma surrounding mental health. Please take a moment to view the truth-telling videos on Reed Smith’s #StopTheStigma playlist.

We were thrilled to welcome back Mettie Spiess, a certified psychological health and safety advisor and founder of A World Without Suicide. For the second year in a row, Mettie presented Mental Health Safety training for our personnel. Participants learned how to effectively support the mental well-being and psychological safety of colleagues, and at completion were certified as Mental Health First Responders. Mettie also presented a session on Protecting Your Mental Wellness in Difficult Times, where she spoke of practical strategies for achieving mental well-being.

Reed Smith is proud to be building a culture of wellness and offer new programs and initiatives that encourage mental well-being.



[View videos](#)



Individuals living with mental health conditions can – and do – have highly successful careers.

Mark Goldstein – Partner and Mental Health Task Force Partner Chair, Reed Smith



# Supporting references and documents

Businesses are not alone on this journey. Support is available for employers and employees.

## U.S.-based support

- SAMHSA Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>
- Mental Health First Aid: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/mental-health-resources/>
- Mental Health America: <https://mhanational.org/>
- NAMI National Association on Mental Illness: <https://www.nami.org/Home>
- NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania: <https://www.namikeystonepa.org/>
- National Institute of Mental Health: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>
- CDC Mental Health Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/tools-resources/individuals/index.htm>
- MentalHealth.gov: <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/>

## UK-based support

- NHS Mental Health: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/charity-and-voluntary-services/get-help-from-mental-health-helplines/>
- Time to Change: <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/mental-health-and-stigma/help-and-support>
- Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/seeking-help-for-a-mental-health-problem/where-to-start/>
- Mental Health Foundation: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/getting-help>
- Mental Health UK: <https://mentalhealth-uk.org/help-and-information/downloadable-resources/>





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