

Industry Impact

The *public & labor* workforce wellbeing playbook

The practical guide for improving health, engagement, and outcomes

What you'll find inside

Public and Labor organizations support some of the most essential functions in our communities. Yet behind that shared mission are highly diverse workforces with different schedules, responsibilities, health risks, and support needs.

This playbook is built from what we're seeing across Public and Labor organizations today. Rather than focusing on generic best practices, we examine the strategies, workforce behaviors, and outcomes emerging across organizations responsible for keeping communities safe, educated, connected, and running.

The insights that follow are drawn from Navigate outcomes data, observations from our Public and Labor-focused Client Success team, and the experiences of organizations working to strengthen workforce health, resilience, and engagement.

Industry research helps anchor the conversation, but the heart of this report is what we see every day across the organizations we serve. Inside, you'll see how Public and Labor organizations are building trust, supporting diverse employee populations, and creating measurable improvements in workforce wellbeing.

We share these insights openly because progress accelerates when organizations learn from one another.

Not every organization has the same support system, guidance, or industry expertise. The insights in this guide are intended to help leaders better support the workforce responsible for delivering the services communities rely on every day.

At the end of the day, your people are your strength. And they're ours too.



Behavior change
system



Behavior change
across the Navigate
Book of Business



Public and Labor
Supporting health and wellbeing
across diverse populations

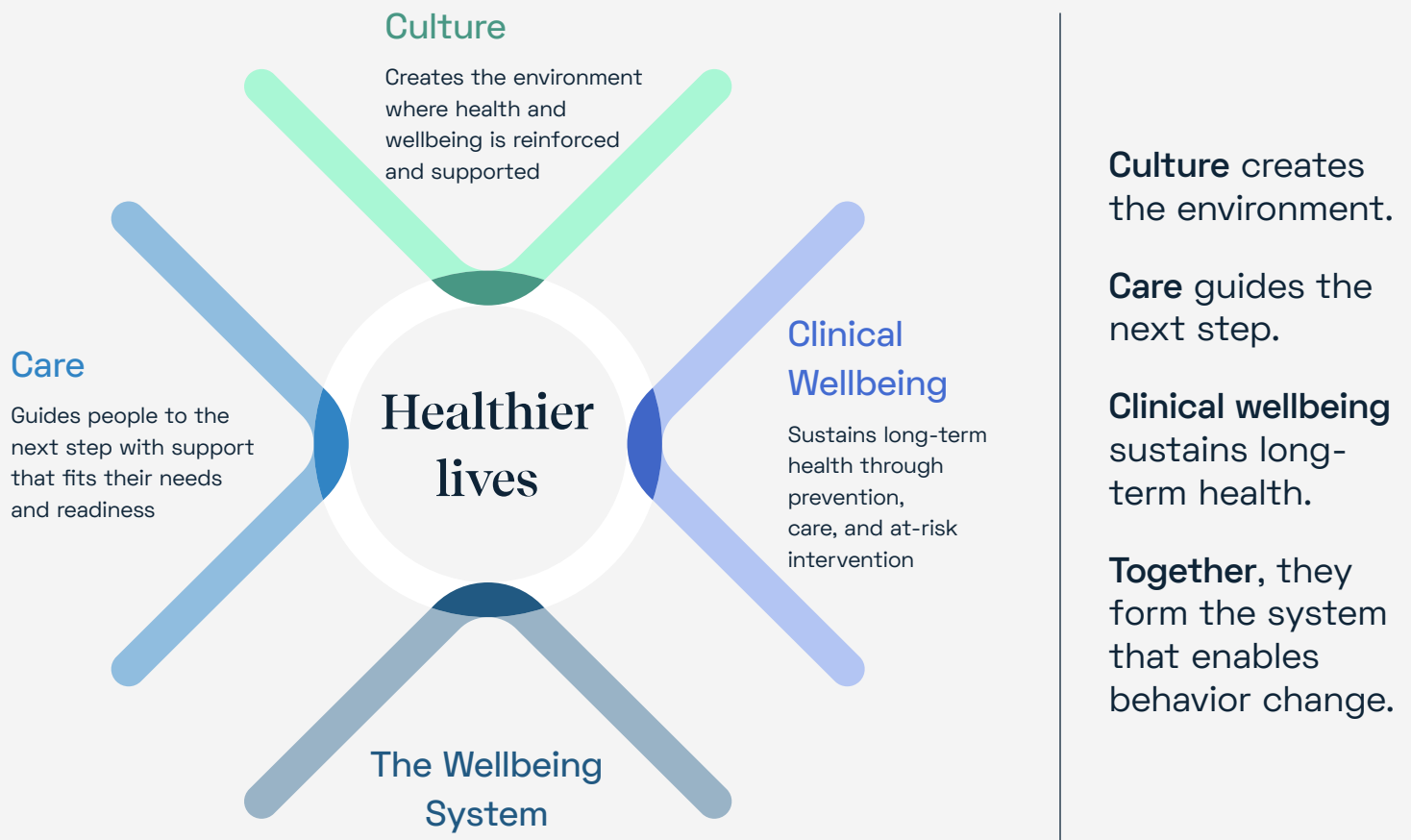


A shared pattern
across every
workforce



Health and wellbeing behavior change system

Wellbeing programs provide activities; systems drive behavior change.



The five signals of behavior change

Signals we see across our book of business:

01 Culture is intentionally designed

The strongest wellbeing programs don't rely on culture to happen naturally. They design it.

Organizations with high, sustained engagement intentionally build health and wellbeing by designing behaviors that support their values. These behaviors are reinforced through leadership involvement, effective communications, active wellbeing champions, community volunteering, and support for employees.

02 Employees take the first step

Behavior change rarely begins with a major lifestyle shift. It begins with a single action: completing a wellbeing assessment, joining a challenge, speaking with a coach, or accessing resources for an immediate need.

Organizations that remove friction from the first step consistently see stronger participation across their workforce.

03 Personalizing readiness to change turns interest into action

Interest alone rarely leads to sustained change. Employees receiving next best action aligned with what they are most in need of, interested in, and ready to change, can easily take action to build small healthy habits in an area specific to where they are today.

And because health and wellbeing are interconnected, moving from struggling to thriving in one area improves all. This support helps people feel seen, heard, and understood to move forward with confidence.

04 Preventive care becomes a priority

Some of the most important wellbeing behaviors happen outside the platform. Primary care visits, preventive screenings, and early risk identification are often the strongest indicators of long-term health improvement.

Organizations that support these behaviors see stronger long-term health outcomes and lower long-term risk.

05 Health outcomes begin to improve

The strongest signal of lasting change is measurable improvement in employee wellbeing.

Across organizations, we see improvements in areas such as biometric risk, stress management, sleep, financial stability, and overall wellbeing scores.

When culture, care, and clinical wellbeing work together, these improvements become sustainable rather than temporary.

What does this look like across real organizations? Across the Navigate book of business, these signals consistently translate into behavior change.

[Learn how ↗](#)

A photograph of two women in a kitchen. The woman in the foreground, with dark curly hair and large hoop earrings, is smiling and looking down. The woman in the background is using a blender. The kitchen has shelves with jars and a clock.

Behavior change across the Navigate Book of Business

Behavior change accelerates when culture, care, and clinical wellbeing operate as one connected system.

The strongest engagement and health improvements occur when organizations design culture, care, and clinical wellbeing to work together.

Relevance

Culture

Culture determines whether wellbeing reflects what matters most to an organization and its people.

Behavior change impact

When wellbeing reflects organizational values and is delivered in context of culture, sustained engagement follows.

Throughout this report, we reference employee engagement statistics. At Navigate, engagement is defined as employees achieving outcomes their organization has prioritized for their program, along with reaching key engagement milestones year long. This approach reflects activities, behaviors, and outcomes to provide a clear view of impact to our clients, brokers, and consultants. This is different than industry standard measurement of engagement through logins and connected device syncs.

Navigate behavior insights

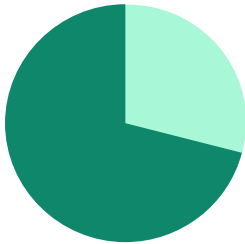


100%

of clients customized their incentive table to reinforce the outcomes they most wanted to see in 2025

71%

Employee engagement



Support

Care

Care connects employees with guidance and support aligned to their personal needs and readiness for change.

Participants move from struggling to thriving

Behavior change impact

Behavior change begins with small, practical steps that become part of daily routine. When employees receive guidance aligned with their needs and readiness to change, small actions compound into meaningful improvements. Due to the interconnectedness of health and wellbeing, an improvement in one area supports improvements in all others.

30%

Improved
Stress and
mental wellbeing



25%

Improved
Financial wellbeing



43%

Improved
Social connection



Impact

Clinical Wellbeing

Clinical wellbeing connects everyday health behaviors with measurable improvements in long-term health risk.

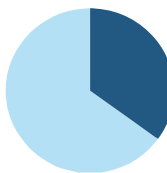
Navigate participant
behavior change signals

Behavior change impact

Sustained health improvement follows consistent, everyday behavior changes supported over time. Movement along the health and wellbeing continuum, from struggling to thriving, is one of the clearest indicators that meaningful behavior change is occurring.

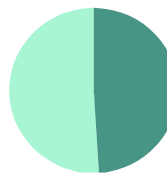
35%

of our high-risk
participants lowered
their risk level



49%

improved blood
glucose risk
(high → low)



18%

achieved ≥5% body
weight improvement



Behavior change succeeds when culture, care, and clinical wellbeing combine into a unified, sustainable system that works for people.

Next, we will see how this comprehensive system is applied across various industries. Using the Navigate platform and insights from our industry-aligned client success leaders, we uncover real behaviors, outcomes, and implementation strategies unique to different workforces.

How to use this playbook

Public and labor workers face unique pressures, environments, and health risks. To help leaders apply these insights, the following sections examine behavior change patterns across the industry.

Each section includes four elements:

- 01 Workforce context**
The operational and health realities shaping employee wellbeing in that industry.
- 02 Behavior signals**
Patterns we observe across the Navigate platform that indicate how employees are engaging with and improving their health and wellbeing.
- 03 Insights from our client success team**
Practices our industry-aligned client success teams see driving stronger engagement, culture, and measurable health improvements.
- 04 Clinically validated outcomes**
Health risk impacts our clients see when all these areas work together.

Together, these perspectives provide a practical view of how organizations are strengthening wellbeing systems across diverse workforces.



This playbook combines aggregated, anonymized engagement and health data from the Navigate platform with observations from our industry-aligned client success teams, who work directly with employers, brokers, and consultants in specific sectors.

Industry research is included where relevant to provide additional context.



Public and Labor

Supporting health and wellbeing
across diverse populations

Government, public, and labor employees often manage growing workloads while working within tight budgets, persistent staffing shortages, and rising service expectations from the communities they serve. Many roles require long hours, rapid decision-making, and sustained attention under pressure, leaving limited time for recovery or preventive care. Over time, that combination of workload intensity and resource constraints can contribute to chronic stress, fatigue, and increased health risk across the workforce.

Several professions in this sector face acute challenges. Teachers across the U.S. report rising burnout due to large class sizes, administrative demands, and increasing expectations for student support. Law enforcement officers frequently encounter prolonged trauma and high-stress situations, leading to elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Firefighters, despite their training and resilience, face unique risks, including significantly higher rates of cardiovascular disease caused by intense physical exertion, irregular sleep, and repeated stress exposure.



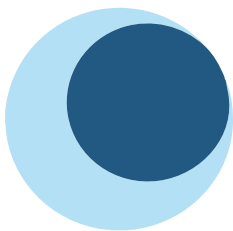
41%
burnout rate
among government workforce

[Eagle Hill Consulting](#)



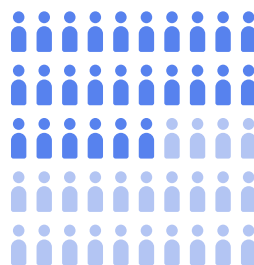
39% *of*
law enforcement
are affected by depression

[Police1](#)



71% *of*
law enforcement
report struggling with sleep
disturbances

[Police1](#)



53% *of*
teachers
reported feelings of burnout

[RAND](#)

These realities create a complex wellbeing landscape for public sector leaders. Supporting employees means addressing both the physical and psychological demands of public service while also maintaining workforce stability in roles that are critical to community safety, education, and infrastructure.

As staffing shortages persist and work demands grow, organizations are increasingly recognizing that workforce wellbeing is not only a health issue, but a core factor in retention, resilience, and long-term operational continuity.

Public and Labor behavior change insights

Public and Labor workforces support essential services that communities rely on every day. These roles often involve physically demanding work, irregular schedules, and high levels of responsibility to the public. Sustaining personal wellbeing in these environments requires practical health behaviors that help employees manage stress, maintain physical strength, and recover from demanding shifts.

The insights below combine aggregated, anonymized data from the Navigate platform with observations from our industry-aligned Client Success teams working directly with Public and Labor organizations. To strengthen reliability, we evaluated patterns that consistently appeared across employers, employee groups, and wellbeing measures.

Together, these patterns highlight how public sector employees are strengthening everyday habits that support long-term health, resilience, and workforce sustainability.



Public sector employees are prioritizing foundational health behaviors

Using Navigate platform data, the most common health topics among public sector participants include:

- ▶ Physical activity
- ▶ Gratitude
- ▶ Healthy eating
- ▶ Blood pressure management
- ▶ Financial health
- ▶ Mental health and stress management
- ▶ Cholesterol management

Why this behavior change is impactful

Public and Labor employees often work in roles that demand physical stamina, sustained focus, and rapid decision-making. The behaviors employees prioritize support energy levels, cardiovascular health, and recovery between shifts. These daily habits help employees maintain both personal health and their ability to perform essential community services.

Social connection is strengthening across Public and Labor teams



43%

of our Public and Labor participants improved from struggling to thriving in social wellbeing

Why this behavior change is impactful

Public sector work depends on collaboration, trust, and strong relationships across teams and departments. Improvements in social wellbeing suggest employees are strengthening connections that help them navigate demanding work environments, support colleagues, and build resilience together. These relationships also play an important role in protecting mental health and maintaining morale across teams that often operate under high public expectations.

Mental wellbeing improvements are emerging across the workforce



30%

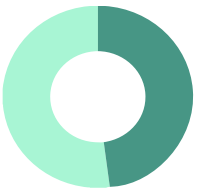
of our Public and Labor participants improved from struggling to thriving in mental health, stress, or mindfulness

Why this behavior change is impactful

Public and labor employees frequently work in environments where stress, public accountability, and operational demands are constant. Improvements in stress management, mindfulness, and mental wellbeing indicate employees are developing practical coping strategies that support resilience and recovery.

Movement along the wellbeing continuum—from struggling to thriving—signals that meaningful behavior change is taking place.

Employees are building stronger financial wellbeing habits



48%

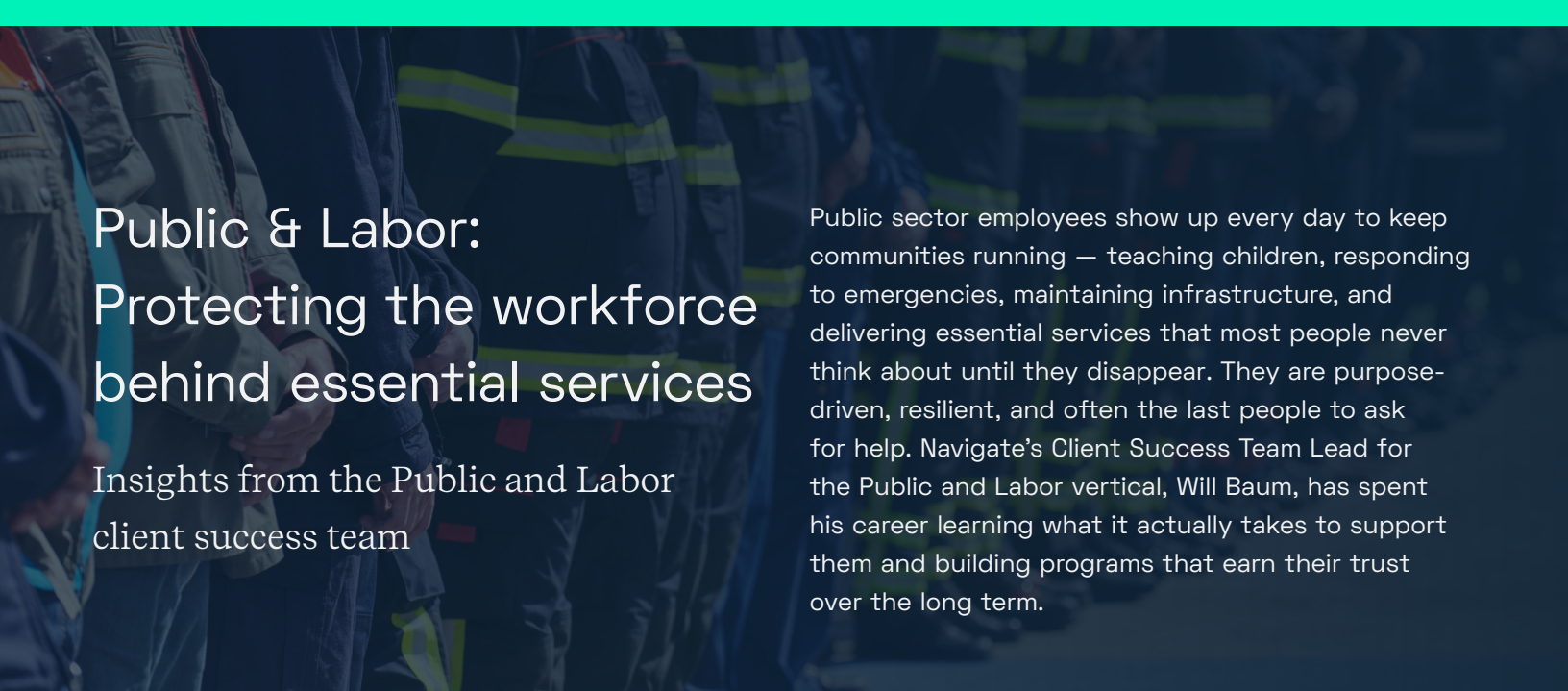
of our Public and Labor participants improved their financial health in 2025

Why this behavior change is impactful

Financial stability plays a foundational role in overall wellbeing. When employees gain greater confidence in managing their finances, it reduces a major source of daily stress and strengthens their ability to focus at work and home. For Public and Labor employees balancing family responsibilities and long-term career commitments, improvements in financial health contribute to greater overall stability and resilience.

For our public sector and labor clients, behavior change outcomes are the result of programs designed around each organization's workforce, culture, and operational realities, supported by Navigate Client Success teams experienced in working with Public and Labor organizations.

How are public sector and labor organizations designing wellbeing programs that truly fit the realities of their workforce?



Public & Labor: Protecting the workforce behind essential services

Insights from the Public and Labor
client success team

Public sector employees show up every day to keep communities running — teaching children, responding to emergencies, maintaining infrastructure, and delivering essential services that most people never think about until they disappear. They are purpose-driven, resilient, and often the last people to ask for help. Navigate's Client Success Team Lead for the Public and Labor vertical, Will Baum, has spent his career learning what it actually takes to support them and building programs that earn their trust over the long term.

1

Start small, stay strategic

“

An effective, outcomes-based program is not built overnight. Don't try to accomplish everything at once.

Lisa Powell

HR Director at Linn County

Lisa Powell has been [building Linn County's wellbeing program for nearly two decades](#). Her advice isn't a caution, it's hard-won strategy. And it's exactly the approach Will and the Public and Labor client success team brings to every opportunity.

Will is direct about something most vendors won't say out loud: the complexity inside Public and Labor organizations is easy to underestimate from the outside. Wellbeing programs may require union agreement, collective bargaining adjustments, and budget approval cycles that span multiple stakeholders, all before a single employee joins a wellbeing program. Job roles within a single employer can range from a deputy sheriff to a public health

nurse to a road crew member, each with entirely different schedules, risk profiles, and readiness to engage. And each workforce has their own unique culture.

A clear, well-executed starting point is essential. It builds trust and momentum, reinforcing the message that effective programs grow over time.

Embedded in that process is Navigate's VP of Clinical Strategy, Dr. Jennifer Musick, PharmD, who has more than two decades of experience working with Public and Labor leaders. Jen's work integrating preventive care, medication adherence, and chronic disease management into wellbeing programs helps HR leaders position these initiatives as confidential, personalized, and clinically grounded. Through this approach, employees have human support to understand where each person is starting from, what's getting in their way, and how they define success. The pharmacist-led health coaching team aims to promote lasting health improvements and enhance participants' overall wellbeing, not just control costs, an important distinction in a union environment.

Traditional public sector wellbeing programs usually focus on culture or clinical risk. The real impact happens when those two work together.

Engagement follows trust

“

Our experience shows participation follows trust. Wellbeing programs in Public and Labor workforces succeed when union leaders, supervisors, and peer champions actively support them. Prioritizing relationship infrastructure fosters the trust needed for participation to grow naturally.

Will Baum

Public and Labor Client Success Team Lead

Will has seen what happens when a wellbeing program launches without that foundation: cautious employees who have watched programs come and go, skeptical of whether this one is genuinely for them or quietly designed to monitor their health and manage claims costs. These concerns don't disappear because there is a new platform.

Relationships change the dynamic. Will and the Public and Labor team collaborate with organizations to build internal infrastructure that fosters trust, identify champions, create engagement opportunities, and ensure communications come from trusted voices.

Program design reflects these guiding principles: emphasizing empathy, choice, and support for the public service mission. This approach leads to solutions that employees see as genuinely supportive. Most importantly, readiness to change. These tangible actions can be aligned with incentives and employee recognition to further support permission and move from reactive management to proactive workforce care.

Will emphasizes: comprehensive programs that address all pillars of wellbeing, not just physical health. Expanding programs to include financial, mental, social, community, balance, mindfulness, and purpose help to support personal entry points and reward the things that make work and life better, for employees and for their colleagues. For a purpose-driven workforce, that expansion isn't just good program design. It's the difference between a benefit employees feel obligated to use and one they want to.

“

The goal isn't to dictate employees' wellbeing journeys. It's to offer flexibility so they can focus on what matters most while identifying where additional support may help. We aim to honor those who care for our communities.

Will Baum

Public and Labor Client Success
Team Lead

Prioritizing mental health

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Public service roles expose people to pressures few professions face. Teachers support students and families daily, first responders handle high-stress, traumatic events, and municipal employees keep essential services running. Mental health support must be accessible, visible, and normalized so employees feel comfortable using it.

Will Baum

Public and Labor Client Success Team Lead

Will hears a familiar pattern: mental health resources exist, but they are underused. The cause for Public and Labor is almost always cultural. In law enforcement and first responder roles, strength and composure are expected. Asking for help can seem like admitting vulnerability. Employees worry about the effects on reputation, relationships, and job security.

At one Public and Labor client we work with, that concern was explicit. When the county introduced annual mental health check-ins for deputies, detention officers, and dispatchers, the first question employees asked was whether anything would reach the sheriff. The HR team answered directly. Nothing shared would be disclosed unless there was a danger to self or others and built visible incentives into participation. A culture shift followed.

The Public and Labor client success team helps build the infrastructure that enables cultural shifts to be sustained through culture-first program design, personalized next-steps based on what the individual is most in need of, interested in, and ready to change, along with targeted resources and communications.

“

Mental health really does include mental illness, but also mental wellness. The larger part of your population is really struggling with things like resilience, relationships, communication, feeling isolated or lonely.

Dr. Jennifer Musick

PharmD, Vice President of
Clinical Strategy at Navigate

Wellbeing and mental health are central to reliable service, staffing, and retention. Supporting both ensures essential services and fosters a resilient workplace.

Transformative outcomes for Public & Labor clients

With Navigate, Public and Labor organizations are experiencing



34%

improved
blood glucose from high risk in
2024 to low risk in 2025



81%

improved
blood pressure from high risk
in 2024 to low or moderate risk
in 2025



48%

improved
total cholesterol from high risk
in 2024 to low or moderate risk
in 2025

Harris County, Texas

Supporting 43,000 employees, retirees, and dependents, listen as Sarah Acosta and Victoria Spencer as they share how they led the county’s first incentivized health plan, established an onsite employee clinic, and contributed to the enhancement of the county’s wellbeing program.



“

We’ve shifted our culture over the last 17-18 years. Navigate has been instrumental in helping us align our programs with our employees’ needs, making wellness a core part of what we do.

Sarah Acosta
Director of Benefits and Wellness
for Harris County

Watch the Employee Benefits News webinar replay featuring Harris County, Texas.

See how they did it

A shared pattern across every workforce

Healthcare, frontline industries, professional services, and the public sector all share a common pattern. Meaningful progress in employee health and wellbeing begins when organizations help employees develop daily behaviors. Long-term health is supported not by adding more programs, but by these daily actions.

While pressures vary by industry, the underlying dynamic remains consistent.

People generally want to take care of their health. What they often lack is the time, clarity, and support to know where to begin.

Organizations making the most meaningful progress are creating environments where those next steps are easier to see and easier to take. Healthy behaviors are reinforced through culture, supported with the right care, and guided by insights that help people move forward with confidence.



Across industries, one insight continues to emerge:

when wellbeing is designed around real human behavior,
meaningful progress follows.

See the impact in other industries in the full [playbook](#) ↗

If the ideas and examples in this playbook help clarify where your organization can go next, we hope they give you confidence in the path forward.

And if you want a partner in building what comes next, we are here to help.

[Book a demo >](#)

Engagement shows
who participated.

Impact shows you
what changed.

Across industries, one pattern is clear:

When organizations support employees in strengthening daily healthy behaviors, meaningful impact follows.



Health improves



Confidence grows



People move from struggling to thriving

Bottom line

That's the difference between participation and impact.



Navigate partners with organizations to deliver personalized wellbeing experiences rooted in behavior change, integrating culture, care, and clinical wellbeing strategy to improve engagement and health outcomes.

Navigate is certified as a Great Place to Work and is driven by a purpose to do good things and improve the lives of every employee, customer, company, and community we serve.

Learn more at navigatewell.com