Bridging Public Health with Workplace Behavioral Health Services: A Call to Action

PRESENTED BY:
Bernie McCann, PhD, CEAP
Tracy L McPherson, PhD

April 29, 2016

For More Information...

Tracy McPherson, PhD
Chair, EASNA Knowledge Transfer & Research Committee
Senior Research Scientist
NORC at the University of Chicago
esap1234@gmail.com

Bernie McCann, PhD, CEAP
Workplace Mental Health Consultant
Employee Assistance Research Foundation
mccannbag@gmail.com
This Rapid Fire Session Addresses:

- A new resource for EA/WBH services research published by the EA Evidence-based Practice Network
- Rationale for a “Call to Action” for EA/WBHS Research
- Organizing framework for promoting and organizing EA/WBHS Research
- Recommendations to stakeholders to promote & align EA/WBHS studies with Public Health

White Paper Produced in Partnership...
Lack of Evidence

- Work organizations invest billions in Workplace Behavioral Health Services (WBHS), predominately delivered by EA professionals.

- Industry, government, and society assume devotion of such resources = effectiveness.

- Yet research on the effectiveness of WBHS services to prevent and address the mental health and substance abuse risks and problems is lacking.

- Absence of science and evidence-based practice (EBP) leads to decisions based almost entirely on cost and providers have no tested standards for quality.

Challenges of WPBH Research

- WBHS research has been difficult to conduct.

- WBHS research requires significant collaboration with work organizations and professionals.

- Most WBHS research is provider-supported, subject to conflicts of interest, often conducted for marketing purposes, or not publicly disseminated.
EA Industry Call to Action

- “Bridging Public health with Workplace Behavioral Health Services” White Paper is a Call to Action.

- Overall Aim: Energize a new collaboration among work organizations, EA/WBHS providers, government agencies, researchers, and other stakeholders to systematically examine the processes and effectiveness.

- Ultimate goal: To reduce behavioral health concerns – improving overall health and quality of life for employees and their families.

ACA Reinforces the Need

- Affordable Care Act (ACA) in the U.S. reinforces the need for rigorous EA/WBHS research.

- ACA identifies mental health and substance abuse treatment services as “essential health benefits” in all health care plans – extending access and parity.

- ACA is likely to lead to broad integration of WBHS into the mainstream health care system and increase access to care for many U.S. Americans.
Lack of EA/WBHS Research is a Public Health Problem

- Behavioral health issues have a profound impact on workforce productivity, employer costs, families, and communities.
- Payers and consumers of EA/WBHS will benefit from knowledge about how these services work and how they can be improved.
- EA/WBHS professionals lack evidence-based principles to guide the delivery and enhancement of services.
- ACA has specific provisions for behavioral health and relies on work organizations to help delivery these services.

Organizing Framework
Areas of Investigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Validate Current Approaches</th>
<th>Identify Neighboring Approaches and Disciplines</th>
<th>Innovate and Test New Approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>How effective are training programs for developing EA professionals?</td>
<td>How do different core disciplines within the EA profession approach their work (e.g., psychologists versus social workers)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the core competencies of EA service professionals?</td>
<td>What key collaborations serve as best practices for WBHS?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What attitudes do EA professionals have?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>How effective are existing EAP protocols in core service areas (see Table 1)?</td>
<td>How can EAPs effectively adapt services used in other fields of public or occupational health?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the impact of emerging technology on EA/WBHS effectiveness?</td>
<td>Can EAPs apply other public health models, such as the Triple Aim?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs and Policies</td>
<td>How can researchers help EAPs test and adapt EBP?</td>
<td>Which programs benefit from collaboration with professionals outside the EA field?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What makes EAPs unique and requires special training to deliver services?</td>
<td>What interdisciplinary projects will result in better uptake of EA/WBHS?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What policies are needed to enhance or regulate current approaches?</td>
<td>How can workplace policies guide collaborations for better service delivery?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collaboration is Key to Advance EA/WBHS Research

- **Workplace Leaders** – organizational consumers across all industries
- **EA/WBHS professionals**
- **Researchers** in EA/WBHS, e.g., occupational health & safety, productivity, risk management, HR, public health, mental health, addiction.
- **Funding and Governmental Policy Agency Representatives** who can encourage research and play a role in its application.
- **Educators/Academics** who prepare future generations of EA/WBHS professionals.
The Ultimate Goal of Collaboration

- Reducing risk and improve the health and productivity of the workforce.
- Achieving desired outcomes for employees, work organizations and society as a whole
- Achieving outcomes that demonstrate effectiveness of EA/WBHS practitioners.

Topic Areas of Collaboration

Areas of Consensus...
- Veteran Workplace Integration
- Crisis Intervention and Mental Health
- Health and Productivity
- Substance Use Disorders
- Innovative Research and Development
- Refining the EAP value statement
- Resilience
Call to Action Recommendations

- For Work Organization Leaders:
  - Become more educated about EBP & utilize to gauge effects on productivity
  - Encourage employee participation in WBHS studies
  - Encourage EA providers to conduct credible WBHS outcome evaluations using valid measures & acceptable response rates

- For EA Service Providers:
  - Initiate direct dialog with business leaders to assure delivery of evidence-based services & training
  - Provide quality monitoring of EAP subcontractors & affiliates
  - Hold affiliates accountable for using EBP

- For Researchers:
  - Apply innovative & valid experimental approaches to continuously establish effectiveness of EA/WBHS services
  - Find innovative ways to persuade work organizations to support EA/WBHS research & to allow workers to participate
  - Use the framework to plan interdisciplinary studies & business-provider-research collaborations

- For Funding Agencies:
  - Identify specific review panels for EA/WBHS research
  - Ensure reviewers have appropriate experience in conducting EA/WBHS research to promote continuity & consistency in reviews
  - Support funding announcements that encourage research among various areas & collaborators
Call to Action Recommendations

- For Educators and Academics:
  - Develop advanced degrees and training curricula to promote the use of EBP among EA/WBHS professionals
  - Develop cross-disciplinary programs to foster partnerships between disciplines (e.g., psychology, social work, human resources management)
  - Articulate valid theories and conceptual frameworks that can help advance research

Closing Thoughts...

- Continued neglect of research threatens several problems:
  - Stagnation of the EA/WBHS field
  - Ineffective education and training of new professionals
  - Lack of innovation

- Without commitment to high-quality research, stakeholders will continue to lack evidence-based standards to guide professionals and consumers toward effective, optimal use of EA & WBH services.

- Scientific basis for valuing EA/WBHS remains limited, despite their widespread and routine use by millions of people.

- EA/WBHS marketplace is currently fragmented and needs a framework to advance our understanding of the services for the benefit of advancing public health.
What is Your Role?

- Read the White Paper
  - Learn more about this EA industry initiative

- Identify your role in advancing EA/WBHS research:
  - Do you have the **capacity** to promote or support EA/WBHS research?
  - Do you have **access** to employees, data, or other asset to support conducting EA/WBHS research?
  - Do you have the **resources** (e.g., funding, staff) to support conducting EA/WBHS research?
  - Who can you **collaborate** with to advance EA/WBHS research?

Thank You!

Access the White Paper here:


Employee Assistance Archive at University of Maryland - open access: [http://archive.hshl.umaryland.edu/handle/10713/4876](http://archive.hshl.umaryland.edu/handle/10713/4876)