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

PRESENTED BY:
Bernard A. McCann, PhD, CEAP
Tracy L. McPherson, PhD

April 29, 2016

For More Information…

Bernie McCann, PhD, CEAP
Workplace Mental Health Consultant
Employee Assistance Research Foundation
mccannbag@gmail.com

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

- Rationale for a “Call to Action” for EA/WBHS Research
- Organizing Framework for Promoting and Organizing EA/WBHS Research
- Recommendations to Stakeholders to Promote and Align EA/WBHS studies with Public Health

White Paper: *Bridging Public Health with Workplace Behavioral Health Services (WBHS): A Call to Action*

White Paper Produced in Partnership…
Access the White Paper…


Employee Assistance Archive open to everyone; housed at University of Maryland: http://archive.hshsl.umaryland.edu/handle/10713/4876

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

- Rationale for a “Call to Action” for EA/WBHS Research
### 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 WBHS 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.

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

Framework to promote and organize WBHS research
Organizing Framework

Areas of Investigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Research Focus</th>
<th>Collaborators</th>
<th>Outcome Examples (and populations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Service Providers</td>
<td>Workplace Leaders</td>
<td>Reduce Risk and Improve Health &amp; Productivity in the Workforce:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td>Greater health, Well-being Productivity (for individuals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Programs and Policies</td>
<td>EA/WBHS Professionals</td>
<td>Reduced Medical Claims, ROI, More Safety (for organizations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government Agencies</td>
<td>Reduced Incidents and Public Health Costs (for society)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educators/Trainers of EA &amp; WBHS Providers</td>
<td>Improved Treatment Effectiveness (for EA professionals)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current Topic Areas (see text)

Avenues for Applying Evidence to Inform Practice

<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></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What are the core competencies of EA service professionals?</td>
<td></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></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is the impact of emerging technology on EA/WBHS effectiveness?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs and Policies</td>
<td>• How can researchers help EAPs test and adapt EBPs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What makes EAPs unique and requires special training to deliver services?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What policies are needed to enhance or regulate current approaches?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Which programs benefit from collaboration with professionals outside the EA field?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What interdisciplinary projects will result in better uptake of EA/WBHS?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How can workplace policies guide collaborations for better service delivery?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How can national policy foster greater involvement amongst work organizations to get their participation in EA research?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What types of “disruptive technologies” will help vitalize the EA/WBHS field?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collaboration is Key to Advance EA/WBHS Research

- **Workplace Leaders** – organizational consumers across all industries
- **EA/WBHS professionals**
- **Researchers** interfacing EA/WBHS, e.g., public health, mental health, addiction, workplace health and productivity, risk management, HR, administrative science
- **Funding and Governmental Policy Agency Representative** (e.g., CDC, NIH, SAMHSA, ONDCP) who can encourage research and play a role in relevant policy (e.g., ACA).
- **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 outcomes for employees, the organizations they work in, and society as a whole -- recognizing that the primary outcome is not just about the employers financial ROI – other outcomes matter (e.g., practitioners are using EBP guidelines)

- 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
- Alcohol and Drugs
- Innovative Research and Development
- Refining the EAP value statement
- Resilience

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

- Recommendations to Stakeholders to Promote and Align EA/WBHS studies with Public Health
Call to Action Recommendations

For Work Organization Leaders:
- Ask for education about EBP
- Utilize EBP in areas that enhance productivity
- Encourage employee participation in WBHS studies
- Encourage EA providers to conduct credible WBHS outcome evaluations using valid measures and acceptable response rates

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

For Researchers:
- Apply innovative experimental and quasi-experimental approaches to establish effectiveness of EA/WBHS services
- Find innovative ways to persuade work organizations to support EA/WBHS research and to allow workers to participate
- Use the framework to plan interdisciplinary studies and 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 and consistency in reviews
- Support funding announcements that encourage research among areas and collaborators in the framework
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 fostering partnerships between disciplines (e.g., management, psychology, social work, human resources)
  - Articulate and synthesize theories and conceptual frameworks that can help advance research

Closing Thoughts…

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

- Without commitment to high-quality research public health stakeholders will continue to lack evidence-based standards to guide professionals and consumers toward effective and optimal use of EA/WBHS.

- 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:
EASNA Research/Practice Webpage:

Employee Assistance Archive open to everyone; housed at University of Maryland:
http://archive.hshsl.umaryland.edu/handle/10713/4876