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

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April 29, 2016

EASNA | THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE TRADE ASSOCIATION

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

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
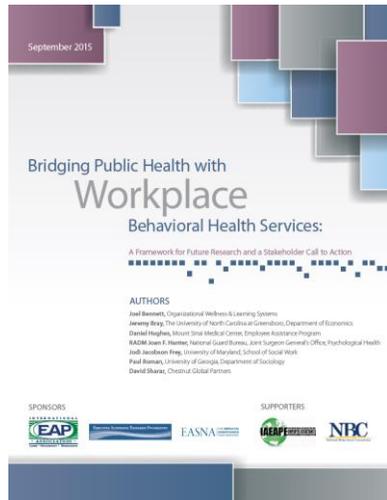
White Paper Produced in Partnership…
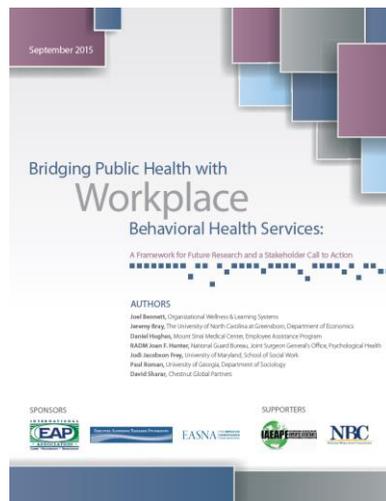
Access the White Paper…

EASNA Research/Practice Webpage:
http://www.easna.org/research-and-best-practices/1636-2/

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.
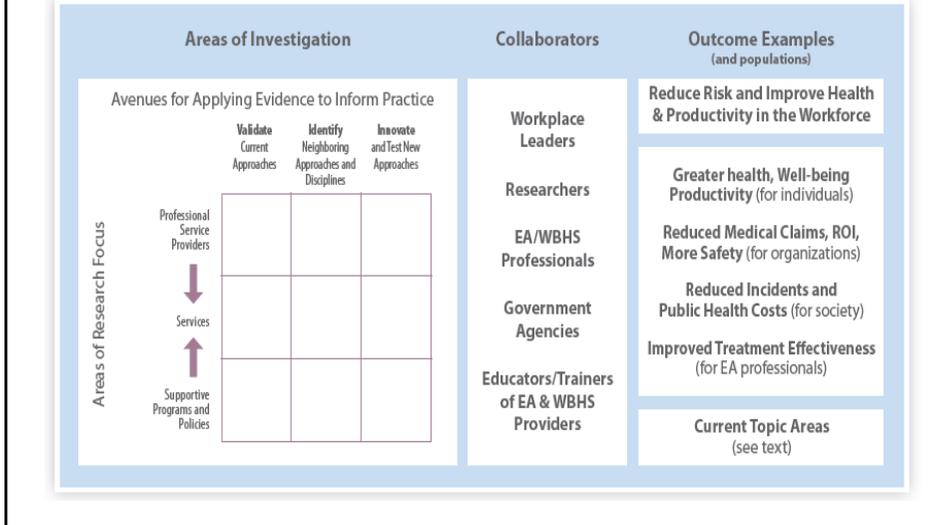
Lack of EA/WBHS Research is a Public Health Problem

- 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.

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Framework to promote and organize WBHS research

Organizing Framework

Areas of Investigation	Collaborators	Outcome Examples (and populations)

Avenues for Applying Evidence to Inform Practice

Areas of Research Focus:
- Professional Service Providers
- Services
- Supportive Programs and Policies

Columns:
- Validate Current Approaches
- Identify Neighboring Approaches and Disciplines
- Innovate and Test New Approaches

Collaborators:
- Workplace Leaders
- Researchers
- EA/WBHS Professionals
- Government Agencies
- Educators/Trainers of EA & WBHS Providers

Outcome Examples (and populations):
- Reduce Risk and Improve Health & Productivity in the Workforce
- Greater health, Well-being Productivity (for individuals)
- Reduced Medical Claims, ROI, More Safety (for organizations)
- Reduced Incidents and Public Health Costs (for society)
- Improved Treatment Effectiveness (for EA professionals)
- Current Topic Areas (see text)

Areas of Investigation

	Validate Current Approaches	Identify Neighboring Approaches and Disciplines	Innovate and Test New Approaches
Professionals	• How effective are training programs for developing EA professionals? • What are the core competencies of EA service professionals? • What attitudes do EA professionals have?	• How do different core disciplines within the EA profession approach their work (e.g., psychologists versus social workers)? • What key collaborations serve as best practices for WBHS?	• How does the profession view innovation? • What are the barriers to testing new approaches?
Services	• How effective are existing EAP protocols in core service areas (see Table 1)? • What is the impact of emerging technology on EA/WBHS effectiveness?	• How can EAPs effectively adapt services used in other fields of public or occupational health? • Can EAPs apply other public health models, such as the Triple Aim?	• What types of studies are needed to develop innovative EA/WBHS services? • Can health media make EA/WBHS services more effective?
Programs and Policies	• How can researchers help EAPs test and adapt EBP? • What makes EAPs unique and requires special training to deliver services? • What policies are needed to enhance or regulate current approaches?	• Which programs benefit from collaboration with professionals outside the EA field? • What interdisciplinary projects will result in better uptake of EA/WBHS? • How can workplace policies guide collaborations for better service delivery?	• How can national policy foster greater involvement amongst work organizations to get their participation in EA research? • What types of "disruptive technologies" will help vitalize the EA/WBHS field?

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

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- 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

Call to Action Recommendations

- 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!
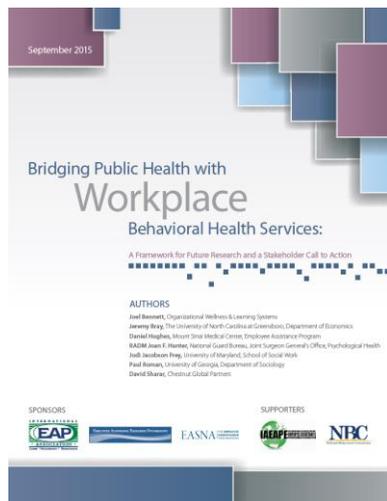
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