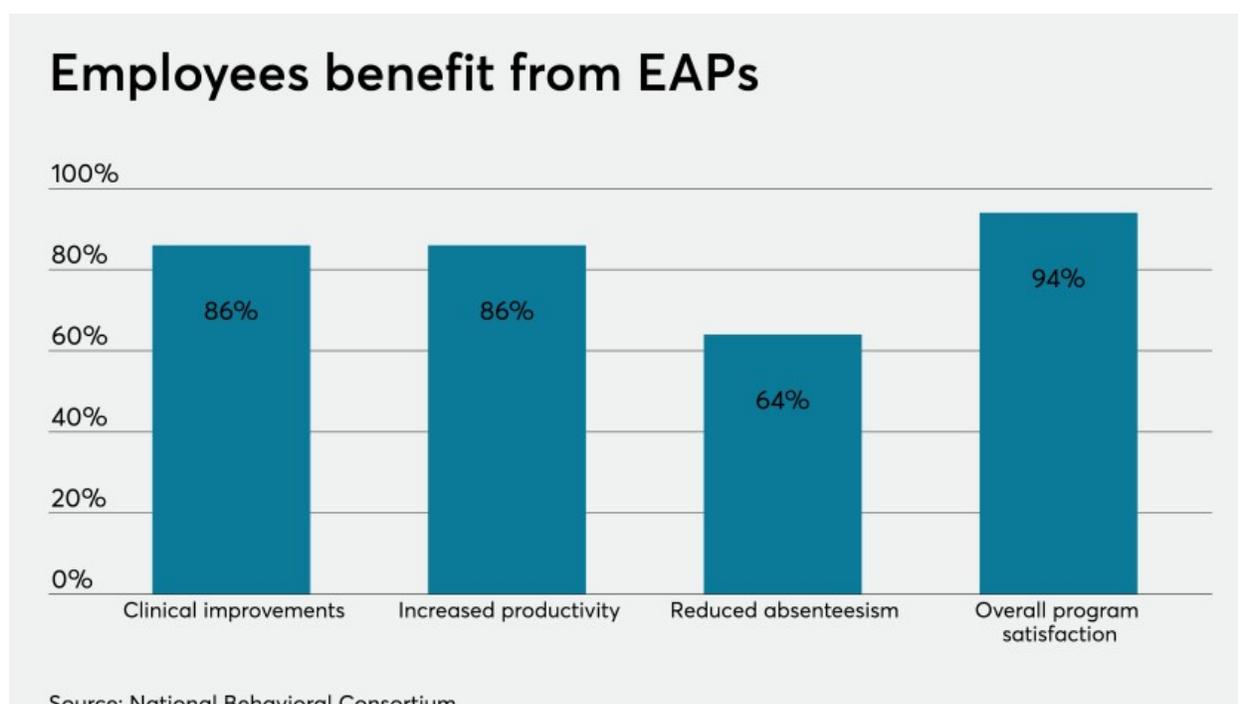


EAPs have never been more important to employees

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There is a reason why [most employers have an EAP](#) and the data proves it again. EAPs have never been more relevant than they are today because employees and their families need [mental health](#) and work-life assistance. Most EAPs report that the volume of calls from employees requesting help has increased and that the nature of the calls is more severe. If your EAP is not being promoted enough to be highly visible, employees with complicated COVID-related issues could remain underserved.

Read more: [6 companies that launched innovative mental health benefits this year](#)

One thing we know for sure is that full service EAPs have proven their value. The 2020 Annual Report for the Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) measured the effectiveness of EAP counseling. The report found significant improvements in all five measures of work presenteeism, work engagement, workplace distress, work absenteeism and overall life satisfaction.

Presenteeism for employees who used the EAP improved significantly. More than half of all cases (56%) reported that their issue was making it "difficult to concentrate on work." After EAP counseling, the incidence of work presenteeism was cut in half.

The study converted absenteeism and presenteeism into the total hours of [lost productive time for work](#). The average user of EAP counseling had 63 hours of lost productive time during the month before the start of counseling. The good news is that after counseling, productivity time has been restored by more than 3 full workdays/month.

The study found that return on investment (ROI) for employers in the US ranged from 3:1 for small size employers, 5:1 for medium size employer and to 9:1 for large size employers. The results found cost savings ranging from about \$2,000, to \$2,500 to \$3,500 per employee using the EAP.

This large study demonstrated a significant ROI from reduced absenteeism and presenteeism and should reassure employers about their EAPs.

Full service EAPs have proven clinical outcomes

An earlier research study conducted by the National Behavioral Consortium involving 56 different EAP vendors showed that 86% of EAP users had clinical improvements from the help they received. In addition to clinical outcomes, the study also found improvement after EAP use to include [increased work productivity](#) (86%) and reduced absenteeism (64%). Ninety-four percent of the more than 100,000 cases surveyed reported satisfaction with the service.

Together these studies demonstrated positive clinical outcomes and a high level of satisfaction over a large population of employees who had access to top-tier EAPs.

Employees use full-service EAPs more

All EAPs are not equal. In particular, free and bundled programs are shown to be less effective than more robust programs. One study compared the book of business utilization data from many different EAPs. On average, full service EAPs purchased directly by employers averaged 3 times the counseling cases and 6 times the work-life cases. Studies show that employers also get more than 9 times more organizational consultations than EAPs that are bundled into an insurance program. One reason for this higher use is that full-service EAPs are more likely to be integrated with [other well-being benefits](#) and thus promoted across many points of contact with employees.

EAPs are only as valuable as they are visible

When promoted effectively by employers, EAPs can offer a helping hand to effectively guide people from the workplace to counseling and/or practical assistance with finding needed resources. The counseling is delivered in person, by phone or via technology. This counseling is easily accessed and may serve as a lifeline for someone in distress but only if employees know it is available.

Read more: [Helping employees cope with COVID-19 and seasonal depression](#)

SHRM, the leading association for human resources professionals, in a toolkit on Managing Employee Assistance Programs says, “HR should communicate frequently about the availability of the EAP.” This requires a strong partnership between HR, Benefits, and EAP.

It is estimated that more than half of the workforce is grappling with stress. A recent Gallup poll of 7,931 adults showed that younger people (18-44 years of age) are suffering the most from social distancing. In a pandemic world, the issue of presenteeism takes on whole new meaning. Many employees are working from home co-mingled with their school-aged children, making this challenge exceedingly more difficult. “One can only speculate about the current meaning of presenteeism now with so many employees working from home,” says Dr. Dave Sharar, CEO at Chestnut Health Systems. Research is conclusive about the positive impact of EAP on presenteeism.

EAPs can’t get the word out on their own. They need a strong partnership with their client organizations to promote this much needed program. EAPs are needed, now more than ever.