

*The Journal of*  
**Employee Assistance**

**The CEAP<sup>®</sup> at 25**



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Employee Assistance  
Professionals Association

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## The CEAP® at 25

### *Time to Change the Dialogue About its Value*

“Let the word go forth from this time and place... that the torch has been passed to a new generation....

“And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.”

| By Bernard E. Beidel, M.Ed., CEAP

**W**ith those stirring and memorable words just over 50 years ago, President John F. Kennedy challenged himself and an emerging generation of national and international leaders with a new vision of public service – looking beyond one’s own personal interests and gains toward a new focus on an individual’s personal responsibility and accountability in addressing and solving the challenges that the United States and the world faced in the midst of a changing and more complex world.

As with any “milestone” birthday or anniversary, 25 years seems a fitting time to take stock of the CEAP® credential and our profession by addressing both tenured EA professionals and more recent entrants to the profession, with OUR OWN charge, “ask not what the CEAP can do for you – but what you can do for the CEAP.” And to further paraphrase President Kennedy, “...and what together we can do to promote the CEAP worldwide.” (The registration trademark symbol refers to all references of the CEAP credential used in this article.)

During my 37 years in the EAP field – the last 25 as a CEAP – and particularly during my recent tenure as a commissioner on the Employee Assistance Certification

Commission (EACC), I have been asked by individuals both outside and within our profession to justify or defend the CEAP as a credential and demonstrate its value. Challenges often include: “Will the CEAP get me a higher salary?” “My employer requires a mental health or clinical license, not the CEAP.” “I’ve been in the field a long time and have gotten by without the CEAP up to this point.” “I don’t need the CEAP to generate clients in my affiliate practice.”

These are all fair questions and comments, but to me they only scratch the surface. To get at the heart of the matter, I believe we need to change the dialogue about the CEAP’s value and viability – particularly as we “pass the CEAP torch” on to the next generations of EA professionals.

To do that – as author and customer service expert John G. Miller espouses – we need to be asking the right questions in laying a framework for solution-focused inquiries and dialogues. In his book on the decline of customer service, *QBQ! – The Question Behind the Question*, Miller writes: “The Question Behind the Question is built on the observation that our first reactions are often negative, bringing to mind Incorrect Questions (IQs). But if in each moment of decision we can

instead discipline our thoughts to look behind those initial questions and ask better ones (QBQs), the questions themselves will lead us to better results.”

With that in mind, it is time to change the focus of questions about the CEAP. Let’s examine our IQs – or incorrect questions – and pose some more helpful ones – QBQs, if you will. Let us also look at our individual responsibility in carrying the CEAP forward as our profession’s “*Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval*.”

➤ *Why do I need the CEAP now? I’ve gotten along without it up to this point in my career.* Maybe the more important question is “how can the profession benefit over time from my personal certification?” While holding the credential not only demonstrates an individual’s commitment to the EA profession and one’s personal investment in fostering knowledge, holding any credential is greater than simply being able to charge a higher fee or being eligible for a third-party payment schedule. The CEAP represents one’s pledge to contribute to the enrichment of that body of knowledge by bringing one’s individual experiences to the profession and assuring that the credential reflects the breadth of evidence-based best

practices in the EA field.

As the workplace has changed, so too have the demands, expectations, and responses of the EA profession. The CEAP continues to serve as a gold standard within and outside of our profession that demonstrates commitment in addressing the diversity of the workforce and the complexity of work organizations around the globe. It's far more effective to make the contribution on the "EA playing field," rather than simply being a fan watching from the sidelines with a public allegiance elsewhere, as reflected in holding an alternate credential not exclusively devoted to or identified with employee assistance.

➤ ***Why do I need the CEAP, when other professions don't seem to acknowledge it anyway?*** A better question is "what can I do as a member of the EA profession to demonstrate the value and importance of the CEAP to those within and outside of the profession?" A good place to start is to pose a bit of self-examination or "personal inventory" on the part of those of us who currently hold the CEAP. Specifically, "if I hold the CEAP, do I display it prominently?" We can do this by simply looking at one of our most common experiences as EA professionals – our annual gathering. If we are to look at the 2011 World EAP Conference and the number of CEAPs presenting at the conference or identifying themselves as CEAPs, the statistics are interesting...and to this writer, a bit concerning.

In the preliminary program for the EAPA conference in Denver,

of the eight presenters conducting *pre-conference workshops*, four identified themselves as CEAPs (50%). And of the three presenters conducting *networking/bonus sessions*, only one person was a CEAP (33%). Here's where it gets really interesting, of the 102 presenters conducting *conference sessions*, only 26 were CEAPs (25%).

As I reviewed the names of the presenters and researched whether they held a CEAP or not, I verified that an additional nine presenters indeed *were* current CEAPs, but they did *not* include the CEAP credential with their name – in many cases, deferring to their degree alone and/or another non-EA credential. While it's not the intention of this writer to draw conclusions from this singular conference program, one is left to wonder how our conference experience compares with other professions and the representation of their own credential amongst presenters at *their* annual conferences.

➤ ***Why should I pursue the CEAP, when my employer or our insurance partners place more emphasis on clinical credentials?***

No argument on that front – the clinical license is appropriately required for most insurance reimbursements. Let's be clear, the CEAP is the only credential that speaks to the three essential domains of EA practice and the unique body of knowledge that identifies our profession and represents our "EAP core technology." These domains are at the very heart of EA service delivery: 1) EAP design, administration, and

management; 2) EA services to the work organization; and 3) EA services to employees and family members – the first two of which go beyond the more clinical and case management aspects of EA services to employees and family members, and which are generally far outside the realm of the more clinically based disciplines and credentials that often accompany an individual's EA experience.

Therefore, while any number of clinically based credentials prove valuable in serving the mental health, addiction, and behavioral health issues of EA clients in the workplace, the CEAP is critical in bringing the necessary workplace and job performance perspective and balance to these more clinically oriented credentials.

A simple business case can be made for the CEAP based upon the three domains of practice, which collectively not only provide an understanding of the unique lexicon and terminology of EAPs, but more importantly presents the EA professional with the developmental roadmap and toolkit to not only address the wellness and well-being issues of employees, but to assist managers, union representatives, and the organization's leaders in addressing the performance and productivity issues of employees.

It's hard to make the argument that EAPs are more than simply mental health or counseling services in the workplace when the credential that affirms that assertion and which is rooted in our profession's "core technology" is not behind every EA professional's name. In looking at the research

into the history and unique evolution of EAPs in work organizations and organized labor – research that became foundational to the identification and articulation of the “EAP core technology” – the three content domains of the CEAP credential *indeed reflect the services that only EA professionals are qualified to provide in the workplace*. The CEAP is the only credential that tells me that someone has studied, experienced, and fully appreciates the subtle differentiation and the nuances of successfully navigating and delivering these three domains of EA practice amidst the minefield that is today’s changing workplace and global corporate marketplace.

Let’s consider how the rubber hits the road on this issue by looking at a specific example. While those within and outside the EA profession encounter confidentiality and ethical issues daily, there is clearly a unique aspect of confidentiality within the domain of an EAP. The EA professional is not simply concerned with holding mental health, addiction, or behavioral health information in confidence, but must also constantly *balance* those issues with the EAP’s responsibilities to support:

- The employer’s focus on job performance and productivity;
- The business’s regulatory requirements to provide a safe working environment for their employees; and
- Legal and binding contractual obligations under a collective bargaining agreement.

In this particular instance, the

CEAP credential attests to and provides an assurance to an individual’s understanding of the delicate balance in upholding confidentiality in the context of these often conflicting performance standards, safety concerns, employment regulations, and disability protections in the workplace. And only the CEAP credential, with its roots in the convergence and collective integration of the three distinctive domains of EA knowledge and practice, provides an employer *and* its employees, *and* a labor union and its members with such assurances.

➤ ***What are the EACC and EAPA doing to promote the CEAP?*** Let’s go back to one of the tenets of QBQ – which advocates focusing on one’s own personal actions – and not ask what “they” are doing, but what “I” can do to promote the CEAP. If you hold the credential, proudly display it:

- Advertise it on your website;
- Display your CEAP certificate as you would your diploma or other professional license or certification;
- Ensure that the CEAP is detailed and described in your program literature;
- Talk about the CEAP and what it represents in the EA training you conduct; and
- Include it on your business card.

Since I began using the CEAP as the single professional credential on my business card over 10 years ago, I continue to be struck by the number of questions that I’ve received from other professional colleagues as well as the number of ensuing

conversations that have occurred: what it represents; its value; and ultimately the assurance that accompanies it in terms of a professional’s understanding and ability to navigate the complex and challenging workplace environment where an employee’s personal life and his/her workplace behavior and performance intersect with each other.

As EA professionals we are each responsible for the legacy of our profession. And as such, we each have the opportunity – and indeed the obligation – to promote the uniqueness of what it is that we do as EA professionals, and to foster and demonstrate that uniqueness with our pursuit and maintenance of the CEAP. I continue to be amazed by the number of informal and impromptu educational opportunities that “wearing the CEAP,” if you will, has presented me over the years to discuss the history of the credential and how it serves as the “*Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval*” in our profession.

## Summary

As we mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CEAP, and its emergence from its professional adolescence, let me close where I began by proposing the following charge to our profession – “*And so my fellow CEAPs and global EA professionals, ask not what the CEAP can do for you, but what you can do for the CEAP.*” To illustrate, I offer the paradigm shift depicted in Figure 1 as a springboard for the next 25 years and the continued maturation of the CEAP as the most appropriate and only EA peer-validated credential of our

profession's unique and evidence-based body of knowledge.

Few organizations would consider preparing for a tax audit without first reviewing its corporate finances with a tax lawyer. Similarly

that same organization should not consider entrusting its number-one asset – its employees – to the care of just any professional. The CEAP is the most appropriate and the best assurance to that

organization and its workforce that it has indeed found that suitably qualified and capable professional. ❖

**Figure 1. A Shift in Paradigms as the CEAP Matures**

Ask Not...	But Ask...
What the CEAP does for me...	But rather, what my personal CEAP certification and EA experience does to advance our profession and help assure that the CEAP reflects current EA best practices...
How the CEAP will benefit me financially...	But rather how will my CEAP certification help raise the integrity and viability of the certification amongst other professions and the public...
What the EACC or EAPA does to promote the CEAP...	But rather, what does my personal CEAP certification say about my commitment to promote and advance the specialized body of knowledge, professional standards and codes of ethics and professional conduct that are unique to "employee assistance"...
Why other EA professionals don't hold the CEAP...	But rather, how can I promote the CEAP through my own certification as evidence of my personal skills and experience in delivering the unique blend of employee assistance "core technologies" and the CEAP knowledge "content domains" in the workplace...
Should I pursue a clinical license/certification or the CEAP...	But rather, how the CEAP augments and balances my clinical skills and credentials and demonstrates a commitment to and understanding of the separate and distinctive profession of employee assistance...

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Miller, John G. *QBQ! The Question Behind the Question*. G.P. Putnam's Sons. New York. 2004.

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