

Federal Occupational Health, Program Support Center
Behavioral Health Services
Employee Assistance and WorkLife Programs
White Paper on Outcomes from FOH EAP Utilizing the Workplace Outcome Suite

Federal Occupational Health (FOH) is the largest provider of occupational health services in the Federal Government, serving more than 360 federal agencies and reaching 1.8 million federal employees. FOH began providing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services in 1980, and is Health and Human Services' recognized expert in this key area of employee health programs, delivering specialized EAP services exclusively to over 905,624 federal employees. More than ten years ago, we integrated our EAP with our WorkLife program and many of the Agencies we serve are accustomed to our integrated set of resources.

FOH has a rich history of working to advance the knowledge of the EAP field, and was an early supporter of measuring program outcomes. Selvick, Stephenson, Plaza and Sugden (2004) published one of the few studies that demonstrate statistically and practically significant outcomes from the FOH EAP. Their work showed significant improvement from pre- to post-EAP intervention on measures of productivity; work and social relationships; perceived health status; attendance and tardiness; and global assessment of functioning.

In an effort to revitalize the findings with more current outcomes, FOH engaged an industry gold-standard tool, the Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS). A 5-item measure, this tool is psychometrically tested and easy to administer telephonically during the intake process. It consists of 5 scales that measure absenteeism, presenteeism, work engagement, life satisfaction, and workplace distress. In October of 2015 FOH began to collect data on specific outcomes for clients who accessed the EAP. A random sample of clients calling to access services were asked to answer the brief questionnaire; 3 months later these respondents were contacted for follow up and asked the same questions. The sample size consisted of 4800 respondents who completed both the pre- and post-tests. A paired-sample t-test was used to examine changes in average scale scores from before respondents used EAP to after services were rendered. All 5 items were found to be statistically significant, and demonstrate the positive impact of using the EAP. Specifically:

- 69.2% improvement in Absenteeism
- 22.8% improvement in Work Presenteeism
- 2.8% improvement in Work Engagement
- 24.2% improvement in Life Satisfaction
- 10.0% improvement in Workplace Distress

Return on Investment analysis is forthcoming, and expected to demonstrate significant value to the federal government.

Together the 5 measures make a compelling case for the importance the FOH EAP has in influencing employee performance. The remarkable nearly 70% reduction in **absenteeism** alone highlights the value of offering support to employees that are challenged with personal concerns. **Presenteeism** is a less obvious variable, and focuses on "functional impairment," or

the ability to attend to work tasks while physically at the job. Research has shown that behavioral health concerns (depression, anxiety, stress) are the primary driver of lost productivity, with absenteeism following closely behind (Sullivan, 2017). Improvement of nearly 24% in presenteeism demonstrates FOH EAP is successfully working with clients to address their concerns and allow them to focus more effectively on the job.

Comparatively, the nearly 3% improvement in **work engagement** is a seemingly small impact. However, these findings are consistent with other studies that use the WOS, and show that while perhaps not a huge driver of the complex concept of work engagement, the EAP does have a demonstrable impact on how invested in or passionate about their job users of the EAP are.

Life satisfaction is a global measure that addresses the impact of work and life issues on one's general, affective sense of well-being. The measure captures a perceived improvement in one's quality of life or sense of well-being (Sharar, Pompe & Lennox, 2012) which bode well for retention and job satisfaction.

Finally, findings show a 10% improvement in **workplace distress, which reflects a likely reduction which likely reflects improved effectiveness at work.**

In summary, FOH EAP demonstrates significant impact on improving employees' work performance in a variety of dimensions. These findings show promise as we look to validate the positive effects the FOH EAP has on people's lives.

In addition to the services available for individual employees, FOH EAP is a broad brush program that includes services for supervisors and workplace leaders. Services include expert guidance to Agency leadership in managing the organizational impact of change; building a resilient workforce; unlimited consultations with supervisors/managers on performance management concerns; and consultation and on site response to critical incidents. In addition to EAP services, FOH offers comprehensive WorkLife programs that integrate with existing EAP services and further improve the supportive resources for an Agency's employees.

FOH EAP and WorkLife Programs are housed within the Behavioral Health Services Division. Additional services include Organizational Development and Leadership, and Psychological Testing and Evaluation.

Please contact Melissa Back Tamburo, PhD, LCSW-C, Acting Director FOH EAP and WorkLife Programs with any questions about this report, or any other behavioral health concerns your Agency might have. She can be reached via email at melissa.tamburo@foh.hhs.gov or by phone at 301-492-5442.

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