



Employee Assistance
Professionals Association

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INTEGRATION OF
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE
&
WORK/LIFE

A Collection of Articles

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February 2003.

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INTRODUCTION

To the Reader:

EAPs and work/life programs are morphing at a very rapid rate! They are becoming something that each of us as employee assistance and work/life professionals needs to study. Why? Work/Life and EA programs reach out to the same clients (organizations and individuals) to address the same workplace issues – productivity, recruitment and retention. They assist employees and families to develop problem-solving skills as well as offer solutions for presenting issues and concerns. EAPs and work/life programs have different histories, professional staffing, technologies, scopes of service and methods of evaluation, but really – they have the potential for great compatibility and synergy!

That is why the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) has been tracking the issue of integration of EAP and work/life programs for the past decade. Together with the Alliance for Work/Life Professionals (AWLP), and the Employee Assistance Society of North America (EASNA), EAPA is in the midst of an ambitious three-phase study of integrated service delivery mechanisms and their impact on the workplace.

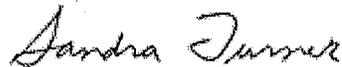
The complimentary packet of articles attached will provide you with an introduction to the professional matters being addressed by work/life and EAP practitioners today. Our intention is always to inform others and heighten awareness of issues and trends to be addressed through the workplace.

We welcome your thoughts and comments.

Sincerely,



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Integration of Employee Assistance and Work/Life

A Collection of Articles

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The Integration of EAPs and Work/Life Programs

“Ozzie and Harriet have become demographic dinosaurs.”

Futurework: Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century
U.S. Department of Labor, 1999

As the 2000 U.S. election cycle continues to heat up, so, too, does the talk of senior citizens, children, and traffic. On the presidential campaign trail, George Bush and Al Gore woo voters with vows to “save” Social Security and Medicare and lower the cost of prescription medicines. Candidates for state office trade competing plans to strengthen public schools and expand child care programs. Local politicians, meanwhile, speak of “managing” or “slowing” development to avoid overcrowding and the road congestion it creates.

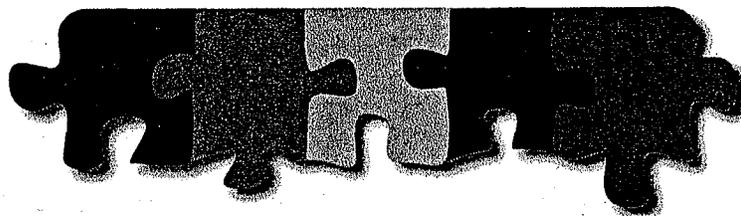
Caught in the middle of these promises are workers who must care for the young and elderly and endure long commutes to and from the workplace. Caught, too, are employers that find they must provide a growing range of services and alternative work arrangements—and provide them efficiently and effectively—to attract and retain talented employees. Many employers are questioning whether they should integrate their employee assistance and work/life programs to better meet workers’ personal needs and the financial needs of the companies they serve.

Such questioning will continue long after the November elections. Already, three in four women with children are in the workplace, as are two in three single mothers with children under 18. Roughly 20 percent of U.S. households provided informal care to a friend or relative over 50 in 1996, and the Families and Work Institute projects that two in five U.S. workers will provide some form of elder care by 2002. And traffic congestion, once confined to large cities, is beginning to afflict small cities as well, more than quadrupling the amount of time commuters spend stalled in their automobiles compared to 1982.

Will integrating EAPs and work/life programs help employers address these and other concerns? The following articles discuss the barriers to and benefits of integration, and remind EA professionals that how *well* EAPs provide services is more important than *how* they provide them or even who provides them.

EAPs and Work/Life Programs Solutions to the Whole Puzzle

by Sandra Turner, MSW, CEAP, and Sally Davis, CEAP



For many years, EAPs and work/life programs each enjoyed success in the workplace as resources to solve the myriad puzzles of human existence that presented themselves in the forms of lateness, absenteeism, errors, accidents, and lowered productivity. EAPs were the first on the scene, helping with the eminently visible problem of addictions and then assisting in later years with relationship issues and mental health concerns. Paralleling the development of EAPs was the emergence of workplace policies, programs, and services that focused on the retention of women, minorities, and workers facing challenges in daily living. These so-called "work/life" challenges included assistance with child/elder care, adoption, legal/financial problems, consumer affairs, and so on.

In recent years, recruitment and retention of workers have become focuses for work/life programs. Employers increasingly have begun to market their work/life programs as benefits to help attract good workers, and have called upon work/life staff to help adapt their workplace cultures to the expectations of younger employees who want more balance in their lives as well as exciting careers and a good paycheck. Work/life programs have responded by offering flexible work arrangements, job sharing, telecommuting, and other non-traditional employment solutions.

Because they share a common goal—addressing issues that hinder or prevent employees from being productive—EAPs and work/life programs would seem to be naturally aligned, like a hand in a glove. But this has not been the case, for at least two reasons. First, these programs often were established in different departments and thus reported to different managers. In short, they held separate "turf" in the workplace. Second, their staff members typically have come from different educational and experiential backgrounds, and their misunderstanding, distrust, and jealousy of each other (not to men-

tion fear of job security) have led to conflict instead of collaboration.

Recently, however, some examples of collaboration between EAPs and work/life programs have emerged in the workplace, driven primarily by companies and unions that want efficient, cost-effective solutions to employees' personal problems. The rise of these collaborative efforts is prompting questions from employee assistance and work/life professionals alike, namely: How do these integrated services work? What outcomes do they achieve? And how are they distinct from their separate, predecessor programs?

Following are three examples of program collaborations:

Case 1: Everything is Gone

It was the couple's worst nightmare. In what seemed like only an instant, their house burned to the ground! Fortunately, no one was hurt, but this family of four escaped with just the clothes on their backs.

Although the fire died out within hours, concerns arose that lingered in the couple's minds for weeks and even months. How would their young children respond to this trauma? How would the family begin the process of rebuilding? To whom could they turn for advice and counsel on these matters?

Working together, the employee assistance and work/life programs were able to offer the employee and his family help they didn't even realize they needed.

A co-worker encouraged the father to contact his employer's EAP and work/life program for help. He did, and found their services to be a source of great comfort. The assistance he received included guidance in handling the insurance adjuster, architect, and contractor in addition to confronting the unique

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issues involved in rebuilding after a fire. In addition, the entire family was offered counseling to cope with the trauma, and written materials were given to the couple to augment the counseling with practical advice for supporting their children.

Even co-workers received attention from the EA and work/life programs, as a critical incident stress debriefing was conducted with the husband's fellow employees. By helping the workers deal with their feelings about the tragedy and discussing ways they could support the family, the debriefing reduced their anxiety and energized them to reach out to the family in a variety of practical, emotional, and spiritual ways.

The bottom line for this employee was that the company treated him like family, looking out for him in a time of great need. Working together, the EA and work/life programs were able to offer him assistance he didn't even realize he needed! He certainly didn't know or care about the distinct areas of expertise, staffing, or responsibilities of one program versus the other. All he knew is that the attention given his family addressed the "whole" of their experience.

This case illustrates the combined power of EAPs and work/life programs. Alone, neither service could have provided the full array of personal, emotional, legal, financial, and practical advice and support offered to this family. Without the expertise and input of both programs, the critical incident debriefing for the co-workers would not have been as rich or as complete, and those who attended the debriefing likely would have emerged from the session with fewer ideas and less confidence about their ability to reach out to the family.

The groundwork for this comprehensive and seamless response to tragedy had been laid long before the family's home burst into flames. The EAP assumed responsibility for the clinical areas of intervention, while the work/life program provided insurance, contracting, and construction advice, developed a telecommuting arrangement, arranged for back-up child care services, and implemented the company's leave policies. The employer, meanwhile, didn't care which program provided which service; it just wanted the best job done for this family.

The EAP at this company had been in place since the mid-1970s and had earned the respect of management and employees alike. In the 1990s, several work/life vendors had approached the company with services that did not sound as if they were covered by the EAP, including child/elder care resources, consultation about adoption policies, parental leave following childbirth or adoption, health and wellness programs, and so on. The company contracted for these services and appointed an internal program coordinator.

The EAP and work/life program operated parallel to each other in the company at that time, each reporting to a different department director. Each program was at the same organizational level within the company. After four years of this arrangement, the vice president of human resources asked the two programs to discuss collaboration, consolidation, or the acquisition of one by the other. Why, he wondered, should employees have to call two different numbers for services that seemed so aligned with one another? And how did employees know when to call which program anyway?

This was a blinding flash of the obvious, but it took a

directive from top management to induce the two programs to collaborate wholeheartedly with one another. After several months of open, honest discussion and debate between the program coordinators, the decision was made to recommend a "Work/Life Balance Department" and a combined EAP-work/life resource and referral program to deliver the services that make work/life balance policies come alive. The recommendation was accepted by management, and implementation occurred quickly.

Continuous innovation through ongoing dialogue among EAP and work/life balance staff, in concert with the entire workforce, has moved these services to a central, influential position within the company. The services are not static; they are always changing and growing to meet the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and maintaining the very best workforce of the 21st century.

Case 2: Motorcycle Accident

Joe's troubles began years ago when he was severely injured in a motorcycle accident. Upon returning to work, Joe was referred to the EAP for help in coping with his injuries. He made a successful transition back to full-time employment and worked for a few years before he began experiencing seizures.

While the EAP worked on the clinical issues stemming from the accident, the work/life program tackled the job of searching for an alternative work arrangement that would benefit both Joe and his employer.

The seizures started as occasional episodes when he would "zone out" during meetings, then progressed to more noticeable events and eventually to full seizures. Joe attempted to resolve the problem through medication and then surgery, which proved unsuccessful. He returned to the EAP for assistance in deciding whether to stay in the workplace and for help resolving his feelings of dependence on others and his resentment at being labeled unproductive.

Addressing these emotions and providing advice regarding a possible life-changing decision necessitated the combined efforts of the EAP and work/life program. Like the family whose house burned down, Joe presented a wide variety of needs that neither program alone could have offered.

While the EAP worked with Joe on the clinical issues stemming from the accident and the changes it had wrought in his life, the work/life program tackled the job of searching for an alternative work arrangement that would benefit everyone. That arrangement turned out to be telecommuting and a reduced work schedule, thereby allowing Joe to work from

home (he is a computer technician), continue his regular appointments with a physician on his own time, and eliminate his fear of suffering seizures in the workplace. The EAP then worked with Joe's managers and co-workers to implement the arrangement and ensure that it met everyone's needs, and performed a mini-CISD for employees who had been affected by Joe's illness and/or would be dealing with him in the future. The work/life program made regular checks on Joe's progress at home, helping him with various living arrangements and the minutiae of everyday life.

Working together, the EAP and work/life program helped Joe stay productive, assisted the workforce in stretching the boundaries of acceptable work definitions, and demonstrated to all employees the value of accommodating workers with special needs. The EAP itself had a history of stretching boundaries—it started in the early 1980s as an alcohol and drug rehabilitation referral service, then expanded into a larger, broad-brush program dealing with all aspects of employee concerns within the core functions outlined by the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA). As work/life issues such as dependent care became a predominant request in the EAP, it expanded its focus yet again.

Case 3: Integrated Program Model

A third example of an evolving employee assistance program involves an employer whose director of diversity left that post in the spring of 1999, creating a vacancy to be filled. The EAP manager was asked to cover that position until a decision could be made on where the diversity program would be housed. What emerged was an umbrella program titled "Workforce Enhancement" that includes employee assistance, diversity, work/life, and wellness initiatives.

Each service area has distinct responsibilities, but each can cross over at any time to assist the others. This type of program is considered "one-stop shopping" by managers and employees—they can choose the services that best meet their needs, and have the option of selecting additional services if required. So far, this umbrella program has worked well both with employees, who gain an abundance of services they may not have expected, and with managers, who have reported satisfaction at being able to gather information for the whole employee.

As the employee assistance profession evolves, there will be many such hybrid programs that develop a range of servic-

es to suit particular worksites and employee populations. A 1998 survey sponsored by William M. Mercer and Bright Horizons Family Solutions found that 13 percent of the more than 420 responding employers offered an integrated EAP—what the survey called "life cycle resource and referral services."

Employee assistance professionals are recognizing that work/life issues are becoming as much a focus at work as mental health and recovery issues were when EAPs were launched. In fact, many EA professionals already are engaged in addressing work/life issues. Such concern for tailored services is explained by the intense competition among employers for the best and brightest employees. In a competitive labor market,

Life Cycle Resource and Referral Services	
EAP Services	Work/life Services
Chemical dependency	Academic and financial aid referrals
Critical incident stress management	Adoption issues
Drug-free workplace programming	Child care, parenting, and special needs
Emotional problems	Consultation regarding work/life balance policies
Family concerns	Elder care
Management coaching and consultation	Federal tax controversy assistance
Marriage/relationship counseling	Financial and credit problems
Other addictions	Legal advice
Stress reduction	Organization of personal/family documents
Violence management	Personal care: health and wellness, convenience services, and pet care
	Prenatal care
	Pre-retirement lifestyle planning

added value may influence employee decisions about joining or staying with a company.

EAPs traditionally have been aligned with the business goal of restoring productivity and efficiency after personal or family problems have interfered with employees' lives. Work/life programs meet this same goal with a variety of services that provide personal assistance, such as child or elder care, academic financial aid, career counseling, convenience services, health and wellness consultation, or even pet care. Rick Wald, a principal and national practice leader for Mercer's work/life consulting practice in Minneapolis, thinks the percentage of employers offering integrated EAP and work/life programs will grow dramatically each year.

There are many examples of integration among the EAPA membership in the corporate, union, governmental, and non-profit sectors. The cases cited in this article occur with certain frequency among all employers. Are you prepared to handle the whole picture? ■

issues involved in rebuilding after a fire. In addition, the entire family was offered counseling to cope with the trauma, and written materials were given to the couple to augment the counseling with practical advice for supporting their children.

Even co-workers received attention from the EA and work/life programs, as a critical incident stress debriefing was conducted with the husband's fellow employees. By helping the workers deal with their feelings about the tragedy and discussing ways they could support the family, the debriefing reduced their anxiety and energized them to reach out to the family in a variety of practical, emotional, and spiritual ways.

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