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The Rising Sun of CEAP Development in Japan



After the 2024 Paris Olympics, some asked me why Japanese teenage girls seem to excel at skateboarding. My answer was that young people in Japan have learned how to have fun while being excellent at what they love. Similarly, something else Japan is good at is Employee Assistance. Members of EAPA's Japan Branch are very proud of the fact that for the last ten years, Japan is second only to the US in the number of new Certified Employee Assistance Professionals. Let me explain how this came about.

In December 1999, I became the first CEAP in Japan. At the time, I was employed by Motorola Japan as its Internal EAP Director for the Asia Pacific Region. Having been trained by Sheila Monaghan and supervised by Steven Uhrick of Motorola, both seasoned EA professionals, I learned how to put the EAP core technology to practice in Japanese work settings for Motorola's Japanese employees. Quickly I realized that management consultation, one of these core technologies, worked quite well in aiding Japanese employees to break through the historical stigmas of mental health and substance use conditions and to motivate them to seek appropriate assistance.

In 2002, with Ayumi Nishikawa, another CEAP and colleague from Motorola, I founded the company J.EAP Co., Ltd. In our goal of promoting the adoption of EAPs in the Japanese workforce, we identified a need for trained and qualified Japanese-speaking EA professionals to provide services. We developed a 60-hour training curriculum to prepare candidates to obtain the CEAP. However, the CEAP licensing exam was conducted only in English and in the United States. Unfortunately, most of our enrollees were not fluent enough in English to successfully complete the CEAP exam. Undeterred, J.EAP Co., Ltd. funded the translation of the CEAP exam into Japanese. Two Japanese/English translators traveled to EAPA headquarters in Arlington, VA, and over a period of three days, translated the exam. EAPA's official CEAP exam vendor at the time, AMP Inc., confirmed the validity of the Japanese translation. Prominent Japanese experts from related fields, such as Psychology, Occupational Health and Behavioral Health were recruited to form a committee to review and finalize the Japanese exam. Temple University of Japan was selected as the exam site. Finally, in February 2007, the first CEAP exam was conducted in Tokyo, Japan. By the end of 2008, there were 29 Certified CEAPs in Japan, and the Japanese CEAP exam continues to be offered every year. Recognition of the success of this effort and our expanding membership led EAPA's Board of Directors to approve the formation of the EAPA Japan Branch (formerly called the Metropolitan Tokyo Branch) in 2008.

Recently, two big, positive developments have transpired to increase support for wider adoption of the CEAP in Japan. The first, occurred with the Employee Assistance Certification Commission's creation of an online version of the CEAP exam. Under this new system, CEAP candidates remotely listen to lectures and take an online exam at the end of each of five curriculum modules. In creating this online format, existing exam questions were modified to reflect recent innovations in EAP practice. This online format provides an easier, more universal access to relevant content and has opened pathways for those previously not qualified to sit for the CEAP exam, for example, those with no prior EAP experience.

Isn't it time you earned your CEAP?



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CEAP Certification

In 2021, a project management team was created within the EAPA Japan Branch to implement the renewal of the CEAP exam in Japan. Led by Ayumi Nishikawa, it included other CEAPs Masaaki Tsukahara, Shinji Sonoda, and Daisuke Tani. EAPA Japan Branch funded the translation of the online classes. Many Japan Branch volunteers, including Asako Watanabe and Naomi Shima provided translations, while Yuri Miyazawa reviewed and finalized the exam. In November 2023, the Renewal Project was completed, the Japanese CEAP coursework and exam were digitized, and were then approved by the EACC for implementation. As of August 26, 2024, Japan boasts an additional 28 new CEAPs who were certified under this new online system, with many more who are well on their way!

The second major change came in 2023 with the opening of a CEAP administration office in Japan. Previously, CEAP candidates had to submit their applications to the EAPA International office in the US. You might imagine how difficult it was for many Japanese candidates to complete the exam application in a foreign language (English), to get proof of their academic credentials for submission in English, and finally to understand their exam results in English. Some candidates did not even know if they had passed the exam or not! Every year, candidates would contact me to find out if the “Congratulations” in their letters meant that they had passed. EAPA delegated the management of Japan’s CEAP operations to the Japan Branch in 2023, allowing the streamlining of the entire process from preliminary inquiries to candidate registration, examination, and subsequent certification renewals. The renewal process had been especially onerous, causing many not to renew at all. The Japan Branch’s CEAP administration office further clarified the process by breaking down the tasks of becoming a CEAP into 30 steps, allowing both candidates and administrators to track exactly where candidates are on the path to becoming a CEAP. (See Table 1).

In Japan, there are more than 80,000 nationally licensed psychologists and 66,000 nationally licensed career consultants. For these professionals, knowledge of EAP concepts, practices and ethics will be invaluable, helping them serve their clients and increasing their resources. We plan to continue to increase promotion of the CEAP through various media platforms and professional associations. As Cocona Hiraki, the 12 year old silver medal winner in skateboarding at the Tokyo Olympics said, “skateboarding is something to have fun with.” The goal of EAPA’s Japan Branch is that becoming a certified CEAP should be an attainable process. Candidates learn new skills; interact with other candidates from a variety of backgrounds, and meet seasoned EA professionals through CEAP mentoring sessions, permitting them to learn about what actually goes on in real-world EAP settings. Speaking for the members of the EAPA Japan Branch, we are proud of the hard work we have done to develop our own national CEAP certification process and are confident that the ranks of CEAPs will continue to grow in Japan and will eventually surpass those of the US!



Table 1 – EAPA Japan Branch CEAP Checklist	
I – Candidate Application	
1	Online application form submitted
2	Submit Candidate job description
3	Documented Master’s degree
4	PDH certificates completed
5	EAPA membership status
6	Track confirmation of 1-5
7	Invoice sent to candidate
8	Payment completed
II - Pre-study	
9	EAP Consultant Achievement course completed
10	Fundamentals of EAP course completed
11	Zoom URL textbook sent
12	Pre-study certificate
III - LMS	
13	Learning Management System (LMS) ID provided
14	Orientation to LMS
15	Module 1 completed
16	Module 2 completed
17	Module 3 completed
18	Module 4 completed
19	Module 5 completed
20	LMS Completion check
IV - Post Study	
21	URL text sent
22	Post study PDH
V - Mentoring	
23	Mentoring schedule
24	Mentoring sign-up
25	Mentoring log sheet submitted
26	Mentoring certificate awarded
VI - CEAP certificate	
27	EAPA International certificate fee
28	Certificate invoice generated
29	Certification fee paid
30	Certification and badge awarded

Kaoru Ichikawa, PhD, LCSW, CEAP, is CEO of Resilie Laboratory Inc., in Tokyo, Japan. The current Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Employee Assistance Roundtable (APEAR), she is a globally known Employee Assistance consultant, researcher, and educator. Dr Ichikawa has been instrumental in introducing the concept and development of EAPs in Japan and other Asia Pacific countries, is a former EAPA Board member and EACC Commissioner, and current president, EAPA Japan Branch.