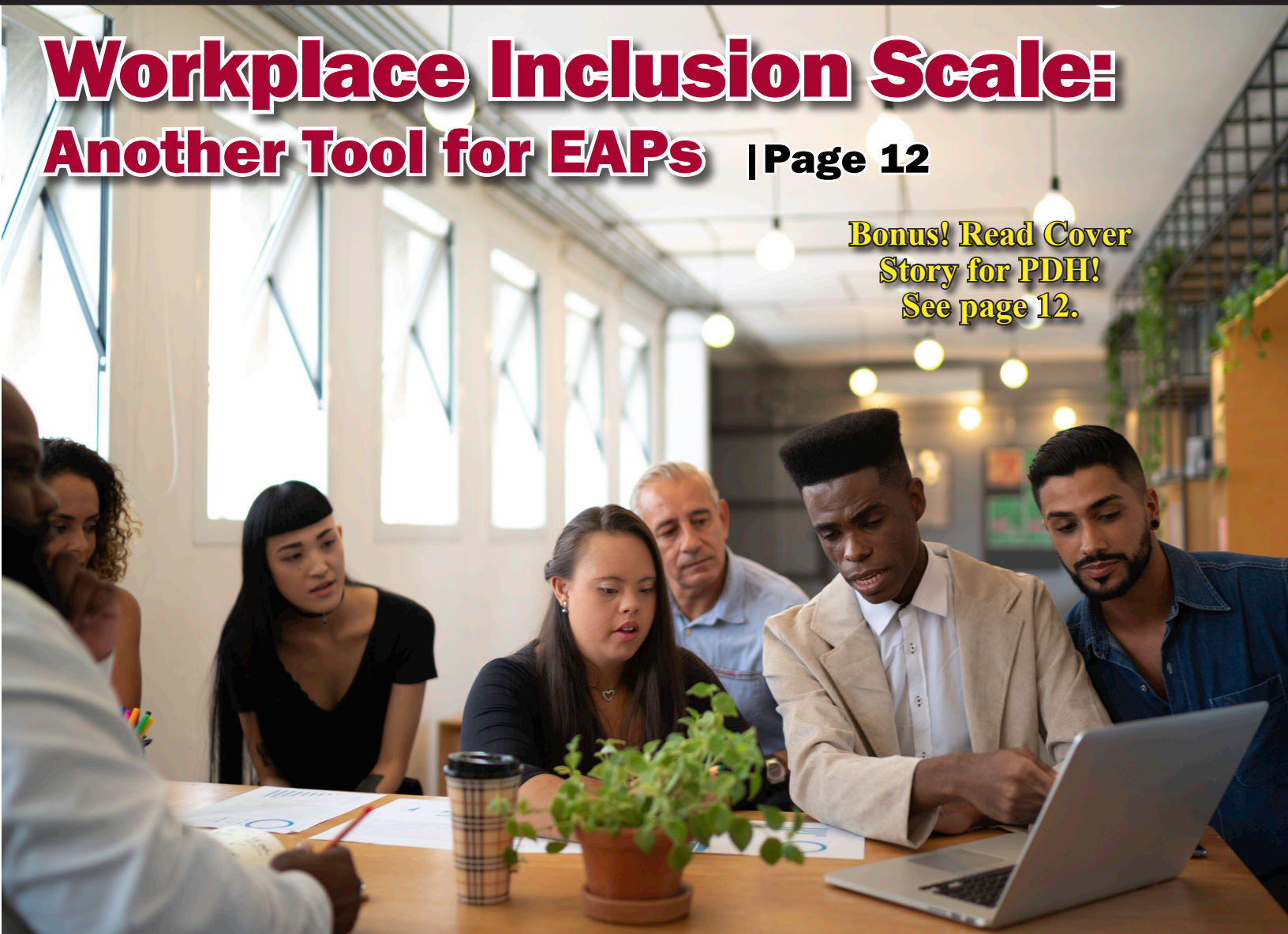


The Journal of **Employee Assistance**

Workplace Inclusion Scale: Another Tool for EAPs | Page 12

**Bonus! Read Cover
Story for PDH!
See page 12.**



 **EAPA** International
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PLUS:

**Data Game
Changer**

Page 18

**The Hidden
Worker: Part I**

Page 26

**You Don't
Look Sick**

Page 32



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The Journal of Employee Assistance

1ST Quarter 2022 | VOL. 52 NO. 1

cover story

12 The Workplace Inclusion Scale: Another Tool for EAPs

| By Patricia Herlihy, PhD, RN; Dave Sharar, PhD and Molly Robey, PhD

The Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS) is a tool that organizations can use to quickly assess the impact of diversity and inclusion efforts as perceived by those employees working within one or more departments and regional offices of an organization.

features

18 Data Game Changer: Current Utilization Figures Inaccurate

| By Dale Masi, PhD; Jodi Frey, PhD, LCSW-C, CEAP; James Harting, LCSW, CEAP; & Michelle Spearing, LPC, CEAP

The difference in results went from 5% utilization to almost 25% utilization, reflecting a greater number of employees served by the EAP over a five-year period. The lesson – *not all employees with an issue will seek help in any one year.*

22 Confusing Cannabis Laws Impact the Workplace & EAPs

| By Tamara Cagney, BSN, MA, EdD, CEAP

EA professionals will need to stay up to date on cannabis legislation in their states, focusing particularly on what employment protections are included. For employers, risk management starts with the drug and alcohol policy. EA professionals will want a seat at the table when policies are being updated.

features

26 The Hidden Worker: Part I – Considering Diverse Employee Needs During COVID

| By Bryan McNutt, PhD, LMFT, CEAP

While virtually everyone has been affected in some way, shape, or form by the coronavirus pandemic, diverse employees have been especially hard hit. This article will identify these workers and discuss their challenges and stressors, especially considering COVID-19.

32 You Don't Look Sick: Assisting Individuals with Invisible Disabilities

| By Maureen Hotchner

Since employee assistance professionals undoubtedly have clients with hidden disabilities, it stands to reason that EAPs need to be aware of this issue and take measures to help this underserved population.

departments

4 FRONT PAGE

6 "TEAR-OUT" RESOURCE

8 SPOTLIGHT ON EACC

10 WEB WATCH

21, 25, 36 EA ROUNDUP

16 LEGAL LINES

30 EURO TRENDS

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Harting	7
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KGA.....	13
SAPlist.com	15, 19

IFC: Inside Front Cover



Meeting the Needs of Diverse & ‘Hidden’ Workers

*WIS Metrics Scale Presents
Opportunity to Drive Inclusion Efforts*

| By Andrea Lardani and Bernie McCann, PhD, CEAP

A reoccurring theme that emerges in this issue of the *Journal of Employee Assistance* involves the significant disparities of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workforce that exist among various racial, ethnic, and other minority groups. The 1st quarter 2022 *JEA* offers discussion, recommendations, and best practices for how our profession can join with employers and others to encourage this important transformation.

In order to participate in meaningful change, we as individual practitioners and as a profession must first better understand the issues surrounding it. The *Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS)* presents an intriguing, potentially important tool in helping our employer clients to do just that. Modeled after the successful, EAPA-endorsed Workplace Outcome Suite that has been in place for a decade, the *WIS* is a **new** tool that organizations can use to quickly assess the impact of diversity and inclusion efforts as perceived by those employees working within a given organization.

Patricia Herlihy, Dave Sharar, and Molly Robey, authors of this issue’s cover story, highlight the usefulness of the *WIS* in addressing organizational concerns regarding how to measure the effectiveness of DEI initiatives and programs. To date, these efforts have primarily been qualitative and subjective in nature.

The first of a two-part article examines the particular importance of DEI efforts in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Bryan McNutt** explains that in a collective crisis such as the pandemic, it is often the marginalized members of society who are most vulnerable to feeling the adverse impact of the crisis. He identifies these employees as women, LGBTQ+ employees, BIPOC-identified individuals (Black, indigenous, people of color), young parents, women, and people who identify as sexual and gender minorities. Bryan presents information from a significant, global survey as well as other reports that reveal notable stressors specific to diverse-identified employees.

In another feature related to this issue’s theme, **Maureen Hotchner** explains how EAPs can help meet the needs of another marginalized group – individuals with “hidden” or invisible disabilities, who she describes as having health challenges that are primarily neurological in nature.

In a feature article that could have a significant impact on our profession, **Dale Masi, Jodi Frey, Jim Harting, and Michelle Spearing** explain that EAP utilization reports have been vastly underestimating the impact of our profession on client companies and their employees. Dr. Masi states it is much more accurate for organizations to review the number of employees who used the

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EAP over a *five-year* span, instead of only analyzing *one year* of utilization. When using a more cumulative approach, the difference in results went from 5% utilization to almost **25%** utilization.

The authors tested their theory in two major corporations with robust EAPs and use the article to share their data findings and the potentially enormous implications on the EA field. While noting more research is warranted, they strongly urge other researchers and EAP managers and providers to test the new utilization count methodology.

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A reminder that by reading this issue's cover story and answering a 5-item multiple choice quiz at <https://bit.ly/3yGSPCR> you can earn one free PDH. Upon completion of the quiz, contact Julie Rochester (j.rochester@eapassn.org) to notify her that you have successfully completed the quiz, and she will forward the earned PDH certificate.

In another feature, **Tamara Cagney** assists EA professionals and their client companies in navigating confusing cannabis laws and regulations. In terms of employee drug testing and the ever-changing landscape of cannabis legalization, Cagney stresses there is no one-size-fits-all solution. She adds that it is vital for EA professionals to remain current on cannabis regulations in their respective states.

In this issue's *Euro Trends* column, **Dirk Antonissen** shares results of research concerning changes in work experiences due to the COVID-19 pandemic in France and Germany, two major countries in Europe.

In the *Spotlight on EACC* column, commissioner **Ian Quamina** and the *JEA* teamed up to interview five CEAP[®] candidates about their interest in pursuing the new CEAP[®] Refresh credential.

Finally, readers are reminded of the "tear-out" resource on page 6, which in this issue – in light of ongoing COVID concerns – addresses the difficulty in deciding whether to return to the office or continue working from home.

We wish you a Happy New Year and thought-provoking reading! ♦

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'Am I Safer at Home or at Work?'

Returning to an Office is Tough Decision for Many

By John Narine, DBA, CEAP

What it means to be an employee and part of a company's culture has truly changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have been working out of my basement for the past 12 months. Getting up from my cubicle, walking over to my boss's office, and asking a question were replaced by physical isolation and Zoom meetings.

As a recovering addict, adjusting to isolation while remaining engaged in my work has been particularly difficult. Not only did my interaction and connection with co-workers decrease, but the 12 step in-person meetings that I relied upon to stay sober faced disruption and moved online, thereby significantly increasing isolation and risking my recovery.

However, returning to the office brings about an entirely new set of concerns. According to a Bloomberg publication, some workers reported quitting their jobs rather than going back in office due to the pandemic. Conversely, a survey of 1,000 adults revealed that 39% would consider quitting if remote work was **not** an option.

With COVID-19 still threatening the safety of the workplace, the crux of the issue is: *Am I safer staying at home or being in the office?* For me, the stress and anxiety surrounding the idea of returning to work in an office does nothing but decrease employee engagement and productivity and increase the need for me to work my program.

This begs two questions: Which decision is right for YOU? What can business leaders do to help?

Vaccines. In a recent article by Bloomberg, 21% of employers are mandating that employees are vaccinated to remain hired and that number is expected to surge. While this effort can protect employees from physical harm due to COVID, the hope is that it also brings some relief to mental health and wellness.



Remain Connected. Everyone is feeling the effects of COVID-19. The CDC offers practical steps that employers can take to manage stress and build resiliency during the pandemic, such as communicating vulnerably with employees about how the stress is affecting their life as well and work together towards solutions. By relating to the stress employees are under, leaders can build a connection and gain their trust. In my own research, the 10 leaders I interviewed revealed that by building connection through vulnerability, employee engagement and productivity increased in their firms as substance abuse relapse rates decreased.

If you are leading a company that is requiring employees to return in office, identifying and employing leadership strategies for employees' transition back into the office is critical. This is especially true for those suffering from a substance addiction. The key question I have for business leaders is: ***How are you meeting your employees' needs where they are mentally during this transition back to the office?*** ❖

John Narine received his Doctorate of Business Administration from California Intercontinental University, specializing in Global Business and Leadership. John is the author of Leading Workplace Addiction. Specifics about his career and work can be found at www.drjnarine.wordpress.com

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CEAP® Refresh

Candidates Speak Out on Revamped Credential

By Ian Quamina, PhD, CEAP

In addition to timely online announcements and related correspondence from EAPA about the CEAP® Refresh on the EAPA website and other venues, the Employee Assistance Certification Commission (EACC) introduced this column in the 1st quarter 2021 issue of the *Journal of Employee Assistance (JEA)* to bring readers up to speed about the newest developments in the CEAP® Refresh process.

In this column, the *JEA* interviewed employee assistance professionals about their interest in the CEAP® credential. The EACC and *JEA* thank them for taking the time out of their busy schedules!

JEA: *Why did you want to become a CEAP?*

Daniele Ascani, LMHC, MA, CEAP

The reason is personal. Approximately 15 years ago I began my career in social work/mental health counseling for a non-profit agency here in New York. The work was challenging and eventually it led to burnout. I was fortunate because my partner (now wife) encouraged me to contact someone at the EAP. To say that the experience was life changing is an understatement.

In fact, during my sessions, the therapist made me realize how the burnout but was not likely caused by the work itself but by my perception and negative assumptions about my superiors. Within 5-6 sessions he literally helped me rewrite the narrative in my head, understand the importance to practice regular self-care, and most importantly the need to set boundaries at work.

Upon my return I was able to focus on work without spiraling out of control. I realized that I was probably not the only one going through this and that If I had not contacted the EAP I would have likely left the field. This motivated me to help other professionals who, like me, are struggling.

Laurie Kovens, MSW, LCSW

MA - Writing, Certificate in Narrative Health
Durham, NC

I have been a clinician in EAP settings for the better part of the last decade. The CEAP® will help me round out both clinical and non-clinical knowledge base as an EA professional, and serve as an indication of education, experience, and expertise.

Michael Levy, MSW San Francisco State University
California LCSW
San Diego, CA

I've been interested in becoming a CEAP since I first began working for an EAP seven years ago. During that time, I have supported others in their efforts to complete the CEAP® requirements and exam, and I am pleased to be in a position now where I have the support of my leadership to take the time to pursue it.

Sean T. Marci, CADC, SAP

I am currently the EAP coordinator for a Union Local with about 1,500 members. Our members work for the same manufacturing company in the same plant. In my role, the CEAP credential would be a game-changer.

There has been a genuine understanding for many years about the intrinsic value of our union members having their EAP run by another hourly member like myself. Our Collective Bargaining Agreement with the company has strong language pertaining to the union's EAP.

C.J. Massie, MA, CEAP

My decision to become a CEAP was based upon my professional entrance into the EAP field two years ago. I have found breaking into the profession quite challenging due to limited positions, and those in the field remain long term as salary is comparatively more stable in contrast to typical mental health counseling due to differences in billing practices.

JEA: *What do you hope to achieve that would not occur without a CEAP®?*

Daniele: I would like to someday have my own EAP, and I believe it was essential for me to become a CEAP® to understand the totality of the subject. I have two Masters' degrees, and it was only when I began studying to pass the CEAP® that I realized how assisting an EAP client requires a deep understanding of the complex dynamics in a workplace. Looking at the client through a standard social work/mental health lens is simply not enough to help the client.

Laurie: Connecting with other CEAPs would allow me to collaborate with others, contribute to the field, and allow me to represent EAP practice and ethics with non-EA professionals. It would strengthen my position as an advocate for colleagues and clients, and EAP practice within my current institution.

The credential is also a significant marker of professional growth and commitment; it is the gold standard for commitment to the field. I think it is important that professionals have a way to distinguish their achievements and contributions, and a community in which they can continue to grow. The CEAP® represents that to those of us committed to EAP work.

Michael: EAP history for one. I look forward to learning some of the history and processes that I have not been as fully exposed to or involved with in my EAP career thus far and look forward to adding the credential to affirm my EAP expertise.

Sean: It puts me in the position, once having attained my CEAP® credential, to be of maximum service to my fellow union members. I can sit across from even the highest-ranking company officials and know that the recommendations I make will be fully respected and considered.

C.J.: I believe I have a much greater understanding of the EAP field and an outline of how to better support EAP functions in the workplace.

JEA: *Why did you wish to pursue the CEAP® at this particular time?*

Daniele: Because of the way COVID has impacted the workforce. Many professions have moved to remote work, and the reality is that a good portion of those jobs will stay that way. But clients are overwhelmed

by the lack of boundaries. Home *was* the place where we would go for rest, but for many it is *now* where you "clock in but never clock out."

People see themselves as prisoners or as one of my clients said, they feel that "every day is Groundhog Day." As CEAPs, we are perfectly positioned to help the workforce weather the storm and adapt to this new reality. The timing couldn't be better to help professionals!

Laurie: I am considering the CEAP® at this time due to changes in life circumstances as well as the new CEAP® pathways. The confluence of these changes presents a new opportunity to commit to completing the CEAP® process and devote the time and attention to integrate that training as fully as possible.

Michael: I have been eagerly awaiting completion of the CEAP® Refresh. It just strikes me as a far more straightforward process for completing the CEAP®.

Sean: I have put a lot of work in to attaining the CEAP® and I look forward to using the credential to further build the positive reputation of our union's EAP within our company and beyond.

C.J.: I have been determined to earn my CEAP®, but the decision was accelerated after the introduction of the new certification path. Refresh clearly outlined the important material and served as a basis to increase my competency for the field.

JEA: *What knowledge do you hope to obtain by achieving the CEAP® credential?*

Daniele: I have learned so much. I feel more confident about my understanding of the subject matter. I enjoyed the new exam and modules. It breaks down the EAP domains into an easy-to-understand format.

Laurie: While I regularly pursue continuing education to grow as a clinician and in my understanding of ethics, my professional association does not offer EAP-specific training. I look forward to the unique opportunity that CEAP® preparation and EAPA membership offers to understand the core competencies of EAP work, EAP-specific ethics, and business issues and trends.

continued on page 35

Post-COVID

Predictive Index

<https://bit.ly/2RykkkgK>

In its latest report, find out what's causing executive teams to struggle in a remote post-COVID world – and what they're doing to build dream teams.

Disability Inclusion

Job Accommodation Network

<https://askjan.org>

Do you have questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act? The *Job Accommodation Network* (JAN) is a leading resource on the ADA, including a comprehensive list of various disabilities and suggestions for workplace accommodations, which the EAP can help devise.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Dismantling Racism Works Web Workshop

www.dismantlingracism.org

This web-based workbook was originally designed to support the Dismantling Racism Works two-day basic workshop. The workbook is now offered as a resource to the entire community.

Employee Assistance

10 Essential Messages for C-Level CIRs

<https://youtu.be/pw1WestrgPQ>

Compiled by Tim Hobart, CEO with H&H Health Associates, this link directs readers to Tim's latest video on Workplace Critical Incidents.

Employee Assistance

EduWeb

<https://www.eapasa.co.za/what-is-eduweb/>

The EAPA South Africa chapter has created EduWeb, a new online education portal, as part of its long-term strategy as a leader in EAP education.

Employee Assistance

Not Safe For Work (NSFW) Podcast

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/3PAAY9zgpMQ3m9lcPrPAb2>

Hosted by Charles Epstein of BackBone, Inc., this podcast offers a humorous take on workplace issues, offered on Fridays as an end-of-week stress reliever. For more information, contact Charles at che@backboneinc.com.

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The Intersection of ACEs and Addiction

<https://bit.ly/3kLFVNb>

Hosted by Hazelden Betty Ford addiction psychiatrist Stephen Delisi, this webinar takes a closer look at specific adverse childhood experiences implicated in chronic illness. Participants must register to view the recording.

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You Learn You Turn: Coping with Grief

<https://bit.ly/2W6L2iR>

Lucy Henry with First Sun EAP shares how grief affects us in the workplace and shares positive ways to process grief.

Employee Assistance

International Employee Assistance Digital Archive

<https://www.eaarchive.org>

The International Employee Assistance Digital Archive is always adding to its important EA depository of information for the employee assistance profession. Recent submissions at <https://archive.hshsl.umaryland.edu/handle/10713/2345> include but are not limited to:

- *Do You Know What an EAP Is?* John Narine;
- *History of Employee Assistance Programs in the United States* (book review), Dave Sharar; and
- *The State of Mental Health America 2022*.

For more information about the EA Digital Archive, contact Jodi Frey at JFREY@ssw.umaryland.edu or Pat Herlihy at pherlihy@rockymountainresearch.us

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The Workplace Inclusion Scale

Another Tool for EAPs

| By Patricia Herlihy, PhD, RN; Dave Sharar, PhD; and Molly Robey, PhD

In 2010 Chestnut Global Partners (CGP) created the Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) to provide EA professionals with a method for collecting empirical data about the impact of their interventions. This scale has been in existence for over ten years and the most recent report confirms data from over 45,726 users who have used EAP counseling services during that time span. (Attridge and Streenstra, 2021)

Chestnut Health Systems, the parent company of CGP, recently created a new psychometrically informed instrument to help the EAP field integrate inclusion into its services: the Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS).

The WIS is a tool that organizations can use to quickly assess the impact of diversity and inclusion efforts as perceived by those employees working within one or more departments and regional offices of an organization. Specifically, *it is a method for EAPs, as management consultants, to offer HR, benefit departments, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs a unique lens to assess the perceived level of employee inclusion.*

Intent of Article

This article introduces the (WIS) to the EAP community and highlights its usefulness in addressing organizational concerns about how to measure the effectiveness of DEI initiatives and programs. The WIS scale is intended to provide simplicity, clarity, and coherence to the assessment of the success of DEI programs, some of which have existed in organizations for as many as 15 years.

Considerable efforts have gone into determining which questions are most salient for capturing employee sentiments on DEI. While the researchers began with a beta-test of twenty questions, they were able, with statistical confidence, to reduce the number to eight with the knowledge that short scales are known to increase response rates. *For a list of these*

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A reminder that by reading this issue's cover story and answering a 5-item multiple choice quiz at <https://bit.ly/3yGSPCR> you can earn one free PDH. Upon completion of the quiz, contact Julie Rochester (j.rochester@eapassn.org) to notify her that you have successfully completed the quiz, and she will forward the earned PDH certificate.

questions, see the "Scaled Questions with Related Themes" section in this article.

Background

The year 2020 was widely acclaimed as a year of racial awakening. The deaths of unarmed black Americans, including Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor generated widespread agitation and protests across the United States. In the wake of the violence and unrest, many Americans have come to believe that the country needs to pass new civil rights laws to counter racial discrimination (Jones, 2020).

This realization has also spilled over into private sector recruitment and retention practices. According to Edelman (2020), a majority of Americans believe private sector organizations bear responsibility for helping to create a more equitable and just society.

As a result, a renewed urgency is being seen within workplaces to revise diversity policies and foster inclusion. A recent Fortune/Deloitte Survey (2021) finds that 96% of CEOs agree that DEI is a strategic priority for them in the current socioeconomic climate.

Joan Williams and David White (2020), in an article in the *Harvard Business Review* focused on

“Updating your DE&I Playbook” suggest that past efforts to deal with equity, diversity and inclusion have basically failed. They attribute this failure to a lack of structural and cultural change within organizations. Such change, they argue, must be driven by evidence and metrics.

Measuring DEI is Challenging

Measuring diversity, equity, and inclusion quickly and with a sound and reliable tool presents several challenges.

Diversity—a characteristic of a group that includes people of multiple and various identities and abilities—may be relatively straightforward to measure. However, assessing the extent to which “all people feel respected, accepted, supported, and valued” within a work environment, and all employees,

“fully participate in decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization, is even more of a challenge to measure” (Romansky et al., 2021).

It is in response to this contextual background that the authors introduce the Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS).

Discussion

The WIS is a particularly noteworthy tool in its employee-centeredness. Unlike many other diversity and inclusion assessment tools that rely on quantitative metrics, the WIS focuses *exclusively* on the reports of *employee experiences and perceptions* of the *degree* to which they feel they belong, are respected, are involved and engaged at their jobs, and have access to career building opportunities.

Since the WIS does not ask employees to weigh in on perceptions of diversity efforts, it provides a more direct measure of how efforts around diversity affect employees in terms of engagement and a sense of belonging.

The nucleus of the WIS centers on eight key themes: trust, value of individual attributes, personal work engagement, access to opportunity, fair rewards, cultural responsiveness, respect, and social acceptance. These concepts are measured by validated questions on a Likert scale ranging from 1-5 as illustrated below:

Scale Questions with Related Themes

1. I know I can trust this organization (trust)

2. People are valued as individuals by the organization (values individual attributes)
3. My opinions matter to the organization (personal work engagement)
4. I have access to new opportunities (access to opportunity)
5. The organization distributes recognitions fairly (fair rewards)
6. I think the organization recognizes diversity (cultural responsiveness)
7. I feel respected by the organization (respect)
8. I always feel like I’m part of a team at work (social acceptance)

Note: *For a detailed discussion of the selection of these eight themes and how they relate to the questions, please refer to the validation article being published in W@W’s Journal of Total Rewards in March 2022. (Editor’s note: To access this article as it becomes available, contact any of the authors at the email addresses listed at the end of this article.)*



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Using a Pre/Post methodology as a measure of change, a final comparative score can be created that can help EA practitioners, HR managers, and DEI professionals objectively evaluate how their employees specifically feel about the degree to which inclusiveness exists within their work team and company.

Although the WIS scale offers suggestions for choices in demographic selections, users of this scale are encouraged to explore how employees of different

ages, genders, races, and sexual identities experience inclusion in their own work environments.

Intended Uses for the EAP Field

Statistical analysis supports the WIS scale as an efficient and precise measure of inclusion. The WIS is shown to be a valid and reliable instrument that provides a systematic way to assess employee feelings about inclusion in a wide range of workplace environments. The validation paper for this new scale, which,

WORKPLACE INCLUSION SCALE

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our short study of inclusion at the workplace. As you can see neither your name nor any other identifying information appears on this questionnaire. Therefore, your responses to the questions will never be linked to you personally. Please answer the questions as honestly as you can.

Please check the appropriate box:

Gender:

- ☐ Man
- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Transgender or Nonbinary
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Sexual Identity:

- ☐ Bisexual, Pansexual, or Queer
- ☐ Gay/Lesbian
- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Race and Ethnicity:

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Multiracial or Multiethnic
- ☐ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders
- ☐ White
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Age:

- ☐ 15-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 61+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Instructions: The following statements reflect your impressions of your work environment. Please answer as honestly as you can and remember that your answers are completely anonymous. Please circle the appropriate number to the right of each question using the 1-5 response format.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. I know I can trust this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2. People are valued as individuals by this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My opinions matter to the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have access to new opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The organization distributes recognition evenly.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I think the organization recognizes diversity.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel respected by the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I always feel like I'm part of a team at work.	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU!

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as noted will be published in the *Journal of Total Rewards* in their March 2022 edition, will answer readers' curiosity about the process of designing this new scale.

The more this tool is administered and results anonymously pooled, important data for further research in this rapidly growing field will be accessible. Towards that end, the scale will be freely available to users with the signing of a short User License Agreement with similar arrangements as provided with the WOS scale. EA providers that offer workplace consultation/coaching/training and want to assist employers in building more inclusive work environments can utilize the WIS as a tool to empirically measure the success of their DEI strategies.

Summary

The Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS) is a tool to establish a systematic and rigorous basis for conducting diversity and inclusion audits of employees at a wide range of corporate organizations of all sizes. The research conducted to create this scale provides validation for the WIS as a reliable and sound assessment tool.

The scale offers a basis for a single measure that adheres to and builds upon some of the key factors described in the earlier literature on the topic of diversity measurement. The *main differences* between the Workplace Inclusion Scale and other measures lies in its *simplicity*, *brevity*, and *theoretically solid structure* in capturing employee experiences along the key dimensions of inclusion.

The WIS tool, when deployed and used as an easy to administer before/after assessment, has the ability to bring empirical and credible assessments of employee experiences to what is now primarily a qualitative assessment and subjective approach to evaluating the efficacy of organizational DEI initiatives. ❖

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Sexual Harassment Laws Continue to Evolve

| By Robin Sheridan, JD

Federal law has prohibited sexual harassment in the workplace since Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted. Title VII makes it unlawful to harass an applicant or employee because of that person's sex and prohibits unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature including, jokes, teasing, and leering.

Historically, state law has been consistent with federal law, providing the same kind of protection for employees, and giving employees a choice of pursuing claims for sexual harassment under state law (with a local state agency) or under federal law (with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, a federal agency).

But in the last few years we have seen states, and sometime local authorities, taking a more aggressive stance than that provided by the federal law and as a result, providing greater protection for those working within its state line.

Changes Impacting Employee Rights On-the-Job

Most recently, employers in **Texas** became subject to two significant amendments to state employment laws. Previously, only employees in businesses with more than 15 employees were entitled to the protection of the state law. Since the law was amended, employees in businesses with *any* number of employees will receive the same protection.

In addition, the law extends the period within which an employee can file a sexual harassment claim with the Texas Workforce Commission. Instead of having only 180 days from the date of the alleged harassment to file a claim, an employee now has 300 days.

In **New York**, former governor Andrew Cuomo expanded the New York State Human Rights Law as the same time the city of New York made similar changes to the local ordinance. Not only do these

changes require employers to adopt a sexual harassment prevention policy and provide training, but the statute of limitations for also filing a sexual harassment claim *tripled* – from one year to *three* years.

Protection against sexual harassment now extends to employees, contractors, consultants, and vendors. Most notably from an employer perspective, the State effectively *eliminated* the requirement that an employee inform the employer of their allegation before filing a claim if the worker saw a reasonable chance of prevailing.

Connecticut's Time's Up Act required that all employers (those with three or more employees) provide two hours of sexual harassment training and education and requires that employers provide periodic supplemental training not less than every ten years. Re-training of supervisors is encouraged every three years and new hires must be trained within six months of their start date.

The **Oregon** Workplace Fairness Act has created a five-year limitations period for the filing of sexual harassment claims.

Illinois' Workplace Transparency Act amended the Illinois Human Rights Act to not only require annual sexual harassment training but also to impose minimum standards for that training. The prohibition against sexual harassment in Illinois extends not only to employees, but to *contractors* and *consultants* as well.

Illinois is unique in requiring that employers report to the Illinois Department of Human Rights by July 1 of each year, the total number of final adverse sexual harassment administrative rulings against them and the relief that was granted.

Even small **California** employers (those with at least five employees) must provide at least two hours of sexual harassment prevention training to all supervisory

employees and at least one hour of sexual harassment prevention training to all non-supervisory employees within six months of assuming their position. The training must be provided once every two years. California has also extended the filing period from one to three years.

New supervisors in **Delaware** must receive interactive training within one year of their date of hire or commencement of a supervisory role. All other employees must be trained every two years.

Maine requires training for all employees within one year of their start date and additional training for supervisors.

New Laws Impacting Resolution of a Claim

As the public has learned how celebrities and politicians (and others of wealth and influence) are using confidentiality agreements and settlement payments to quiet sexual harassment allegations, certain States have attempted to counter these strategies and provide greater protection to victims of sexual harassment. For example:

California prohibits an employer from requiring that an employee sign a nondisclosure agreement if that agreement eliminates the employee's ability to disclose information about the harassment.

New Jersey has determined that confidentiality agreements concealing details of harassment are against public policy and unenforceable.

New York no longer allows employers to include nondisclosure provisions in settlement agreements resolving sexual harassment claims (unless requested by the alleged victim).

The **Illinois** Workplace Transparency Act prohibits a "contract, agreement, clause, covenant, waiver or other document" that restricts an employee from reporting allegations of unlawful sexual harassment to state authorities. **Tennessee, Vermont, and Washington** presently have similar laws on their books.

Practical Takeaways

In the last few years, numerous states have expanded sexual harassment laws to provide greater

protection to employees. *EA professionals need to be aware of these changes as they counsel individuals on workplace sexual harassment issues and the resolution of those issues.* This includes whether these individuals are acting as employees, or in certain cases, contractors, or vendors.

As importantly, however, EA professionals are uniquely qualified to assist employers in sexual harassment training. And while employers have always had good reason to provide sexual harassment training, the recent mandates mean that an EA professional's knowledge of training requirements can even further enhance their value to both employers and the employees. ❖

Questions should be directed to Robin Sheridan, rsheridan@hallrender.com, 414-721-0469, or another Hall Render attorney. Special thanks to law clerk Joseph N. Ho, for his assistance in drafting this article.

Legal Lines articles are provided for informational purposes only. For legal advice regarding how the issues in this article relate to specific circumstances, Hall Render recommends that EAPs seek out their regular counsel who can provide appropriate context and advice for a particular situation.

Robin Sheridan, JD, is an attorney with Hall, Render, Killian, Heath & Lyman, P.C., the largest health care-focused law firm in the country. Please visit the Hall Render Blog at <http://blogs.hallrender.com/> for more information on topics related to health care law.

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Data Game Changer

Current Utilization Figures Inaccurate

By Dale A. Masi, PhD, Jodi J. Frey, PhD, LCSW-C, CEAP; James Harting, LCSW, CEAP;
& Michelle Spearing, LPC, CEAP

In late 2020, Dr. Dale Masi wrote a letter to the editor that was published in the *Journal of Employee Assistance* titled “EAP Utilization: EAP Field Doesn’t Do Itself Justice.” In the letter, Dr. Masi brought attention to the EAP field citing a 5% employee utilization in *one* given year as the goal of EAPs. For example, 50 employees using an EAP in a company with a total of 1,000 employees would have 5% utilization.

Using this method resulted in a great deal of criticism, as seen in two recent articles – the first published in the *Wall Street Journal* article (Feintzeig, 2020) while the second was an article in the *Society for Human Resource Management* (Agovino, 2019). Dr. Masi went on to explain how EAPs responded by using various methods to raise the utilization count using their services.

These included counting the employees’ family members, employees who used Work/Life services, and even individuals who didn’t show up for counseling. These figures were added into the numerator of employees using programs without changing the denominator of the number of employees. EAPs calculated these as part of their annual utilization count.

New Utilization Data is Revealing

What Masi’s findings revealed was that the original method of assessing EAP utilization was not ideal given that EAPs were reporting their data based on a one-year span. Dr. Masi worked with a Fortune-50 premier corporation, IBM, which had two EAP vendors with a robust program. IBM raised concerns about the 5% utilization rate and Dr. Masi suggested that they instead review the number of employees who used the program for a five-year span, instead of only analyzing one year of utilization.

The difference in results went from 5% utilization to almost **25%** utilization, reflecting a greater number of employees served by the EAP over a five-year

period. This cumulative approach to the data count over that timespan where the numerator, being the number of employees using EAP services, divided by the total number of employees in the company, the denominator, resulted in a far higher representation of utilization. *The lesson – not all employees with an issue will seek help in any one year.*

Where the counting has gone askew, in Dr. Masi’s perspective, is that EAPs have used the *single* year as the total utilization regardless of number of years they are providing services. In reality the number is much different when you look at the number of unique employees who are using EAP services over the course of several years.

After the Masi letter was published in *JEA*, she was approached by Dr. Jodi Frey, Professor at University of Maryland, asking if she would be interested in her working with a co-researcher to test Masi’s methodology on an additional company.

Testing ‘Masi Hypothesis’

Dr. Frey then consulted with James Harting, founder of Harting EAP, who agreed to seek the authorization of another large EAP to utilize their unidentified data, collaborate with the team and test the “Masi hypothesis.”

The idea of cumulative utilization, or the “Masi Hypothesis,” was intriguing to both Frey and Harting.

To begin, Frey and Harting reviewed Harting EAP’s Customer List and identified several companies that might collaborate on the project.

After several conversations explaining the project and requesting their approval to utilize their aggregate, non-identified data, it was decided that the best match to test this new utilization method was *to partner with the Halliburton EAP*. Halliburton has had supporting services to employees provided by its embedded EAP since 1980.

The EAP provides comprehensive assessments, referrals, and follow-up for all employees and family

members, in addition to being a resource to managers for workplace and employee management. Employees come to the EAP in one of three general ways; self-referral, supervisor referral, or referred by HSE via the drug and alcohol department.

The Halliburton EAP's core functions include comprehensive assessment and referral; critical incident response and grief support for co-workers and family members; crisis intervention and assistance during crisis situations including disaster response and threat assessment; workplace consultation on identification prevention, and resolution of behavioral risk factors and safety concerns in the workplace; training and presentations; and managing the relationship of the MH/SUD partner.

Working with Halliburton

Michelle Spearing, Manager of Halliburton's EAP, welcomed the opportunity to share aggregate data that contributes to improving the EAP field. Her first reaction was to recall that her mentors taught her to be an advocate for the field through supporting good research and she understood the critical need for EAPs to demonstrate value for their services. As manager of Halliburton's EAP, Spearing realizes that utilization is an important value to present to help track program outcomes.

Halliburton's EAP data is internally housed on protected servers, so the researchers worked to create a data mining script that would gather unidentified pertinent data elements from Halliburton's EAP database. They specifically looked at the count of unique employees that used the EAP (not including no-shows) and the total count for individuals employed by the company over time.

Going into the project, the researchers hypothesized that the cumulative utilization counts would be significantly higher than traditional annual reported utilization of around 5% and would better represent the impact of EAPs on a workplace given a more reasonable period of time. To better evaluate if the EAP was reaching employees in the workplace, they agreed with Dr. Masi to review EAP utilization over a 5-year period.

They looked at the number of active employees in the company and took the average for each of the five years, identified only unique (or new to EAP) employees seen during the 5-year period and limited this analysis to employees – they did not include family members. If a person had come in twice, they were counted *once*.

Next, they took the average number of employees from the 5-year period (2016 through 2020) or 21,232 and divided the number of employees that had an Open Case (4,677). **The answer indicates that the EAP saw 22% of the workforce in this 5-year period.** (See the Table 1 graphic, which shows utilization calculations for each year and the average 5-year period.)

Interesting Utilization Trend

Spearing noted that, year over year, there tends to be an interesting trend in EAP utilization that is unique to the industry and dependent upon certain market conditions. If the market is up and employees are being hired, there tends to be an increase in EAP utilization, however, if the market is down and downsizing is taking place, EAP utilization is lower.

This is a very typical pattern within the industry. There are several potential reasons as to why EAP utilization would be affected by industry market conditions. In a hiring year with many new employees, the EAP information is given to them at several touchpoints during their onboarding process.

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Additionally, in the hiring year, the company has more resources and individuals feel more comfortable coming forward to deal with personal concerns.

During a downturn, with layoffs, many employees are pressed for time and as a result they tend to not deal with issues until they become critical. (The Table 1 graphic shows the number of unique employees that have used EAP in the last 5 years.)

hypothesis is valid and further testing of this concept is advocated.

New Steps and Conclusion

In the future, the research team plans to further refine methodology and compare data with employees only, with employees and covered family members, and then expanding the concept to understand cumulative

Table 1: Research Study for Cumulative Utilization in EAPs – July 29, 2021

	Number of New Cases distinct individual in 5-year period	Number of total employees	Percentage
2016	929	18,728	5.0%
2017	1,141	22,378	5.1%
2018	1,066	26,068	4.1%
2019	991	24,261	4.1%
2020	565	14,225	4.0%
5-year total	4,692	21,132	22.2%

Sharing Study Results

When the researchers shared results of the study with Spearing, she reported feeling supported and not surprised, but very pleased. When she shared results with her management, they responded, “Wow! Great job” and commented on how valued the EAP was and that they wanted to share these numbers with more senior and key Halliburton leadership. The Halliburton team plans to share the new methodology and reporting in their annual report.

Since Masi, Frey, and Harting hypothesized the cumulative utilization to be much higher than the typically reported EAP utilization of 5%, they were pleased to see the average over time was actually **22%**. They all agreed that having this data to share with a Vice-President of a company and informing them that an EAP saw 22% of the company’s workforce who had personal issues that affected their work performance, is a more illustrative example of the services that an EAP provides than a one-year snapshot.

It is the authors’ conclusion that an effective EAP that provides the five core-technologies that EAPA states are essential components of an EAP, will deliver a similar result. This would indicate that Dr. Masi’s

utilization for EAP-services that fall within the EAP Core Technology and value-added services, such as work-life and management consultation.

As a team, they recognize the need for EAPs to demonstrate value and impact on various levels, and to multiple customers. They also understand that the quality of EAP and the services they provide impact utilization as a reflection of trust, perception of confidentiality, and confidence. Cumulative utilization helps tell the story and fill in some of the gaps created by only providing annual utilization for so long.

From this study, and Dr. Masi’s prior work, there are now two major Fortune 500 companies whose data defies the usual way of counting utilization. *Why has the EAP field not questioned this before?*

The implications are enormous. Instead of turning to solid researchers such as Frey and Harting, the field has relied on rationalizations and excuses that did not change the bottom line of usage of 5% utilization per year.

The authors strongly urge other researchers and EAP managers and providers to test the new utilization count methodology. More evidence is needed to support these initial findings and to share the true impact of the field’s services with workplace leaders and professional stakeholders.

To its credit, the *Journal of Employee Assistance* has supported this initial work.

Additional research is warranted to better understand how employee utilization of EAPs over time, in addition to related EAP core services, meets the needs of employees and employers.

Providers should fund researchers to study their numbers over consecutive years rather than a single year among their clients. Researchers should apply for funding from federal and private sources to fund major research in using large samples of various EAPs.

The industry's future could depend on it. Streaming and smartphone apps competing for programs are posing an additional major threat to the existence of EAPs. Hopefully the EAP field will realize the importance of supporting further research in this area. ♦

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Work at the University of Maryland and the Chair of Social Work in the Workplace & Employee Assistance Sub-specialization.

Jim Harting, LCSW, CEAP, is the founder of Harting EAP. Michelle Spearing, LPC, CEAP, is Manager of Halliburton's EAP.

The researchers greatly thank Halliburton and Spearing for their partnership in this project and contribution to research and the EAP field.

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earoundup

Tech is Great, but Something is Missing

Many employees might be starting the new year the same way they ended the old one – communicating via Zoom, Google Chat, email, text messages or a similar venue. It's true these tools offer back and forth communication, but not in the same way as an in-person conversation. Neither does remote work offer breakroom chats where team members build relationships and rapport. Courtesy of Clint Padgett, author of *How Teams Triumph: Managing by Commitment*, here are some tips and cautionary advice:

Work to overcome technology's communications limits. Be honest, how many times have you misinterpreted the tone of an email or a static document? Skip the emojis and strive to make communications as clear as possible.

Put yourself in the other person's place. If you received this text or email, would you understand the context without more explanation?

Set up clear, two-way communications. One-way communications should only be used for simple, clear questions that have yes/no answers or are used to piggyback on conversations. In other words, it's okay to text or email questions before a conversation takes place or for follow-up responses afterward.

Conversations need not be the only form of communication, but they are the most important. When in-person isn't possible, video chats like Zoom at least provide an opportunity to engage in needed dialogue.

Appreciate technology, value people. Software is not an answer, it is a *tool*. If you choose technology over people, your project won't be successful. While communications will be fast, you'll sacrifice quality, clarity, accountability, and, ultimately, success."

continued on page 25



Confusing Cannabis Laws Impact the Workplace & EAPs

| By Tamara Cagney, BSN, MA, EdD, CEAP

Cannabis laws and regulations in the workplace are convoluted, confusing, and hard to navigate. Multi-state employers face a particularly steep climb. Employee assistance professionals and employers in the United States need to approach the challenge not just from a drug testing standpoint, but also understanding their state laws and employment protections, exploring whether marijuana affects an employee's ability to fulfill all job responsibilities; if accommodations need to be made; whether supervisors can recognize the signs of impairment resulting from cannabis use; and if there are alternatives to the consequences of testing positive.

Truck Drivers Abusing Alcohol and Drugs

The news recently has covered the impact of COVID-19 on the truck driver shortage and its slow-down impact on the supply chain in the United States. But a related story often missing from the story is that as of September 1, 2021, there were 87,438 drivers in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Clearinghouse because of a drug or alcohol use violation.

Most of these drivers (69,937) are in prohibited status, which prevents them from using their commercial driver licenses. Of these prohibited drivers, three-fourths (52,691) have not even started the return-to-duty process that requires an assessment be conducted by a substance abuse professional (SAP). The FMCSA Clearinghouse publishes and updates this data monthly.

Positive drug tests for THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis, account for half of all Clearinghouse violations. The pandemic did not dampen workforce drug testing positivity for cannabis, which continued to increase last year in the general U.S. workforce, according to a new analysis released by Quest Diagnostics.

The company said it was the first large-scale analysis of results of workforce drug tests performed during the pandemic. Driven largely by surging rates of marijuana, the workforce positives and steady rates of positive tests for amphetamines, the rate of drug positivity remains stubbornly high despite seismic shifts to the workplace caused by the pandemic.

Quest's annual report (Drug Testing Index), based on data from 7 million drug tests of the general workforce, suggests that testing positive for cannabis use has increased sharply nationwide since states began to legalize marijuana in 2012. Overall, 47 states have some form of legal cannabis allowance, and only Idaho, Kansas, and Nebraska lack a public program for marijuana use.

Most states now allow some form of medical marijuana use. But only 17 of those states offer employment protection for medical users. The U.S. also has 20 states and territories that have legalized adult recreational use. Fifteen of those states, as well as the District of Columbia and certain cities, prohibit employers from testing for or taking adverse employment actions based on an employee's legal marijuana use.

Medical Marijuana Use Increased

The stress of the COVID-19 pandemic and other intense current events has also led to an increased number of individuals to seek medical cannabis for mental health reasons, displacing chronic pain as the main reason for medical marijuana use.

The national study was conducted by Veriheal, a healthcare technology company that provides marijuana education and connects prospective patients with medical marijuana prescribers, along with the London School of Economics, the University of Southern California, the University of Maryland, and the Cultivating Research Education and Advocacy (CREA) Group.

Of the patients studied, 55% said their main reason for using medical marijuana was “to feel happy.” Patients’ desire to feel “happy” increased 46% year-over-year. Sign-ups for medical marijuana consultations and appointments rose in tandem with COVID-19 case spikes, during the same time frame as Black Lives Matter-related protests during Summer 2020, the pre-election period, and the January 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. As noted, reaction to all of these stressful events is thought to have heightened use of medical marijuana.

Adult Recreational Use of Marijuana

The legalization of adult recreational use of marijuana in states attempting to regulate cannabis like they do for alcohol is rapidly changing the landscape. Not surprisingly, the Drug Testing Index data shows stark differences between states that have legalized recreational marijuana use versus states that have only legalized medical marijuana use or no form of legal marijuana use.

The Quest Diagnostic Drug Testing Index shows that rates of workers who tested positive for marijuana use surged in states with legal recreational use statutes 118.2% from 2012-2020.

In contrast, in other states with only medical marijuana statutes, rates of workers testing positive for marijuana used increased by 68.4% during the same period. In states with no medical or recreational marijuana statutes, the rate for workers testing positive for marijuana use increased 57.9%. Thus, the states with medical use of cannabis had almost double the use levels in their workforce than did other states.

Legal Issues for Drug Testing by Employers

But what does this mean for employers? Are medical marijuana users protected at work? Is off duty use protected? Can companies still drug test employees? Is “zero tolerance” for cannabis a recommended legal policy?

The increased availability of cannabis, along with the decreased sense of risk, is rapidly changing employer policies. The Office of Personnel Management issued a memo to federal employers that previous cannabis use should not automatically disqualify people from working for the federal government, which has been the policy up until now.

The National Basketball Association (NBA) announced it is extending its policy of not randomly

testing players for marijuana. And New York recently became the first state to ban employers from testing most employees for THC.

Amazon reported it will no longer test most job applicants for marijuana use, except employees who fall under regulations of the Department of Transportation. This means that Amazon is going to be able to hire applicants in many states whose urine screens are testing positive for cannabis. Amazon is encouraging their contractors to adopt a similar policy.

Federally regulated employees like the Departments of Transportation, Energy, and Defense have clear employer policies, prohibiting any use of THC containing products across the board, including medical use. But what about the much larger group of employees nationally who are subject to *different laws* depending on the state?

While the states’ adult recreational marijuana laws differ in various aspects (e.g., permitted use and/or amount of possession, etc.), they generally do not interfere with an employer’s right to restrict the possession, use or consumption of cannabis at its workplace, and allow employers to prohibit employees from working while being impaired.

A key issue under recreational cannabis use laws for employers is how to identify which employee(s) might be under the influence of cannabis while on the job. Currently there are no breathalyzers or blood tests available that measure marijuana impairment. This is particularly troubling given that today’s marijuana is considerably more potent than in years past.

In many states, the onus is on employers to observe if an employee appears to be impaired by cannabis at work. In practice, this presents challenges for employers to maintain a drug-free workplace as most state laws protect employees’ legal use of cannabis (off the employer’s premises) up to the beginning (or after the conclusion) of an employee’s work hours and appears to limit an employer’s ability to take action against employees if impairment is not outwardly detectable or negatively affecting the employee’s job performance.

Recreational cannabis use laws may also affect an employer’s ability to conduct *pre-employment* drug testing and/or take adverse actions because a candidate tested positive.

For example, the City of Philadelphia passed a law (effective January 1, 2022) to prohibit employers from

requiring prospective employees to undergo testing for the presence of cannabis as a condition of employment. New York City employers have already been prohibited from conducting pre-employment drug testing for marijuana since May 10, 2020, with certain exceptions.

Disability Protection and Workers' Compensation

In addition to state and local laws, employers must also be mindful of relevant federal laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which may need to be considered when determining whether to conduct drug testing of applicants or employees.

Because cannabis remains illegal at the federal level, medical marijuana patients are *not* covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act, making this a state-by-state issue. Some states have started to require an interactive disability process like the ADA.

Disability protections influence what is allowed under state workers compensation systems. The states of Florida and North Dakota have explicitly created laws excluding medical marijuana from their workers' compensation systems. Maine and Massachusetts have affirmed court decisions against reimbursement for medical marijuana under workers' comp, citing the federal prohibition on the substance.

Both New York and New Hampshire courts found that the state does not preclude an insurer from covering medical marijuana. Connecticut, New Jersey, and New Mexico have also found that medical marijuana was reasonable and necessary to treat injured workers' injuries. This means that employers, through their workers' comp carriers, are paying for medical marijuana.

Laws regarding post-accident cannabis testing remain a contentious issue in the Workers' Compensation arena, and employers will most likely continue to find inconsistencies between state and federal regulations regarding medical marijuana products and whether Workers' Compensation is required post-accident when the employee tests positive for cannabis.

Implications for Employee Assistance Programs

As the wave of cannabis legalization at the state level continues to sweep across the country, employers (especially those with multi-state operations) must grapple with its impact on their operations and workforce.

With new cannabis legislation pending in several states, the patchwork of laws affecting employers' rights

and obligations with respect to employee cannabis use will continue to grow more nuanced and complex. The following are specific implications for EAPs.

Employee assistance professionals will need to stay up to date on cannabis legislation in their states, focusing particularly on what employment protections are included. For employers, risk management starts with the drug and alcohol policy. Employee assistance professionals will want a seat at the table when policies are being updated.

EAPs can help employers rethink the status quo. As employers modify their policies, they may be looking to change types of testing and the consequences of a positive test. If the employer plans to alter the steps they take after an otherwise desirable candidate or a non-safety-sensitive employee tests positive, an EAP assessment and recommendations should be a standard part of this change.

Rather than immediately retracting an offer of employment or issue termination, they may choose to make employment contingent upon an EAP assessment, abstinence agreement, and ongoing negative drug tests.

Educating employees about cannabis in all its forms is a critical EAP contribution. This may be employees only source of education about the changing scene of cannabis. Employees need to understand the risks connected to use, potency, drug testing, CBD, the Delta variant, and any new developments. Additional focus on education and prevention for parents is a community service.

Training supervisors to devote more attention to employee performance indicators, rather than drug testing is vital – as emphasis on this aspect will do more to keep employees safe in a changing climate of acceptance. Supervisors and managers need the tools to do their jobs. Training should include identifying signs and symptoms of substance use, how to determine the need for a reasonable suspicion test, and what to do following an accident.

Summary

Marijuana laws across states can be tricky to navigate. In terms of employee drug testing and the ever-changing landscape of cannabis legalization, there is

no one-size-fits-all solution. But utilizing the EAP core technology of educating and training employees and supervisors has never been more valuable. ❖

Tamara Cagney, BSN, MA, EdD, CEAP, is the executive director of TC Training and Consulting. The focus of her current work involves consultation with peer assistance and employee assistance programs. Concerning DOT Drug and Alcohol regulations and the workplace impact of rapidly changing laws regarding cannabis in the US.

She has provided Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services for over 40 years in both the public and private sectors, in unionized and non-unionized settings. She served as a Distinguished Member of the Laboratory Staff in the role of internal employee assistance professional at Sandia National Laboratories (a DOE research laboratory) for 20 years. Tamara is the Past President of the International Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She conducts national training for DOT Substance Abuse Professionals throughout the country. Tamara may be reached at tcagneyeap@yahoo.com.

earoundup

Continued from page 21

Mental Health Offerings Help Keep Employees from Quitting

If there is one thing that organizations have learned throughout the pandemic, it is this: Employees want mental health and wellness to be a topic of importance for management to address on an *ongoing* basis, not one week or one month out of the year.

Companies *have* stepped up, as many are offering employees a plethora of behavioral health options including access to therapists, coaching, wellness and meditation apps, mental health breaks, paid time off, and flexible schedules. While these benefits can be helpful, they stop short of addressing the problem if managers are not involved.

“It’s not enough to simply offer programs,” says Jimmy Etheredge, CEO of North America at professional services firm Accenture. “The onus is on leaders to lead by example to show people it’s okay to be their authentic selves.”

According to CNBC, companies that offer employees the resources to take care of their emotional health while putting in place the guardrails that prevent burn-out from happening in the first place, are the ones that are going to fare the best in a post-COVID world.

Organizations need to realize that many employees have been dealing with behavioral health issues for years. The pandemic may have exacerbated them, but it is also allowing organizations to de-stigmatize these conditions and help employees access the care they need.

EAPA Schedules Online Courses for New Year

The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) has planned a number of online courses for 2022. DOT/SAP Qualification will be held from January 18-27. The online course is offered as a 4-part webinar series, 4 hours each session. Attendance at all sessions is required for credit. EAPA typically offers in-person, classroom training courses as well. EAPA SAP training prepares SAPs to provide services to organizations that are subject to DOT rules and regulations.

DOT/SAP Qualification/Requalification trainings are typically offered throughout the year. For more information, including complete U.S. Department of Transportation SAP regulations, visit <https://www.eapassn.org/SAP>.

A Masterful Consultation course is also planned for February 3 through March 3. Questions should be directed to Julie Rochester, Professional Development Coordinator, at j.rochester@eapassn.org. For more information on EAPA live webinars and virtual training courses, check out <https://www.eapassn.org/livewebinars>.

continued on page 36



The Hidden Worker: Part I

Considering Diverse Employee Needs during COVID

| By Bryan McNutt, PhD, LMFT, CEAP

While virtually everyone has been affected in some way, shape, or form by the coronavirus pandemic, diverse employees have been especially hard hit. This article will identify these workers and discuss their challenges and stressors, especially considering COVID-19. Generally speaking, a diverse-identified employee can be described as an employee who embodies diverse life circumstances, experiences, and identities that are underrepresented among their work colleagues and peers.

Since diverse employees are underrepresented within an organization, they are at risk of being overlooked, unheard, and misunderstood, as well as face negative bias within their place of work. Diverse employees are often hidden from the broader collective consciousness and sense of shared identity of an organization. This lack of awareness and consideration of the unique needs and experiences of diverse employees may be displayed through the misinformed perspectives among leadership in decision-making, among supervisors in managing, and among co-workers in daily personal interactions.

COVID-19: Diverse Employee Experiences in 2020 and 2021

Whenever a community experiences a collective crisis, such as the COVID pandemic, it is often the marginalized members who are most vulnerable to feeling the adverse impact of the crisis both first and to a greater degree. These employees include women, LGBTQ+ employees, BIPOC-identified individuals (Black, indigenous, people of color), young parents, women, and people who identify as sexual and gender minorities.

At the end of 2020, McKinsey & Co. conducted a survey with representatives from 11 countries, comprised of over 1,100 executives and

2,600 employees. Results revealed notable stressors specific to diverse-identified employees:

➤ Female employees were 1.5 times as likely as their male peers to be concerned about challenges with mental health and balancing household and work responsibilities;

“Whenever a community experiences a collective crisis, such as the COVID pandemic, it is often the marginalized members who are most vulnerable to feeling the adverse impact of the crisis...”

➤ LGBTQ+ employees were 1.4 times as likely as heterosexual and cisgender employees to be concerned about fairness of performance evaluations, workload increases, and social belonging and connection; and

➤ BIPOC employees were also 1.5 times as likely as White employees to be concerned about opportunities for career progression and work-life balance.

In addition, working parents were up to *five times* as likely as employees without children to be concerned about career advancement and managing the stress of their home life.

The pandemic has stalled the careers of many working parents. Millions of people, mostly mothers, have stopped working for pay due to a lack of

adequate childcare. Many others have had to work fewer hours or decide not to take a promotion, to care for their children. This systemic disruption could have long-term career costs for many employee parents.

Research conducted by Moody's Analytics and published by the *New York Times* in May 2021, surveyed five hundred working mothers. One-third of respondents revealed they had worked fewer hours during the pandemic because of childcare issues, and an additional one-fifth had decided to move to part-time work. Twenty-eight percent declined new responsibilities at work.

In addition, 23 percent did not apply for new jobs, and 16 percent did not pursue a promotion. According to the survey, single mothers not living with another working-aged adult have experienced the biggest decrease in hours worked and are least likely to have recovered economically.

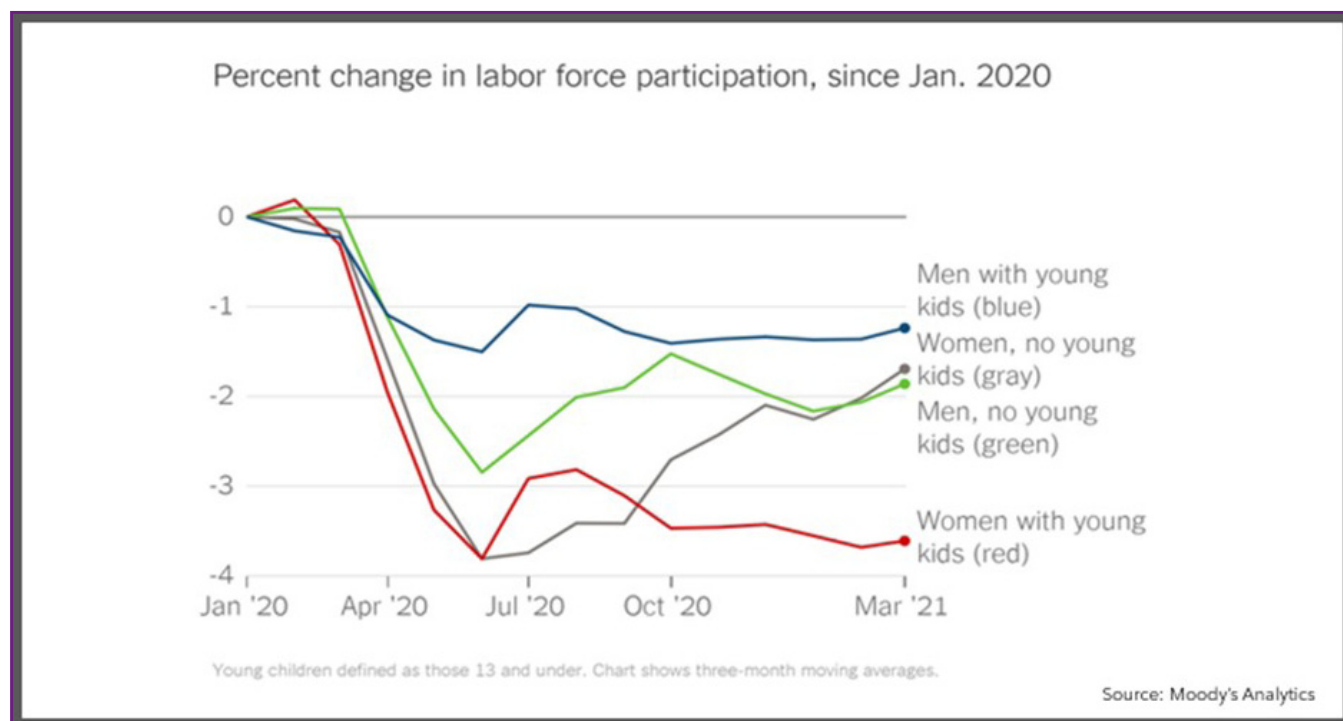
The American Psychological Association's 2021 "Psychology and the post-pandemic workplace" report revealed the disproportionate concerns of BIPOC employees and workers who identify as racial or ethnic minorities in their place of work.

The APA report revealed that Black-identified adults, as well as Hispanic/Latinx, and Asian-identified Americans had significantly more concerns about the future of their working lives than their White peers. Of those surveyed, most individuals who identified as Black, Hispanic/Latinx, or Asian, did not feel comfortable resuming in-person interactions or going back to living life like they used to before the pandemic.

Looking a bit deeper into the experiences of racially diverse employees at work, Gallup released data from a survey conducted at the end of 2020, which included more than 8,000 respondents, including more than 3,500 White workers, more than 2,000 Black workers, and more than 2,000 Hispanic/Latinx workers.

The findings revealed that one out of 4 Black-identified employees reported an experience of discrimination at work within the past 12 months. Black workers younger than 40 (31%) were twice as likely as Black workers aged 40 and older (17%) to report having experienced discrimination at work in the past year.

Younger Hispanic/Latinx employees under 40 (31%) were the only other racial or ethnic



subgroup to report such a high level of discrimination at work. This figure is twice as high as the rate among Hispanic/Latinx employees aged 40 and older (17%).

The adverse impact of the pandemic in the workplace is also clear among LGBTQ+ employees. While the nation overall is seeing an improvement in employment outcomes for sexual and gender diverse individuals, LGBTQ+ people are still more likely to experience adverse employment outcomes in the reopened economy, including higher unemployment rates and more frequent reporting of having their work hours reduced.

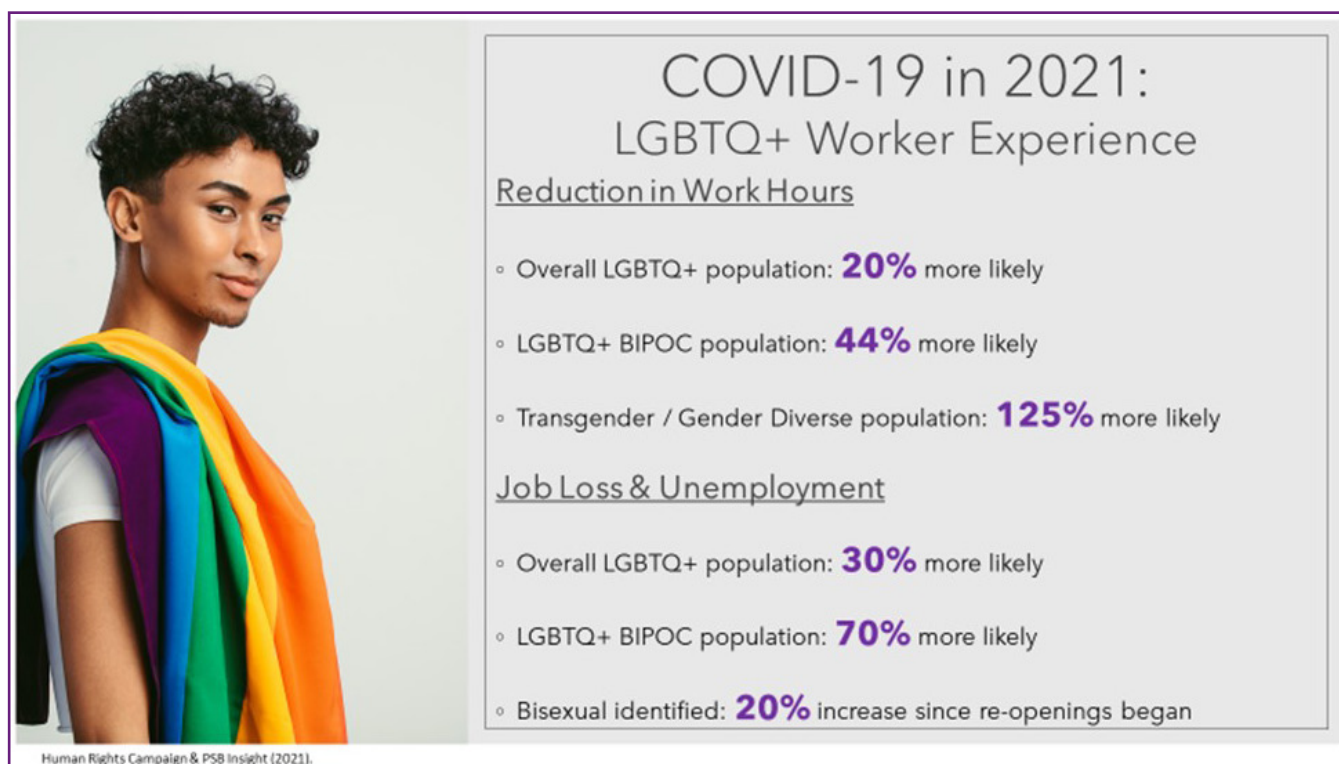
New data and analysis recently released by the Human Rights Campaign and PSB Insights conducted a series of polls involving over 12,000 people. The results revealed that LGBTQ+ people are being left behind even as some businesses and public spaces across the country try to reopen. This data provides additional confirmation of what has long been known: *the most vulnerable communities are being hit hardest by the pandemic, even in the reopened economy.*

While many people have faced pay cuts or needed to resort to taking unpaid leave for various reasons relating to the COVID crisis, LGBTQ+ people experienced these difficulties in higher proportions than the dominant non-LGBTQ population.

Of note, LGBTQ+ individuals who are also Black-identified, or identify as a person of color, experienced a 54% increase in taking pay cuts, while also being **150%** more likely to suffer pay cuts since re-openings have begun. Transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse workers are **125%** more likely to face a reduction in work hours. While some folks within the LGBTQ+ community might be returning to work, chances are that they are making less money than before.

Minority Stress

Much of this data points to the underlying and pervasive phenomenon of minority stress that many diverse employees experience on a regular basis. Minority stress involves the experience of stigma, bias, prejudice, and discrimination that minoritized individuals experience through various aspects of daily life: these include sociocultural, systemic,



organizational, occupational, and interpersonal spheres of life.

In the workplace, examples of minority stress for diverse-identified employees may involve the experience of feeling overlooked, unheard, misunderstood, and receiving unfair bias in their performance evaluations. It may also involve feeling a lack of social belonging and inclusiveness, as well as feeling that their unique concerns and stressors are minimized by colleagues, supervisors, or managers.

This can have an incredibly isolating effect for diverse employees. At times, minority stress can lead diverse employees to become “hidden” in the workplace – whether by choice (by just trying to survive emotionally), or by circumstance (due to being overlooked or unacknowledged). In summary, workplace minority stress hurts organizations, and it hurts worker productivity.

Who are the Hidden Workers in YOUR Corporate Clients’ Organization?

The intersection of diverse identities and experiences can result in a mix of social advantages and disadvantages represented throughout the life of an organization. As a result, it is important to consider how diversity can encompass many aspects of personal or cultural identity, including racial and gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, even socioeconomic status, language, ability, age, and political and regional affiliation. Diversity also involves the mixture of beliefs and life experiences.

While there may be a complex mix of diversity factors represented within many workplaces, diverse-identified employees are at higher risk of experiencing minority stress, as well as being marginalized in contrast to the dominant social identities within an organization.

Summary

Being attentive to the needs of diverse employees means, in part, how well we, as employee assistance professionals, foster sensitivity to the hidden experiences of others. Sometimes these intersecting identities and diverse experiences remain unseen because there is a lack of care to consider what they might really mean for an employee’s experiences

in the workplace; other times they remain hidden because it is just not emotionally safe enough for someone to show them in the workplace, for any variety reasons.

It is critical to consider how *you* may observe the “hidden” experience of minority stress among the lives of your diverse colleagues and clients, as well as how organizational leadership addresses (or fails to address) it. In Part II of the “The Hidden Worker,” we will explore ways in which EAPs can work to foster more sensitivity and advocacy for the workplace needs of diverse-identified employees – approaches that include organizational self-reflection and promoting psychological safety. ❖

Dr. Bryan McNutt, PhD, LMFT, CEAP, is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist who currently works as an internal employee assistance counselor with the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program at the University of California, San Diego. Dr. McNutt also serves as the president of the EAPA San Diego Chapter. He may be reached at bryanmcnuttphd@gmail.com.

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France and Germany

COVID Work Experiences in Two Major Countries

By Dirk Antonissen

In this Euro Trends column, I am happy to report some results of research concerning changes in work experiences due to the COVID-19 pandemic in France and Germany, two major countries in Europe. The data was collected by the Pulso Group during the last months of 2020 during the heart of the pandemic.

The study was supervised by the author of this column, managing partner with Pulso, and Pulso international director Inge Van den Brande, PhD.

Audrey Eertmans, PhD, senior manager, was in charge of the soundboards, while senior consultants Yang, PhD, and Inge Neyens, PhD, handled research. (All are with Pulso.)

The Wellbeing and Organisational Dynamics was the analysis tool that was used. (See <https://pulso-europe.eu/en/wod-well-being-organisational-dynamics-tool>). More than 4,000 employees in Germany and France, 2,014 and 2,021 respectively, were sampled.

Objectives

Within this exploratory study, Pulso:

- Measured the change in employees' work experience attributed to the coronavirus pandemic;
- Identified risk groups – focusing particularly on age;
- Identified the most important organisational factors that are instrumental to cope with age-related risks (best practices); and
- Explored interesting differences between the French and German work experience.

Changes in Work Experience

The table at right illustrates changes in work experiences since the COVID-19 pandemic began in both Germany and France, with + indicating better and – revealing worse.

Figure 1: Changes in Work Experience for Dimensions of Wellbeing

WORSE	Energy Level	-26%
	Work Stress	-16%
	Motivation for Job	-15%
BETTER	Relationship with colleagues	+ 5%
	Support from supervisor	+ 4%
	Balance work and private life	+ 3%
	Support from organisation	+ 2%
	Sense of belonging	+ 2%

Worse

Most negatively impacted was the energy level employees experience, with 38% of the respondents experiencing lower energy levels while only 12% reported an increased energy level (difference -26% as indicated in graph).

This was not really a surprise since COVID regulations have taken away energy givers for many of us (such as social gatherings, and cultural and sporting activities). The average age of the respondents in both countries was 43, which could imply that respondents had to combine workload with caring for children due to the closing of schools. This may be a big consumer of energy. When energy *takers* such as workload are not compensated by energy *givers*, employees experience an imbalance in their lives, which can lead to burnout issues.

Also seriously negatively impacted by COVID were work stress and job engagement (*motivation for the job*).

Better

Interestingly, certain aspects related to social support and atmosphere changed in a positive fashion:

Relationship with colleagues, Support from supervisor, Support from organisation and Sense of belonging.

Although it was more difficult to see each other in real (work) life, many companies/organisations seem to have made successful efforts to maintain and even improve the social bonding within and between teams.

Also, employees more often reported an improved *balance between work and private life* during COVID than vice versa. However, it should be pointed out this effect was rather small, since 22% of employees reported a deterioration of their work-life balance since COVID.

Impact Factors

The Pulso analysis also identified the “most important impact factors that explain the change in employees’ work experience attributed to the Corona Crisis”. These were:

- Organisational support during change;
- Instrumental support from the manager;
- Good information;
- Team collaboration and social atmosphere; and
- Work organisation.

Organisations that paid attention to these aspects of work life experienced less negative impact with their employees as opposed to those who did not.

Risk Groups

In terms of identifying risk groups, Pulso focused on *two dimensions of employee experience that appeared to be most negatively impacted* (see Figure 1): *burnout* (as there is a clear link between energy level and work stress) and *job engagement* (as there is also a clear link between energy level- and -motivation).

Pulso observed that age was a crucial factor. During the pandemic, employees’ work experience was negatively associated with age, with younger workers experiencing less engagement. A higher risk for burnout in the *under-44* age group was also observed. In summary, in terms of age, *the younger the worker the higher the risk*.

Best Practices in Coping with Age Challenges

What are the characteristics of the companies/organisations that successfully *kept their young workers motivated and energised during COVID times*?

Based on our analysis we found *four factors* as being crucial – specifically because these areas are more difficult to implement in a pandemic, while at the same time they have a significant impact on the motivation and energy of younger workers. *These crucial factors were:*

Feedback from manager: In COVID times, with less workplace contact and more teleworking, it becomes even more important for young workers that their direct supervisor maintains good contact.

Career opportunities: For young workers working at home in a pandemic, it is very difficult to have a good insight and perception about what the company/organisation can offer them in the future. Companies/organisations who are able to continue to visualise stimulating career opportunities for their younger employee generation will keep them motivated and energised.

Personal development and training opportunities: Training opportunities, learning on the job ... are areas not evident in Corona times with colleagues who are not sharing same office places, and when trainings that can only be provided via online platforms.

Remuneration: Many companies/organisations were struggling with an economic downturn due to COVID measures. Staff at the same time is working hard and especially young workers are very sensitive to a remuneration in line with the demanded (extra) efforts.

Germany vs. France

Although the difference in perception between German and French employees is not excessive, we can observe almost systematic higher wellbeing scores on all indicators of employee’s work experience for the German respondents.

Most remarkable is the difference in *job motivation*. Many more French than German respondents (nearly 15%) report lower job motivation, compared to pre-COVID times. There are also more German than French employees reporting higher job motivation than previously.

continued on page 35



You Don't Look Sick

Assisting Individuals with Invisible Disabilities

| By Maureen Hotchner

Parking Lot Vigilantes Abuse Woman with Invisible Disability.” This was the headline in the January 2, 2015, edition of the *South Florida Sun Sentinel*.

Shocking? Yet, this is precisely what happened to 58-year-old Debbie Mizrahi, a brain cancer survivor, who faced abuse from strangers who accused her of faking her disability. It would not be obvious from looking at her, but Debbie suffers short-term memory loss, and has a handicap placard which she relies on in order to find her car. But parking lot vigilantes yelled at her and left nasty notes on her car. Worse still, she returned to her car to find a bent windshield wiper, snapped antenna, and smashed sideview mirrors.

Defining Invisible Disability

Debbie is hardly alone. According to the Invisible Disabilities Association (IDA), these types of accusations and abuses are common for people with invisible disabilities. Disabled-World.com defines an invisible, or hidden disability as an umbrella term, “*that captures a whole spectrum of hidden disabilities or challenges that are primarily neurological in nature. They are not immediately apparent.*”

“Although the disability creates a challenge for the person who has it, the reality of the disability can be difficult for others to recognize or acknowledge. Others may not understand the cause of the problem, if they cannot see evidence of it in a visible way.”

A Pervasive Problem

According to Accessibility.com:

“Most invisible disability metrics in the U.S. say that roughly as high as 20% (or more) of Americans have an invisible disability. Further, most people who have a disability don’t use obvious assistive technology like a wheelchair or cane.”

It’s more likely, then, to meet someone with a **hidden disability** than an obvious one. *Since employee assistance professionals undoubtedly have clients with hidden disabilities, it stands to reason that EAPs need to be aware of this issue and take measures to help this underserved population.*

Disclosure Remains an Issue

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law, a landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications, and access to state and local government programs.

But despite the added protections, many with invisible disabilities still struggle with the decision whether to disclose the existence of their disability to their employer (or potential employer). Many opt not to share this, for one reason: fear. **Fear** of discrimination by their boss or co-workers. **Fear** about being passed over for the job or for a promotion. **Fear** of being terminated.

Even upon making the decision to disclose the disability, figuring out the right way to do so brings upon its own challenges. Is it safe? Who do I tell—my immediate supervisor? The HR manager? How will it be received? What if they don’t want to grant an accommodation?

The Spoon Theory

These decisions can be exhausting. Christine Miserandino, of ButYouDontLookSick.com, developed what she calls “spoon theory” to explain how incredibly tiring life can be for those with disabilities. Looking for a way to explain to her friend what it was like to live with an autoimmune disorder, Christine came up with spoons as a metaphor to represent a unit of energy. As Christine explains:

“I start each day with 12 spoons. In the morning after waking up, showering, washing my hair, getting dressed and eating breakfast, I have already used up six of the 12 spoons. When commuting to work, if I do not get a seat on the subway and did not rest well the night before, two more spoons are spent.

“Even though I sit at a desk, I am bone weary by the end of the day. At least three spoons have been used up at work. Once home, I must decide if I have energy left (or a spoon left) to prepare and eat dinner, or just flop into bed exhausted.”

Steps for the EAP to Put into Practice

With those thoughts in mind, the following are four actionable steps that your corporate clients can put into place to support people with disabilities.

➤ **Encourage HR to embed accessibility into every part of their recruitment process as well as your own.** Let people know your company is committed to diversity and inclusion. Consider including this in your own EAP’s mission statement. Promote an environment where it’s easy to request accommodations. Provide a safe place for disclosure. For example, managers at Microsoft realized that not enough people with autism were hired despite clearly having the knowledge and intellect. When they discovered that the problem was the interview process, they sought help from a local autism support organization. Microsoft was able to create an assessment of exercises designed to test teamwork and technical skills. The company’s chief accessibility officer stated, “Now we feel confident we haven’t overlooked a strong candidate simply because a common practice doesn’t play to their strengths.”

➤ **Contact the Jobs Accommodation Network (JAN),** funded by the Department of Labor) JAN will give free, one-on-one consultations, with businesses to give guidance and training assistance for accommodations in the workplace. JAN reports that accommodations cost little to no money, and that even the costliest ones usually do not exceed \$500. Go to askjan.org for publications, trainings, and resources. The site has a tab for Employers and one for Individuals. Their Workplace Accommodation Toolkit is a free online resource that shows managers how to create a disability-inclusive workplace. There are sections

for recruiters and hiring managers. They even include a section for Role-Play Training Videos and Accompanying Presentations. Ann Hirsh, JAN Associate Director, is in charge of education. JAN has a myriad of courses, most virtual but live training can be arranged. Subscribe to their newsletters. They offer practical advice for every type of accommodation question. JAN is an extraordinary resource.

➤ **Provide unconscious bias training for all employees.** Provide leadership training on how to handle requests for accommodations and conduct an awareness campaign that focuses on understanding and supporting people with disabilities. The goal is

continued on page 34

Studies Confirm ROI in Hiring Individuals with Disabilities

While EA professionals aren’t typically involved in the employment process, they are surely aware that many of their clients are finding hiring difficult in the post-COVID work environment. As it turns out, hiring individuals with disabilities not only offers an answer, but it is also a profitable business strategy.

Findings from a joint study conducted by Accenture, Disability: IN, and the American Association of People with Disabilities yielded important findings, which demonstrated that companies that provide an inclusive working environment for employees with disabilities achieved:

- An average of 28% higher revenue;
- 30% greater economic profit margins; and
- Double the net income of their industry peers.

Hiring those with disabilities and then treating them with respect, dignity, and without discrimination, properly helps increase the bottom line by lowering turnover rates, increasing productivity, creating a more empathic corporate culture, generating fresh perspectives to different ways of doing business, and may even open up the company to certain tax benefits. ♦

– Maureen Hotchner

to create cognitive empathy to help employees “walk in someone else’s shoes.” The Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) is an excellent resource for unconscious bias training. On their website, shrm.org, they offer hundreds of courses on this topic alone. They also offer an Implicit Bias Resource Guide. It provides a video, articles, and links to books and research articles. Major universities such as UCLA and Stanford offer these courses to the community. In addition, Microsoft e-lesson: Unconscious Bias (mslearning.microsoft.com) offers a comprehensive course open to the public. Compare that to a one-day training given by training professionals that can cost up to \$6,000.

➤ **Start an Employee Resource Group.** This is a platform for members to share their unique experiences, with common interests such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability. ERGs are an excellent way to promote diversity and inclusion with a company. These peer-led groups offer another resource and sources of support for people with disabilities. There are six basic steps to creating a successful Employee Resource Group:

- Check with management first as it is important to identify an executive sponsor. Also, you will be requesting a budget to support the activities of the group.
- Evaluate the client company’s needs and identify a resource. For example, is there a group that is underrepresented in your organization? ACCESS (<https://www.accesscommunity.org/node/327>) and Pride & Allies (<https://americas.societegenerale.com/en/careers/get-know-diversity/pride-allies/>) are among the many possibilities.
- Do an employee pulse survey to get feedback on what topics employees are interested in most.
- Once a topic is chosen, develop outreach strategies and generate interest for the group. Reach out to employees through a company newsletter, e-mail blasts, flyers, and inserts and events such as a welcoming breakfast.
- It’s necessary to name the group, set a mission and goals, design the structure, and assign roles or officers within the group.
- Measure success. This is another way of determining if goals were achieved. For example, did we consistently recruit new members each

month, did we publish a quarterly newsletter, did we conduct one annual event. And did we form new peer support groups?

A Word on Remote Work

Make working remotely a standard option, even after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. It may be necessary to work with Human Resources. The lockdowns were a boon for employees with disabilities, who had been requesting this accommodation for decades, often with little success. The ability to work without a daily commute and utilize accommodations in the home was an incredible game changer for many employees with disabilities.

Summary

For people with disabilities—especially invisible ones—life can be daunting. By treating them with compassion, empathy, and respect, we can not only make their lives easier, but we can also strengthen our corporate clients’ organizations in the process. ❖

Maureen Hotchner is a licensed mental health professional, specializing in Workplace Mental Health. Her behavioral health trainings help identify problems and offer solutions to restore equilibrium and boost productivity in business. Maureen is the owner of Hotchner Workplace Wellness (<https://hotchnerworkplacewellness.com>).

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Michael: I am looking forward to doing more Workplace Consultations, Critical Incident work, and supervision of interns. The modules have some very useful articles, history, and frameworks for building and sustaining EAPs. I appreciate how they both round out the basic foundations of EAP and point the way for additional learning I may be interested in down the road.

Sean: Our CBA language is often looked at as the gold-standard in our industry. Our CBA states that not only will the company financially assist the EAP Coordinator in attaining the CEAP® credential but also once the CEAP® certification is attained, the company agrees to recognize that an

EAP Coordinator holding the CEAP® is qualified and authorized to make specific treatment recommendations for employees.

C.J.: As I stated, I believe I have a much greater knowledge of the EAP field. I encourage anyone wishing to increase their competency and reputation in the field to consider pursuing the CEAP®. ♦

Ian B. Quamina, PhD, CEAP, is a 2020 EAPA President's Award of Service recipient and an EA Digital Archive Ambassador who holds a PhD in Organizational Leadership with specialization in Human Resource Development and a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree with a specialization in EAP. He may be contacted at ianquamina@gmail.com.

eurotrends

Continued from page 31

Figure 2: Difference between Germany and France for the main drivers (1-7 scale) for Job Engagement during COVID.

Main Drivers with impact on Job Engagement	Germany	France	Difference between Germany/France (in % on 1-7 scale)
Vision of the future	5.10	4.60	8.3%
Challenging work	5.05	4.62	7.2%
Meaningful work	5.49	5.11	6.3%
Support during change	4.84	4.49	5.8%
Variation in work	5.06	4.83	3.8%
Skill utilisation	5.46	5.24	3.7%

In order to better understand this difference, we analysed which were the drivers with highest impact on job engagement, and how the results for these drivers differ between the two countries.

In Figure 2 at left, you can observe that German companies/organisations seem to perform better (5 to 10%) on all of these detected drivers: vision for the future, challenge, meaningful work, support during change and skill utilisation. It would be interesting to examine whether this difference is linked with government policies in both countries. Stuff for more research ...

In this column, our intention was to simply highlight some of the more interesting results. Contact info appears below, or feel free to reach out to a colleague with the Pulso Group. ♦

Dirk Antonissen is Partner of Pulso Europe, a spin-off of the Leuven University with offices in several European countries. Pulso Europe is a reference company in the field of innovative evidence-based tools and services for assessing and impacting psychosocial well-being. In 2019, Dirk received the EAPA Global Champion Award, presented to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding initiative and best practices in growing the employee assistance profession anywhere in the world. He may be reached at dirk.antonissen@pulso-europe.eu.

Workspan Daily, EAPA Team Up to Publish New Column

Workspan Daily has begun publishing a new column from EAPA for the benefit of readers to highlight the importance of EAPs and to encourage additional discourse on related topics. EAPA's new CEO, Julie Fabsik-Swarts, kicked off the series with a column about elite performance and mental health.

"EAP support has become more commonplace among professional sports teams and organizations serving elite athletes, which makes perfect sense, as EAPs are all about removing mental health and behavioral barriers to achieving the desired outcomes," wrote Fabsik-Swarts. "For years, EAP has made similar inroads with high-powered executives — elite performers in the business world who face many of the same barriers," Fabsik-Swarts added. She concluded that EAPA's goal is to "help make everyone — not just top athletes and executives — an elite performer."

To read more, visit <https://worldatwork.org/workspan/articles/elite-performance-and-mental-health-there-s-an-eap-for-that>.

Online discussions are held at <https://worldatwork.org/engage> or send comments to workspan@worldatwork.org.

Return to Work has been Disappointing for Many

Following months of anticipation, returning to in-person work has been a disappointment for many employees, as more than four in 10 office workers surveyed by BambooHR found returning to the office did not match their expectations.

"As companies reopen workspaces, it's important to understand what their people are expecting and how to manage reality in order to create a positive outcome for everyone," said Cassie Whitlock, head of HR at BambooHR.

The following are some key findings from the BambooHR study, as reported by Benefits Pro.

Employees are missing in-office food and beverage perks, such as free coffee and snacks. Also, cafeteria (23%) and catered meals (18%), which were once prominent, are no longer offered.

Surprisingly, younger generations are more eager to work in an office environment than older workers. Only 28% of Millennials and 27% of Gen Zers were interested in full-time remote work, while 33% of Gen Xers and 41% of Baby Boomers said they preferred working from home.

Executives and employees aren't on the same page about remote work. Forty-three percent of employees believed that the majority of people at the company wanted to work remotely full time. In reality, only 32% of managers felt the same and just 22% of vice presidents agreed.

Childcare Growing as Employee Benefit

Access to childcare was an issue before the pandemic, but the closure of daycare centers and shift to working from home exacerbated the problem, according to the *Business Insider*.

Childcare centers are experiencing many of the same issues as other sectors — namely, low wages leading to labor shortages — and access to affordable childcare remains out of reach for many parents. As a result, many workers, particularly women, are opting to stay home to care for their kids. According to analysis from the National Women's Law Center, more than 300,000 women over the age of 20 left the workforce in the month of September alone.

"Women are not able to answer the 'help wanted' ad if they don't have steady, affordable childcare, because they know they can't be reliable, productive employees. So they're not applying for these jobs," Gina Raimondo, US Secretary of Commerce, told *Business Insider*.

It's clear that if businesses want to lure workers, especially young ones, they're going to have to start offering better benefits — specifically, childcare.

Some companies are starting to make this shift a reality. Emergency childcare became a relatively common benefit in 2020 among large companies like tech firms, but now McDonald's franchises have the option to offer employees emergency childcare, too. And employer-based child-care facilitator Bright Horizons Family Solutions told CNBC it's seen an uptick in employers using its services to the tune of a 20% jump in 2020 alone. ❖