Editor’s note: Going to EAPA’s annual World EAP Conference isn’t something that every EA professional can afford to do. As a result, the intent of this article is to pass along some of the key findings from this important gathering to enlighten those who were not able to attend. Watch for more in-depth articles from some of these sessions in future issues of both the Employee Assistance Report (EAR) and EAPA's Journal of Employee Assistance (JEA), which is edited and designed by Impact Publications, publishers of this newsletter.

“EAPA Heats Up: Flourishing into the Future” was the theme at the Employee Assistance Professional Association’s 2013 World EAP Conference, held Oct. 16-19 at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix.

The first day of the conference began for me with a closer look at the new “EA Specialist, Clinician (EAS-C)” certificate training, led by Judy Beahan, Robert Intveld, Marina London, and Tracy McPherson. An in-depth article about the EAS-C appears in the December 2013 EAR and the 4th quarter issue of the JEA. More information on EAPA’s new certificate of recognition is also available at www.eapassn.org/EASpecialist.

The highlight of day one was the annual EAPA Marketplace Grand Opening Reception. The event is a great way to meet the conference exhibitors to network and see what types of products and services they offer. Some of the nearly 100 vendors included: Adolescent Growth, Inc., CareLike, Crisis Care Network, Eldercare Locator, Hazelden, Recovery Trek, and many others.

DAY TWO -- Darrell Scott, founder of Rachel’s Challenge, and father of Rachel Scott, the first student killed at Columbine High School in 1999, presented the opening keynote. The presentation offered a moving and inspiring example of how even small, deliberate acts of kindness and acceptance can start a chain reaction of kindness and compassion that empowers us to positively affect the culture and continued on Page 2

The beautiful Arizona Biltmore, whose guests have included presidents and movie stars, was the site of the 2013 World EAP Conference in Phoenix.
A surprise in the findings was that SBI did not lead to the dramatic decreases envisioned.

**Best Practices for Surveying EAP Clients:** Validate the Case for Your EAP – Offered by James Harting and Dave Sharar, the presenters reviewed how, when done well, outcome-driven surveys can increase client response rates and satisfaction. The presenters said it’s important to examine this topic because a low survey response rate introduces bias and uncertainty while a high response rate reduces selection bias and enhances EAP credibility. Reasons cited for not responding to a survey included:

- Too busy;
- Survey was too long;
- Low interest or the questions weren’t relevant; and
- Survey fatigue.

And what is a good response rate? They said 50% is generally considered the minimum; but a 19% response rate is more typical. Strategies that Harting and Sharar presented for enhancing return rates for EAP surveys were:

- Mix up the delivery methods (e.g. email, phone, etc.);
- Make survey projects a specific staff responsibility;
- To reduce chances of emails going to spam, get on a certified whitelist (e.g. ReturnPath.com);
- Obtain consent and reassure that the survey is confidential;
- Give an approximate date for follow-up at intake;
- Obtain good “locator” info at intake (e.g. what is the best way to reach the person – work phone, cell, etc.);

- Consider issuing a reminder about the survey before sending it; and
- Develop “rapport” at intake and explain the reason for future contact.

“You have to work really hard on the front end to get good locator information later,” Sharar said. “A side benefit to good response rates is that it can lead
to more follow up in other areas of EAP,” Harting concluded.

**Workplace Implications of the Opiate Addiction Epidemic and Synthetic Drug Misuse** – Jeffrey Reynolds and Stephanie Siete explained how prescription opiate addiction is now considered a national public health emergency in the U.S. Drugs such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methadone are among those abused – known better by brand names such as OxyContin, Vicodin, and Darvon.

“There has been a fivefold increase in the past decade in treatment admissions for prescription medications,” Reynolds stated. Why? Pain relief, especially among returning veterans and an aging population, was cited as a big reason. While drugs are used for legitimate pain use, they are generally designed more for acute pain, and not chronic pain, Reynolds said.

Workplace addiction occurs rapidly and leads to absenteeism, presenteeism, higher health care costs, theft, litigation risks, and workplace incidents and accidents.

Siete presented a slew of disturbing statistics that illustrate the strength and quick addiction to many newer synthetic drugs. Drugs such as “bath salts” and Krokodil, for instance, are even more powerful and addictive than their heroin and meth counterparts, Siete explained. “We’re talking addiction and effects that only take hours, weeks, and months, not years,” she said. “Fentanyl is 40 times stronger than heroin, but made to look like other pills, such as Viagra.”

Because synthetic drugs are difficult to detect, she said schools often have more authority than police in dealing with them – hence she stressed that EA professionals working in addiction need to train school administrators about the dangers of these drugs. Useful websites she passed along were: www.dea.gov, www.medreturn.com and www.medicineabuseproject.org.

**DAY THREE** – There wasn’t a chair to be found at the informative session, The Cutting Edge: Two Research Studies on the Current State of EAPs, moderated by Bernie McCann, and presented by Dirk Antonissen, Terry Cahill, Stanford Granberry, and Manuel Sommer. The presentation featured results of two privately funded studies by the Employee Assistance Research Foundation, one undertaken by ISW Limits, and the other by the National Behavioral Consortium (NBC).

**Editor’s Notebook**

What do pop hits such as “We’ve Only Just Begun”, “Rainy Days and Mondays” (Carpenters) and “Old-Fashioned Love Song” (Three Dog Night) have in common with substance abuse?

Quite a bit actually. Award-winning composer Paul Williams, who wrote classics like these and scores of others, concluded the 2013 World EAP Conference with a well-received dinner concert.

While enjoying a very successful career as a song writer, Paul eloquently told the audience about his darker side – his addiction to cocaine and alcohol. He said that EA professionals are making a big difference in the world, so much so that he wanted to attend the conference to tell EAPA members just that. “You’re heroes!” Paul said to the packed crowd, adding that he’s been sober for 23 years.

The next time you’re having a bad day wondering if it’s all worth it, don’t forget that while the average person may not know who you are or what you do, your efforts in the field of employee assistance mean a LOT to many people, even to a Grammy and Oscar-winning composer, who, by the way, also went on to become a certified drug rehabilitation counselor. To learn more, check out http://paulwilliamsstillalive.com.

Until next time.

Mike Jacquart, Editor
(715) 258-2448
mike.jacquart@impacttrainingcenter.net

**Continued from Page 2**

EAR and JEA Editor Mike Jacquart poses with Maria Lund, president and COO of First Sun EAP, at Chestnut Global Partners’ Friday reception at the Wrigley Mansion.
Granberry served as the primary investigator for the NBC “Industry Profile of External EAP Vendors.” Portions of the extensive NBC research have begun to be published, including “Mergers & Acquisitions: A Neglected Area of EAP Literature” in the 2nd quarter 2013 issue of the JEA. A follow-up article is planned for this year.

Sommer and Antonissen were among the investigators for ISW Limits’ “Eureka: An Employee Services Perception Study in Continental Europe.” Countries studied were: Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Greece. “Hopefully, this study will help to put EAPs and mental health in general, higher on the agenda for European policy makers,” the researchers wrote. Additional information on both studies is offered at: www.eapfoundation.org.

**Digital Intervention**

**Supporting Expats: Helping Anytime, Anywhere**, was led by Paul Wittes and Barbara Veder with Shepell.fgi. The focus of the session was on addressing how organizations can use digital technology to enhance the probability for success on international assignments. Who exactly are “expats”? Wittes said only 11% are new hires, with 30-39 being the most common age group. The top five locations for expatriates are the U.S., U.K., China, Singapore and India.

Overall failure rate is 6%; with “failure” defined as premature return from an international assignment. According to Wittes, expatriate challenges that increase risk of failure include: back-to-back assignments (similar to the cumulative trauma seen among veterans with multiple deployments), personal/family adjustments, lack of social support, and language/communication barriers.

While cultural and other challenges are inherent, the presenters stressed that digital service options, such as e-counseling, video counseling, and other online tools, DO help. “With 24/7 online access, there are no time zones or borders – it’s a giant paradigm shift in our profession,” they said. “Global services are evolving day to day and we [EAP] must keep pace.”

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**In the News**

**EAPA Presents Annual Awards**

The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) celebrated its best and brightest during the annual awards luncheon at the World EAP Conference in Phoenix.

Winners included:

- **EAPA Member of the Year**, James O’Hair;
- **Outstanding Chapter**, Pacific Northwest;
- **Outstanding Branch**, South Africa;
- **Lifetime Achievement**, Bernard Beidel;
- **John J. Hennessy Award**, Joe Torres; and
- **Hennessy Scholarship Fund** winners: Jenny Espinoza Soto, Mexico; Colleen Stanley, Great River, N.Y.

Source: EAPA.

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Crossing Borders... cont’d from Page 3

Editor Mike Jacquart and wife Deb in the Biltmore lobby.
Firms Increasing Benefits to Attract Talent

Many employers are pulling out all the stops to recruit employees with in-demand skills, a new Accountemps survey finds. Nearly half (46%) of chief financial officers (CFOs) interviewed said they are improving benefits in order to attract top talent. Almost as many (45%) are raising salaries, and another 42% are investing in training and development for promising workers. More than one-quarter (26%) of CFOs indicated their companies are bringing in temporary staff to bridge the skills gap.

“Competition for highly skilled workers remains intense in many specialties,” said Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps and author of *Human Resources Kit For Dummies®, 3rd Edition* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.). “Boosting compensation and adding incentives is a useful first step for attracting talent, but it’s equally important for businesses to develop the abilities of workers already on staff.”

Accountemps highlights five ways for managers to build outstanding teams:

- **Realize it’s about more than money.** High performers expect compensation that matches their experience, but they also seek advancement opportunities. During the hiring process, your corporate client needs to demonstrate that it offers professional development programs that can help their company grow.

- **Develop an internal team.** Managers of corporate clients need to identify less-experienced employees who show potential and pair them with mentors who can help guide their career with the company.

- **Offer stretch assignments.** Internal staff needs to be provided with challenging projects just beyond their comfort zone. It will expand their skill sets and build their confidence.

- **Hire and train to specific needs.** Corporate clients should not blindly fill vacant positions without considering their future needs first. They should align hiring plans with the organization’s areas of growth and consider cross-training programs that will enable existing employees to move into high-demand roles.

- **Monitor workloads.** Top employees can often be saddled with the most work – and can burn out as a result. Managers should consider bringing in skilled temporary professionals to relieve over-burdened staff of day-to-day tasks and support resource-intensive long-term projects that will aid the organization in the future.

>Source: Accountemps, a Robert Half company, accountemps.com.

EAP Use May Lead to a Promotion

A recent study from Statistics Canada’s Workplace and Employee Survey, which included 6,500 women and 8,396 men, asked if people had taken advantage of any one of seven different work-life interface benefits, and researchers then studied whether people received promotions the next year. They found that people who used an employee assistance program were 73% more likely to get a promotion than those who didn’t. Moreover, employees who used work-life accommodations were 14% more likely to get a promotion the next year than their equivalent counterparts who didn’t use such programs.

One theory suggests that taking advantage of the workplace program increases an individual’s resources to handle the job and cope with life. They can perform better, and over time, that will outweigh any negative stigma, and they will be rewarded with promotions.

>Source: Accountemps, a Robert Half company, accountemps.com.
Health Care Reform

Guidelines Help Clarify Affordable Care Act

Recently issued guidelines help clarify the application of certain provisions under the Affordable Care Act (e.g. Obamacare) to health reimbursement arrangements, employer payment plans, health flexible spending arrangements and employee assistance programs.

According to the Association of Corporate Council’s Lexology report and the U.S. Department of Labor, the guidance provides that benefits offered under an EAP are considered excepted benefits not subject to the ACA market reforms, as long as the EAP does not provide significant benefits in the nature of medical care or treatment.

Until rulemaking is finalized (until at least 2014), plan sponsors are allowed to use a reasonable good-faith interpretation of whether an EAP provides a significant medical care or treatment benefits.

Employers sponsoring health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs), employer payment plans or similar arrangements, health flexible spending arrangements (FSAs), or EAPs should review the structure of these benefits to ensure compliance with the ACA.

ACA: Still a Law of Unintended Consequences

Although entrenched with technological glitches, the ACA insurance exchanges are online and running, signaling the introduction of the monumental healthcare law. Many people who were once on board with the universal healthcare act are rethinking their stance after the bill is seemingly laced with negative consequences.

Industry and human resources expert Rob Wilson discusses some of the most visible unconstructive outcomes related to the Affordable Care Act:

❖ Single party approval caused extreme issues: Obamacare was driven by President Obama and the Democratic Party and highly disputed by the majority of Republican Party members. Since the health care act is a monumental piece of history, having only one party’s approval was undoubtedly going to cause issues down the road.

❖ 30 hour cut-off resulting in part-time nation: In the last year, three out of four of jobs created were part-time. While many businesses are hiring at a steady pace, they are attempting to dodge the health care mandate by hiring part-time workers. The end result is a part-time workforce nation and individuals working two or more jobs.

❖ Many people don’t get to keep ideal health care: Insurance agencies and companies are reevaluating the types of health insurance packages they are offering employees. To afford health care, business owners are shifting their employees to either state-run or private exchanges – both a departure from traditional company-backed programs.

ACA May Steer Millions to Drug, Alcohol Programs

According to Benefits Pro, at least one study estimates that as many as 40 million individuals may enter alcohol and other drug programs under the Affordable Care Act.

Coverage for drug and alcohol treatment programs were previously considered health plan options, or part of a carve-out for behavioral health care. Now, coverage for drug and alcohol treatment must be included as part of a standard coverage plan. With D&A treatment as an integral part of a basic plan, some experts project millions to participate in treatment for these conditions.

One of the intents of the ACA legislation was to bring D&A programs into the insurance fold due to the enormous cost associated with substance use disorders – roughly $120 billion a year in health care expenses.

continued on Page 7
ACA Ranks as #2 Business Concern

The cost of health coverage, the Affordable Care Act and the volume of government regulations are the top three concerns of mid-sized business owners and executives, according to a new survey from the ADP Research Institute.

Seventy percent of mid-sized businesses – those with between 50 and 999 employees – surveyed said their biggest challenge is the cost of health coverage and benefits. ACA legislation came in as the No. 2 concern, cited by 59%, a 16% increase over last year. Rounding out the top three concerns was the level and volume of government regulations, cited by 54% of respondents.

According to Employee Benefit News, nearly two-thirds of benefits decision-makers at mid-sized companies are not confident they understand the ACA and what they need to do to be compliant. Ninety percent aren’t confident their employees understand the effects of the ACA on their benefits choices.

Editor’s note: Due to the extended Affordable Care Act coverage, the “Supporting Our Veterans” feature is not included in this issue of EAR. It will return next month.

Health Care Reform

Things to Know About Obamacare

A new poll released by the Wall Street Journal shines a light on the fact that most Americans are in the dark when it comes to Obamacare. Nearly 70% of the respondents voiced that they were still unfamiliar with the health care measures as uncertainty over the law continues.

Rob Wilson, President of Employco USA, a human resources outsourcing company, explains that many companies are also having trouble keeping up with all the up to the minute changes and new requirements. “Many human resource departments are up to their ears in paperwork, ensuring they are following proper protocol,” says Wilson. “As far as impending changes go, a lot is still up in the air for a large percentage of businesses; they have not begun to properly prepare.”

These are some health care changes to plan for in 2014:

1. Individual Mandate: Individuals will be required to have a minimum level of health insurance or face a penalty. This applies to everyone except those who have income below the federal income tax filing threshold, are incarcerated, have a religious exemption, are a member of an Indian tribe, or are not legally present in the U.S. Beginning in 2014, the penalty is the greater of $95 per person or 1% of household income over the filing threshold, and increases each subsequent year.

2. Tax Credit Maximum Increase: Starting in 2014, the health care tax credit maximum will increase from 35% to 50% for small businesses with less than 25 employees and average annual wages less than $50,000.

3. State Insurance Exchanges: Insurance exchanges will be open to individuals and small employers (those with fewer than 101 employees). The exchange program allows for subsidies towards insurance for low-wage employees. Lower-income individuals (133-400% of federal poverty level) will be able to purchase coverage through an exchange.

4. New Maximums: New and non-grandfathered plans will be subject to a deductible maximum of $2,000 per individual and $4,000 per family, out-of-pocket maximums the same as HSA-compatible plans, and coverage of routine medical costs of clinical trial patients.

5. Industry Tax and Temporary Reinsurance: The health insurance industry tax and temporary reinsurance program will begin, costing $63 per person including dependents. The costs are expected to be passed on to employers through increased premiums. The reinsurance program was designed to help offset risk for high cost enrollees in the individual market.
The Biggest Little Untapped Market: EAP Practice with Small Businesses, was presented by Kate Aronoff, Maureen Casey, and Chris Knoepke with Peer Assistance Services. Small businesses are gaining in prominence and importance in the U.S. labor market, and the presenters offered practical advice on how to help EAP better tap into this market.

Among small businesses, nearly 90% have fewer than 20 employees, who have a lack of access to EAP and other benefits. Small business vulnerabilities include, among others, a lack of HR policies and drug testing, higher turnover, and no checks and balances. Financial constraints and confidentiality are among EAP challenges in these businesses, the presenters said.

The PAS staff used several audience role-playing exercises to illustrate the differences in how an EA professional might help a small business owner resolve a particular problem – as opposed to a larger employer, who would likely have clearer policies. “Small businesses have high need for services,” but there are unique considerations for working with small business owners, they wrote.

DAY FOUR – EAPA’s annual World EAP Conference wrapped up its last morning with its annual fun run/walk, keynote from Mark Attridge on the business value of EAP, breakout sessions, and the annual awards luncheon and address from EAPA President Steven Haught.

Afternoon “super sessions” (two hours as opposed to one hour) included a distinguished panel of tech-savvy professionals – including Marina London and Barb Veder – who discussed what’s next in terms of social media, online technologies and apps; and a multi-cultural view of EAP services offered by Jenny Espinosa, Dirk Antonissen and others.

For more information on the conference, visit www.eapassn.org/onDemand.

After a busy day, it was not difficult to unwind at the serene Arizona Biltmore, site of this year’s World EAP Conference.

Resources

Terminating Without Fear: What Employers Need to Know, $99, PDF download, PBP Executive Reports, (800) 220-5000, www.pbexecutivereports.com. How a termination is handled makes all the difference between professionally parting ways … or getting slapped with a lawsuit.


Document, Document, Document, $99, PDF download, PBP Executive Reports, (800) 220-5000, www.pbexecutivereports.com. Good documentation can help avoid costly lawsuits, and it also serves as a road map that helps good employees get better, and weed out the weak performers, too.