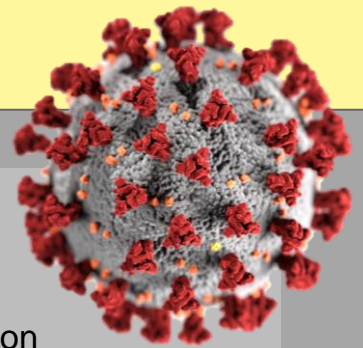# Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (DMHAS)–funded Agencies Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) Needs Assessment

Connecticut Employee Assistance Professionals Association

2021

Introduction

The Connecticut Chapter of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (CT EAPA) undertook an initiative with the State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) underwritten by a SAMHSA grant (21MHA1008) to survey the agencies that subcontract with DMHAS in order to assess the availability and scope of Employee Assistance services available to their employees affected during COVID-19.

EAPA is an educational and certification association of Employee Assistance Professionals that grants the Certified Employee Assistance Professional (CEAP) credential, which certifies practitioners who provide worksite based, clinically informed services to organizations and their employees. CEAPs have demonstrated expertise in assisting employees with personal or work-related issues that may negatively impact job performance and in providing guidance and assistance to employers for handling workplace issues.
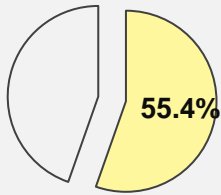
Methodology

CT EAPA, in collaboration with DMHAS, developed a nineteen-item survey instrument for distribution to the 130 DMHAS subcontracting agencies/ organizations by the Commissioner's Office to determine each organization's current and assessed needs for Employee Assistance Services during COVID.
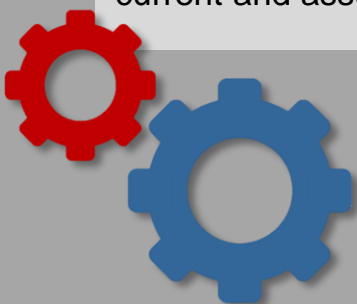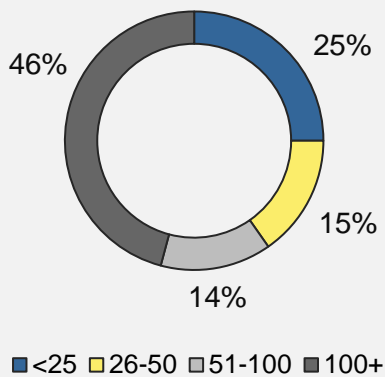
Results

Response Rate

55.4%

In October and November of 2020, 72 agencies responded to the survey, for a response rate of over 55%. Four agency respondents requested a call back from CT EAPA for additional information.

Number of Employees

25%

15%

14%

46%

■ <25 ■ 26-50 ☐ 51-100 ■ 100+

54% of respondents were organizations of under 100 employees.
25% of respondents had 25 employees or less.

Feedback from smaller organizations indicates that a higher proportion of this group have no EAP services in place for their organization or have developed "informal" EAP arrangements (i.e., a community provider who may be available on a case by case or "as needed" basis) In these types of EA arrangements, there is frequently a financial disincentive for the organization to use or refer to these providers, as it represents an additional cost.

13% of respondents provide EA services for their own organization and/or as a vendor to other groups. These programs tend to have the broadest, most developed and integrated EA services available.
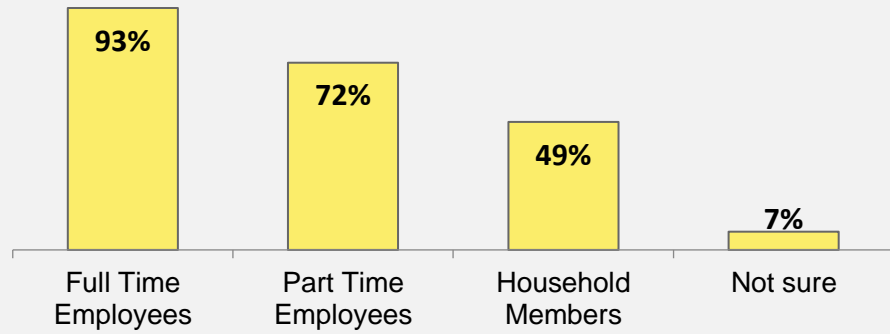
AWARENESS OF EA SERVICES

68% of respondent organizations reported having a formal EAP, while 32% did not know or were unsure.

Suggestions from respondents identified a need to better advertise the availability of their existing EA services. Respondents selected the following approaches to enhance the advertising of their existing EA services:
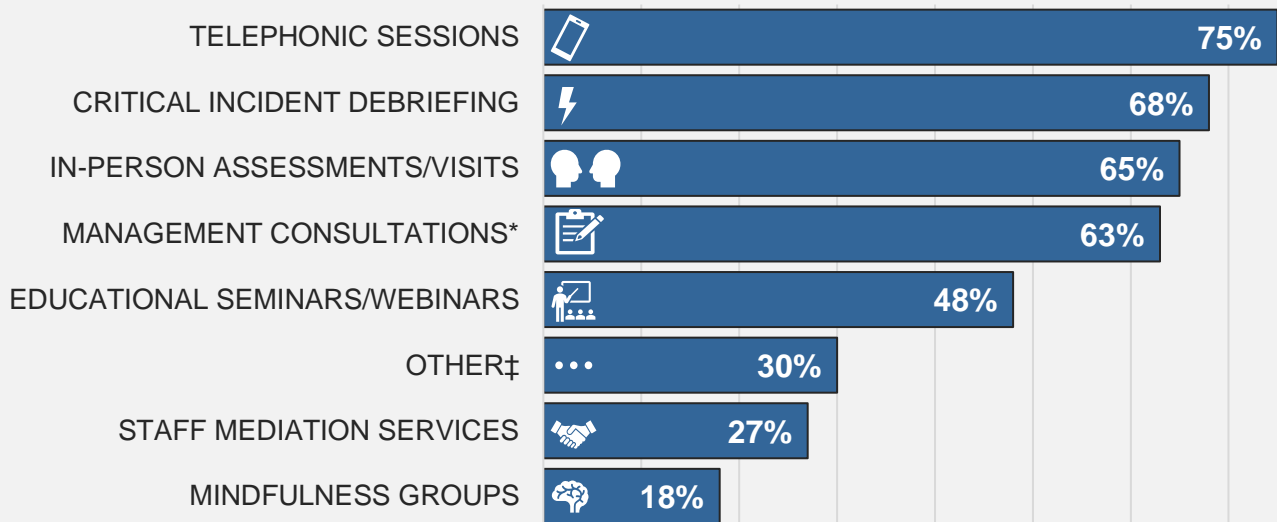
- email reminders
- distribution of flyers
- regular communication from Administration/HR

- availability of websites
- identified point of contact within the organization to act as a liaison with the EA service

ELIGIBILITY FOR EA SERVICES

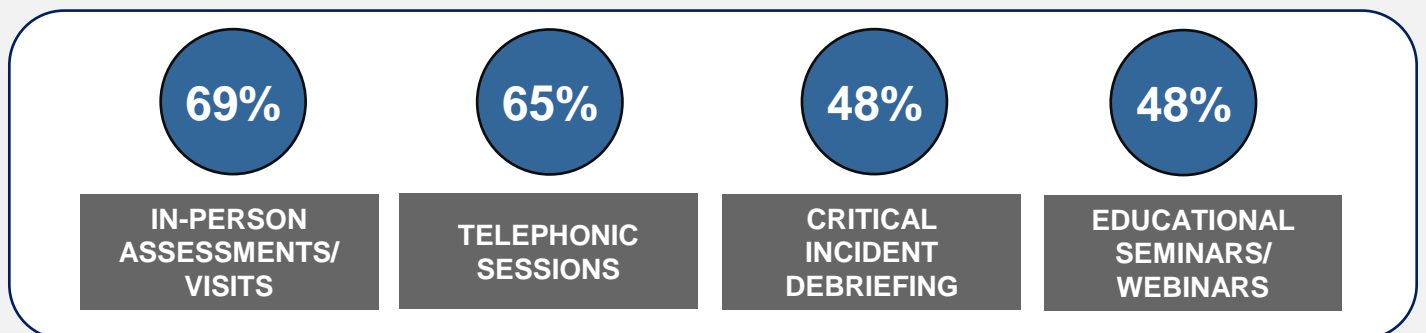**Who is eligible for EA services in your organization?**

Full Time Employees	Part Time Employees	Household Members	Not sure
93%	72%	49%	7%

EAP SERVICES AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYEES

Service	Percentage
TELEPHONIC SESSIONS	75%
CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING	68%
IN-PERSON ASSESSMENTS/VISITS	65%
MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIONS*	63%
EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS/WEBINARS	48%
OTHER‡	30%
STAFF MEDIATION SERVICES	27%
MINDFULNESS GROUPS	18%

* for assistance in helping an employee who may need EAP services
‡ Other items included legal & financial consultations, referral services, cash assistance, etc.

EAP SERVICES MOST VALUABLE TO EMPLOYEES ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS

69%	65%	48%	48%
IN-PERSON ASSESSMENTS/ VISITS	TELEPHONIC SESSIONS	CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING	EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS/ WEBINARS

What Employee Assistance needs do you have related to COVID-19?
Analysis of 45 open-ended responses

Many respondents identified a need to support employees' management of stress related to COVID-19.

"Support groups."

"How to manage remote working schedules."

"How to manage anxiety when returning to work onsite."

"There has been an increase of anxiety and emotional reaction to COVID, but no one seems to recognize or seek assistance that they maybe should. No direct COVID-related assistance has been identified yet."

"It would be nice to offer assistance for navigating COVID when it hits home. From ensuring medical care, through emotional needs as they differ from adult to child, regular check-ins with the employee (how are you doing - we are here) and follow up after the fact."

"Employee anxieties; employees with school age children who have to home school and manage work; creating safe workplace environments."

Several noted a need for general information pertaining to COVID.

"Information to employees on what to do if exposed."

"Help with more readily available testing center."

"Educational information, Community resources, Testing Sites."

Others noted sufficient resources at this time.

"The telephonic counseling sessions have been invaluable. As well as CDC approved literature that we can provide staff with a link to the EAP website."

"We have conducted support groups with clinical staff and EAP manager."

"The utilization has increased a good deal since COVID and therefore our associated costs have gone up with it. We are delighted with our EAP partner, our staff feel comfortable accessing this resource and report the benefits to their colleagues/ supervisors. We have been successful in normalizing therapy as part of our self care and culture."

"Our organization has provided in house clinical, financial, and wellness support to employees who are experiencing stress of various types (emotional, childcare, financial) related to COVID-19."

Needs Assessment & Gaps in Service:

CT EAPA will be focusing on the following problem areas in the Implementation/Service Delivery phase of the grant:

1 Part-time employees were not covered by over 28% of respondents. Family members were not covered by 51% of respondents. Family issues have been identified as a major issue by respondents during COVID-19.

2 82% of respondents were not aware of CT EAPA, and have little or no information on what benefits to expect from an integrated EA Program. This will be further addressed in the Strategic Plan.

3 Respondent organizations frequently identified having limited financial resources and need any EA services to be provided to be no cost or low cost.

Current Barriers

- Organizations do not have available financial or staff resources to devote to developing new or expanding existing Employee Assistance services at this time.

- Several respondents noted that they are "dealing with situations as they come up…" (reactively) rather than having a well-conceived, comprehensive EA program based on the standard definition by the Federal Government's Office of Personnel Management.[1]

- "Small" vendors are the most likely to have limited or no Employee Assistance Services and have limited financial means to meet or expand services.

[1]US Office of Personnel Management, "Federal Employee Assistance Programs: Guiding Principles, Framework, and Definitions." (2008) https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/worklife/reference-materials/eapguide.pdf

Next Steps: Strategic Plan Considerations

- Develop Strategic plan to address service gaps identified in the survey.

- Share summary survey outcomes with DMHAS, survey respondents, and participating organizations.

- Develop guidance materials/develop and provide virtual workshops/training for EA point of service contacts and decision-makers to give guidance and support on how to develop a comprehensive EA program, and enhance existing resources. These may include: website information highlighting available services, developing an "infomercial"/ training modules for posting on DMHAS website.

- CT EAPA will provide consultation services and facilitate appropriate resources to DMHAS subcontracting agencies as requested.

- CT EAPA will investigate and report on other available resources (such as a grant-funded voucher system) to assist DMHAS-funded agencies.

- CT EAPA will develop and implement programming resources (including three workshops to be provided at no cost) to address areas of need as identified in the needs assessment.

- CT EAPA will "pilot" a Small Business EAP consortium supported by the SAMHSA grant (21MHA1008) to provide EA services to small agencies (under 50 employees).

Developed by CTEAPA

Ct**eapa** Connecticut Employee Assistance Professionals Association
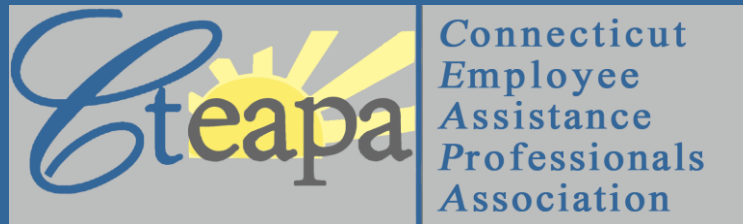
For more information
https://cteapa.com/dmhas/

Alyssa Gilbert, MPH
Consulting Research Associate

B. WEYLAND SMITH
C O N S U L T I N G
PROGRAM EVALUATION • NEEDS ASSESSMENT • GRANT PREPARATION