

# 2020 Arkansas Workforce Trends and Challenges



SOUTHWEST EAP

## SWEAP Client Trends from 2019

Wellbeing vs. Mental Health vs. Mental Illness  
Training to Recognize Poor Mental Health  
The Increasing Impact of Loneliness

Supporting “Emerging Adulthood” Employees  
Evolving, Innovative EAP Capabilities  
Helping Your Workforce during COVID-19

# Thank You Southwest EAP Clients and Partners

The Coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented in its reach and impact on the daily lives and work of your team members. For Southwest EAP, it has also been an opportunity to alter and improve our operations to better serve you.

With the help of our entire team and partners, we were able to shift to a nearly 100% remote mode of work very rapidly. I am both extremely proud of our team and profoundly thankful for their support and hard work.

And I am thankful for you, our clients, for your continued trust in Southwest EAP, to help keep your employees productive across all the facets of their lives, even in these challenging circumstances.

As we have worked with our clients through the pandemic, we quickly understood that we are helping your employees cope with a wide range of effects on their mental health.

We developed a tool to help you help your employees as they experience the variety of impacts of this crisis, whether that be reduced employment, working remotely or working in high stress environments. We distributed this tool individually, but we've also included it in this report for your continued reference.

And though we continue to work through this crisis, we also remain dedicated to our overall EAP work. For the past several years we have published this Trends Report in order to:

1. Provide an overall picture of the effectiveness of our services across our client base – you'll find the latest update on the next page.
2. Help you stay on top of the emerging trends and issues we see. All of the articles in this report reflect our collective thinking and perspectives on trends we continue to see in workforces in the many types of organizations we work with.

As always, we are here to help you help your people.



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# Reasons For EAP Use in 2019

Every year, we collect and analyze data from our client roster. From this data we can share with you our insights and highlight trends to help you gauge your organization's employee engagement and wellbeing effectiveness. You can also use this data to help ensure that we are working together to provide the most value from your Southwest EAP relationship.

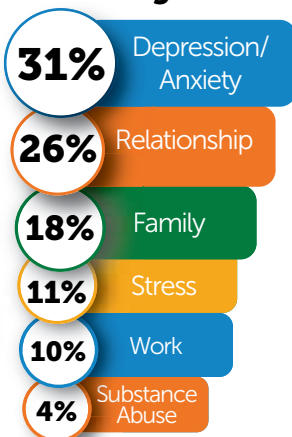


## Increased Impact & Steady Average Case Rate

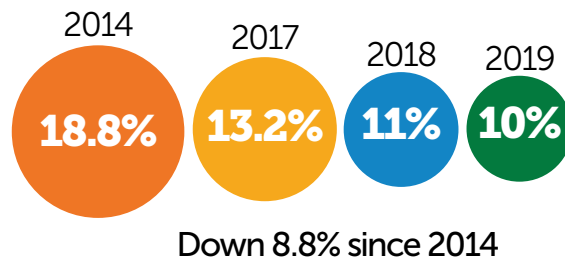
### Referral Type



### Presenting Problems



### Decrease in Presenting Work Issues



### Gender Variance



- Depression/Anxiety and Relationship Problems remain the leading challenges across our client roster. These issues can remain hidden in the workplace and present in absenteeism, decreased work effectiveness, and reduced performance.
- Seventy-nine percent of referrals into Southwest EAP are initiated by the employee or a family member. The remainder of referrals come from concerned co-workers or supervisors (13%), or from formal referrals for work performance issues (8%).
- Our Impact Rate (the percentage of covered employees we engaged) was 15%. This number is well above industry norms, and has been for several years. Additionally, our 2019 Case Rate of 6.3% exceeds the EAP industry standard rate of 4.5%.

# Trend #1: A Need To Clarify How We Talk About Wellbeing vs. Mental Health vs. Mental Illness

Unfortunately, many people casually use mental illness terms to describe certain situations. For example, someone saying, "I'm so OCD!" when they insist upon having a clean workspace or saying, "I was so depressed when March Madness was canceled," to describe feelings of disappointment. These casual statements misrepresent the important differences that exist among emotional wellbeing, mental health, and mental illness.

**Emotional Wellbeing** is defined as having both an awareness of your emotions and the ability to manage and express those feelings in a healthy and age-appropriate manner. It includes having both good mental and physical health, high life satisfaction, and a sense of meaning. More generally, wellbeing is just feeling good about yourself and your life.

**Mental Health** is made up of our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. It can be negatively impacted by such things as living in a difficult marriage, struggling with aging parents, or poor work/life balance.

**Mental Illnesses** are specific, diagnosable health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking, or behavior (or a combination of the three). Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work, or family activities. They are medical diagnoses that have behavioral components like any medical condition such as heart disease or diabetes.

Understanding the differences among the three terms can go a long way to helping ensure that you have employee benefits and support in place for the entire continuum.

## Best Practices

- Companies have had mixed success in getting involved in the arena of wellbeing. Most companies' programs center on education and low-cost access to a gym and maybe several short-term or one-off wellbeing activities such as a team fun run. **Although education shouldn't be dismissed** — it is definitely a central component of helping individuals make informed health decisions — **it's not a known driver of behavior change.** A program that provides self-assessment, education, and easy access to resources, ideally all connected to company-wide awareness campaigns, can provide a more effective and measurable impact. This, in conjunction with a responsive EAP providing access to coaching and problem-solving resources, can create even more positive results for employees and companies.
- A highly visible, high-touch EAP is often your most effective and lowest cost option to support employee mental health. Research shows that every \$1 invested into an EAP yields a \$3-5 return on investment for the company.
- Offer health insurance that provides mental health parity, up to and including inpatient services.
- Create awareness campaigns to reduce the stigma around mental illness and make employees aware of their free and low-cost resources.
- Offer training to managers and supervisors focused on how to promote a healthy workplace and recognize mental health issues.



## Trend #2: More Frontline Training to Recognize What Poor Mental Health Looks Like in the Workplace

*The fully dressed captain jumped from the deck and quickly swam through the water. A former lifeguard, he kept his eyes on the victim as he headed straight for a couple swimming between their anchored boat and the beach. "I think he thinks you're drowning," the husband said to his wife. They had been splashing each other and she had screamed, but now they were just standing, neck-deep on a sand bar. "We're fine!" the husband yelled, but the captain kept swimming. Directly behind the couple, not 10 feet away, their 9-year-old daughter was drowning. Safely above the surface in the arms of the captain, the child burst into tears, "Daddy!"*

*How did this captain know — from 50 feet away — what the father couldn't recognize from just 10? Drowning is not the violent call for help that most people have seen on TV and in movies. Drowning is almost always a deceptively quiet event. The waving, splashing, and yelling that dramatic conditioning (television) prepares us to look for is rarely seen in real life. As a former lifeguard, the captain was trained to recognize drowning by experts and years of experience. The father, on the other hand, had learned what drowning looks like by seeing it on television.*

*Except in rare circumstances, drowning people are physiologically unable to call out for help. Drowning people cannot voluntarily control their arm movements, so they cannot wave for help, move towards a rescuer or reach out for a piece of rescue equipment.*

*Unless quickly rescued by a trained lifeguard, a drowning person can only struggle on the surface of the water from 20 to 60 seconds before submersion occurs.*

So, what does a story of a drowning child have to do with mental health? A lot, actually. The silence of a drowning person is an apt metaphor for the hidden signs of poor mental health.

An employee who is struggling with their mental health can be challenging to accurately identify.

### How we think mental health issues look

- Acting sad or down/crying spells
- Confused thinking
- Excessive worrying
- Extreme mood changes
- Major changes in appearance
- Erratic behavior or statements
- Suicidal/homicidal statements

### How they typically present in a work environment

- Excessive absenteeism
- Presenteeism (at work, but not focused)
- Missed deadlines/weakened performance
- Unable to take criticism
- Argumentative/interpersonal issues
- Disengagement
- Difficulty setting boundaries

While all can be signs and symptoms for concern, it is helpful to understand that these work behaviors can be due to underlying wellbeing or mental health issues. Recognizing these signs can enable managers to more quickly connect employees to their EAP and other support resources.

### Best Practices

- Train front-line supervisors to recognize how poor mental health may present in a work environment.
- Build company-wide awareness campaigns to increase understanding of wellbeing, mental health, and mental illness.
- Find employees within your organization who can serve as "champions" of your EAP and other wellness benefits.



## Trend #3: The Increasing Impact of Loneliness on Productivity and Overall Health

A recent study conducted by Wharton professor, Sigal Barsade and California State University professor, Hakan Ozcelik titled "No Employee is an Island: Workplace Loneliness and Job Performance," surveyed 672 employees and their 114 supervisors to determine what situations had an impact on their health, happiness, and life span. It turned out that good relationships keep us healthier and happier, and we tend to live longer as a result. Without good relationships, or without any relationships, a person's physical and mental health will suffer, as will their lifespan.

The study also found that "people who were lonelier became less effectively committed to their organizations." As a result, their co-workers found those colleagues suffering from loneliness "less approachable." This had a negative effect on work performance because lack of interaction meant less information was shared with co-workers, meaning those suffering from loneliness were less likely to get the resources they needed. This lack of connection can become a significant work performance risk, not to mention raising the possibility of expensive employee turnover and lack of productivity.

Due to COVID-19 many work environments have quickly pivoted to more remote-based options, heightening the importance of finding more ways for employees to have meaningful connections and interactions.

### Best Practices

- Take a look inside. People often assume that loneliness is the fault of the person, when they should be asking if it's a reflection of a larger organizational issue. Make sure your company's culture encourages meaningful connection and inclusivity.
- Encourage personal interaction. Email, texts, and instant messaging have added convenience and efficiency to the workplace, but they've also stifled personal connections. Take advantage of video conferencing options whenever possible.

- Managers need to place a new importance on supporting the morale of their teams. We have to take care of business but there has to be room for levity especially during difficult transitions.
- Use the buddy system. Assign pairs or small groups of "check-in buddies" so everyone receives a personal communication or contact during this time.
- Give people a safe place to talk about their frustrations and feelings. Remind your employees that they have an EAP, which is free, confidential, and easy to use.

Southwest EAP is your partner in providing counseling, resources, and training for your managers and employees so they can productively work through these issues before they become detrimental to workplace performance.



## Trend #4: Recognizing and Supporting “Emerging Adulthood” Employees

“Emerging adulthood” is described as the time from the end of adolescence until young adult responsibilities and routines are established. Psychologist Jeffery Jensen Arnett, PhD, has studied this group of 18-29 year olds and pinpointed their particular struggles and how he sees their adjustment difficulties continuing to increase.

Recognizing the challenges of your “emerging adult” employees and focusing your support strategies on those challenges can pay big dividends. These employees need to feel understood and believe that you have their best interests in mind. A better understanding of your employees’ challenges can lead to improved long-term retention and productivity.

### Why do these struggles emerge in this phase of life?

- Extension of the transition period to adulthood over the last few decades
- Increased length and cost of higher education
- Delayed access to the life experiences that develop adult life skills out of necessity
- Reduced effectiveness of previously used coping skills and behaviors
- Adapting to some behaviors and routines for the first time

Struggle	Best Practice	Reason
Exploring and establishing an identity	Provide opportunities and realistic challenges early in employment	Generates a feeling of productivity Reveals employees’ strengths
Frequent changes in residence, relationships, and other stabilizing factors	Provide stability through routine and consistency within the weekly work structure	Eases anxiety about upcoming change and job security through a reliable work environment, duties, and processes
Complete self-focus and freedom (often for the first time)	Conduct weekly and monthly check-ins, not just annual reviews	Normalizes both giving and receiving feedback Increases comfort with constructive criticism
Feeling caught “in between” adolescence and full adulthood	Provide options and flexibility within the larger structure or organization	Inspires appreciation if you can allow flexibility regarding remote work, PTO, etc. Enables you to draw important boundaries and be crystal clear about expectations up front
Overwhelming optimism of what could be	Capitalize on the optimism of the “age of possibilities”	Channel energy into project needs by encouraging ongoing attempts at new areas of interest or levels of involvement Increases comfort with self-pacing, meeting deadlines, and accountability to others

## Trend #5: Evolving, Innovative EAP Capabilities: Wellbeing, Multiple Access Points, and Flexible Services

Personal problems that spill into the workplace can cause undue stress, reduce productivity, and create uncomfortable working conditions. Traditional, high-quality, high-touch EAPs have always provided these core services:

- Counseling/coaching
- Workforce training development
- Organizational development services
- HR support
- Crisis response

In the past decade, innovative EAPs have evolved to include:

- Wellbeing programs
- New and innovative coaching approaches for individuals and groups
- Proactive educational campaigns
- Financial education and resources
- Accessible self-assessments and information
- Online courses/webinars
- Department evaluations and group culture surveys
- Multiple access points for services

These additions provide a continuum of care spanning wellbeing, mental health, and mental illness to connect employees with the most appropriate care and resources.

Calculating the return on investment (ROI) of implementing an EAP should not only include hard dollar costs but also these hidden costs that can have an impact on your company's bottom line:

- **Measurable Benefits** – Decreased long-term sickness and absence, grievance procedures, and staff turnover
- **Visible but Unquantifiable Benefits** – Performance improvement, positive impacts of solving problems, and time savings for employees dealing with various issues
- **Invisible Benefits** – Motivation, increased morale, and improved reputation or image of your company's brand

It's important to inform your employees about available EAP services by using communications channels such as email, direct mail, and posters placed throughout your business.

### Best Practices




- Set a yearly review session with your EAP. It's essential to evaluate your provider's procedures, systems, and outcomes on a continual basis to ensure your business and your employees maximize this benefit.
- Set measurable benchmarks and priorities for each year you work together.
- Create awareness campaigns by using EAP reports to determine where to focus your attention and resources.
- Use your EAP's knowledge base to identify gaps in your benefit package.

An employee assistance program can be an enormous asset to your company, improving engagement and retention, and ultimately, benefiting your company's bottom line.



# Helping Your Workforce During COVID-19

As you make changes to your operations to accommodate and support your teams for health and safety reasons, there is a wide range of impacts this crisis will have on your workforce. Based on the conversations we are having across our client base -- including municipalities, small businesses, hospitals and clinics -- we put together the tool below to help you assess and lead through this time. As always, we are here to help you help your people stay productive.

	<b>Reduced Employment</b> 	<b>Working Remotely</b> 	<b>Working Under High Stress</b> 
<b>Where are they on this continuum?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displaced workforce</li> <li>• Reduced workforce</li> <li>• Potential to soon be laid off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employed</li> <li>• Working remotely from home</li> <li>• Managing work/life balance differently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employed</li> <li>• Remain in high-stress environment</li> <li>• Managing with less support than usual</li> </ul>
<b>What do they need?</b>	<b>Grief &amp; Resource Support</b>	<b>Change Management Support</b>	<b>Trauma &amp; Crisis Support</b>
<b>What are they dealing with?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of normalcy</li> <li>• Loss of control</li> <li>• Loss of job or reduced income</li> <li>• Loss of stability</li> <li>• Possibly not the only person in their home experiencing this situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing work/life differently</li> <li>• Sharing household space</li> <li>• Working without normal supplies/accommodations</li> <li>• Reduced ability to focus</li> <li>• Survivor's guilt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-the-job trauma</li> <li>• Exposure to illness</li> <li>• Fear for safety</li> <li>• Fear for family's safety</li> <li>• Increased work demand</li> <li>• Frustration</li> <li>• Potential workforce shortage</li> </ul>
<b>Level of Risk to Mental and Physical Health</b>	<b>Med-High</b>	<b>Low-Med</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Suggested Supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact information for unemployment benefits</li> <li>• Resource list for local food banks and assistance</li> <li>• Tip sheets on how to work through grief and change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education on adjusting</li> <li>• Flexibility for adjustment periods</li> <li>• Logistical and tech support</li> <li>• Regularly scheduled check-ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological first aid</li> <li>• Frequent check-ins</li> <li>• Peer supports</li> <li>• Professional individual support</li> <li>• Group critical incident support</li> </ul>
<b>Self-Help Focus</b>	<b>The Resilience Journey at southwestap.com</b>	<b>Time Management &amp; Managing Change Courses at southwestap.com</b>	<b>Relaxation &amp; Mindfulness Techniques at southwestap.com or Crisis Support 800-777-1797</b>
<b>Additional things to watch for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>• Feelings of depression</li> <li>• Anticipatory grief that manifests into anxiety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of ability to adjust time and stress management manifesting into low production, feelings of inadequacy, and burnout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build-up of anxiety and fear without intervention manifesting into panic attacks</li> </ul>

# We Are Arkansas' Leading Local EAP

## On-Call Crisis Services:

- 24/7 Telephonic Access
- Crisis Management
- Emergent Case Management



## Counseling, Coaching, Support:

- Face-to-Face
- Telehealth
  - Telephonic
  - Video Platform

## Supervisor Resources:

- Management Consultations
- Supervisory Coaching
- Formal Referrals
- Personalized Course Recommendations



## Training & Organizational Development:

- Employee & Supervisor Training
- Department Evaluations
- Employee Engagement Surveys

## Online 24/7 Access Resources:

- Articles & Assessments
- Archived Webinars
- Personal Development Courses



## Critical Incident:

- Onsite Responses
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Groups
- Emergent Face-to-Face Appointments

## Educational Campaigns:

- Monthly Newsletters
- Monthly Promotional Topics
- New Monthly Webinars
- Orientation Videos



## Legal and Financial:

- Document Templates
- Phone Consultations
- Online Forms & Resources
- Budget Calculators

## SWEAP Wellbeing App from wayForward

- Easily Accessible
- Science-based Approach
- Identify Top Stressors



- Educational Tools
- Courses for Skill Development
- Coaching for Greater Success



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**SOUTHWEST EAP**

Keeping People Productive...at home...at work...at life.