

## March 2016 EA Industry Spotlight

### Important Addiction Legislation Passes Senate

Overdoses from heroin, prescription drugs, and opioid pain relievers last year surpassed car accidents as the leading cause of injury-related death in America, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Deaths have reached their highest levels of the 21st century in 2014, the most recent year for which data is available, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. New legislation aims to tackle this epidemic. For more information visit <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/114/s524/summary>

### New App Treats Depression, Anxiety, and Chronic Pain

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is an evidence-based psychotherapy used to treat a number of conditions including depression, anxiety, and chronic pain, as well as other disorders and life problems. It uses mindfulness-based approaches and values-guided activity to help clients engage in meaningful and vital lives. ACT Coach is a mobile phone app created by the Department of Veterans Affairs to support those participating in ACT or to support those interested in using the therapy to improve well-being. For more details about the app (including handouts for providers and patients and an app overview), visit <http://www.myvaapps.com/#/act/>

### EAPs save Companies Money

The next time a potential corporate client is skeptical about the value of EAP services, consider telling the business leader that EAPs led to:

- A \$7,750 savings per employee at Warner Corp., because of lower recruitment and training costs, lower workers' compensation costs, and fewer on-the-job accidents;
- A 75% reduction in inpatient substance abuse treatment costs after an EAP was implemented at Gillette;
- A McDonnell Douglas report, which estimated that its EAP saved the company \$5.1 million due to fewer days missed from work, lower turnover, and fewer employee medical claims.

Source: SAMHSA ([www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov))

### 'High Impact, Low Cost'

EA professionals are always on the lookout for studies that verify the usefulness and effectiveness of EAPs. A leading study of 156 organizations conducted by XpertHR and published in *Personnel Today* found that:

- Employee assistance programs are effective in helping staff members overcome challenges at work and home in a cost-effective manner
- Two employers in three (66%) provide access to an EAP and an additional 17% are considering doing so.
- Face-to-face counseling can be the most expensive aspect of a program, but 82% of employers provide it, and it is rated as the most effective aspect of an EAP.
- The biggest change since XpertHR's previous EAP research in 2009 was an increased use of online resources – a feature of 79% of EAPs in 2014, compared with 51% in 2009.

- Asked to rate the cost-effectiveness of their EAP, two thirds (66%) of employers said that it completely or partially justified the cost. Not a single employer stated that it did “not justify its cost at all”.
- One employer’s verdict on EAPs was: “High impact, low cost. It would be remiss of organizations not to consider their use.”

### **New online cognitive behavioral therapy approach**

When Antea Group realized employees often could not access mental health services from their EAP or medical plan on a timely basis, they added Learn to Live, an online cognitive behavioral program available 24/7 to their benefits program. Learn to Live provides online CBT to address psychological problems such as social anxiety, depression, stress and worry. Employees complete an online questionnaire and based on the results, they are directed to one of three eight-module programs. The goal is that by the end of the program, participants have the tools and resources to deal with the specific challenge they are facing. For more information, read

<http://www.benefitnews.com/news/antea-group-launches-online-cognitive-behavioral-therapy-benefits>

### **EA Professional Spotlight**

**Name and Position:** RaeAnn Thomas, Director of Employer Solutions, Employee Assistance Program (aka Associated Employee Assistance Services of Wisconsin)

**What do you like best about working in the employee assistance field?** I love the variety. The opportunity to make a positive impact on so many levels – individual counseling, family work, work teams, departments and wider organizational work.

**What was your first EA job?** I started working for Employer Solutions in 1994, as the Executive Director of the organization and a counselor. As our company has grown, I have been able to add a number of excellent counselors to our team; this helps me to devote more time to the business management side of EAP.

**What is the most challenging part of your job?** We customize our services based on our customer (company) need and we know that the relationship we have with the company reps has an impact on the services we provide as both as the EAP, and as a resource for that company when new issues arise for them. We value those relationships and strive to be everything that the company needs from us. With the evolution of health/ mental health care, and insurance coverage, we are seeing many more individuals who cannot find the financial resources to pay for referrals appropriate beyond the intended scope of EAP. This often translates into EAP providing fairly extensive services to be sure that the employees get all of the assistance they need. Keeping a handle on the depth of the services, while still meeting the employees and company’s needs is a balancing act.

**When you’re not busy working, what inspires you?**

I like to travel. Each January I spend a few weeks in India. I started a charity called For One Child of India ([www.for1child.org](http://www.for1child.org)) to help the poorest children in the village I visit to be able to go to school and thereby make their way out of poverty.

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