

2021

# SWEAP Connections Impact & Workforce Trends

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SWEAP Connections: Arkansas' Leading Wellbeing EAP

(501) 663-1797  
[www.sweapconnections.com](http://www.sweapconnections.com)



**SWEAP**Connections

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

# Southwest EAP Becomes SWEAP Connections

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For over 40 years Southwest EAP has helped companies and organizations across Arkansas and beyond improve employee work performance and wellbeing while decreasing risk factors and liability.

As our business has evolved, the need for multiple channels and ways to help employees and supervisors has grown significantly. This trend rapidly accelerated in 2020 as companies had to quickly find ways to serve the mental health needs of employees remotely as the pandemic took over.

Through our work this past year, we realized that it was time for our company name and brand to reflect the full capabilities of the services we deliver, the multiple platforms through which we deliver them, and the overall connections we help organizations build to keep their people productive.

We are pleased to announce that we are updating our company name and brand to reflect how our business has evolved and is evolving: Southwest EAP is now SWEAP Connections.

What has not changed is that we continue to provide mental health and counseling services for employees and their families who may be struggling with personal and work-related concerns.

What has expanded is the many channels through which your organization can connect to SWEAP Connections:

- Telephone Counseling
- Face-to-Face Sessions
- Virtual Counseling (video)
- On-Demand Resources through [www.sweapconnections.com](http://www.sweapconnections.com)

2020 has made it clear that mental health has become a business-critical issue.

SWEAP Connections offers barrier-free, 24/7 access to a network of experts & resources. Not just mental health experts but also resources for:

- Counseling
- Coaching and Life Skills
- Financial and Legal Support
- Management Consultation
- Crisis Response
- Manager and Supervisor Training Solutions
- Surveys and Evaluations
- Wellbeing Programs

SWEAP Connections delivers Total Wellbeing for every level of your organization.

We are pleased to share our impacts for our clients with you, as well as some educational content to help you work through the challenges you face as leaders, managers and employees.

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

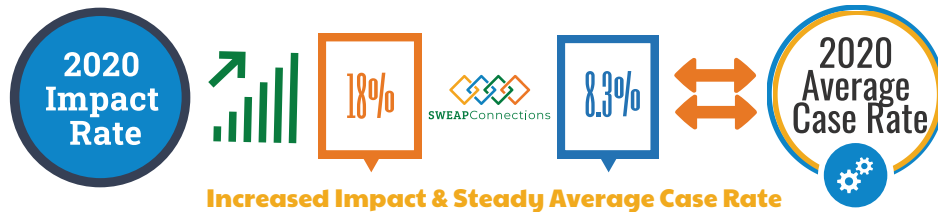
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# Reasons for EAP Use in 2020

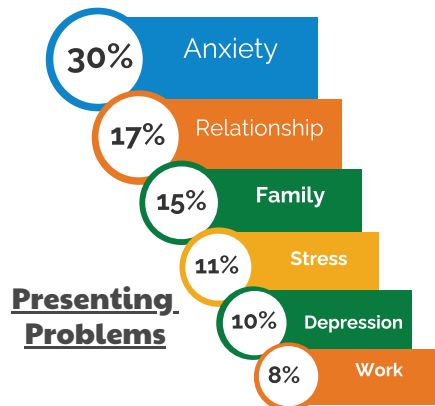
Every year we collect and analyze data from across our client roster. From this data we can share with you our insights and highlight trends to help you gauge your organization's employee engagement and wellbeing effectiveness. You can also use this data to help ensure that we are working together to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



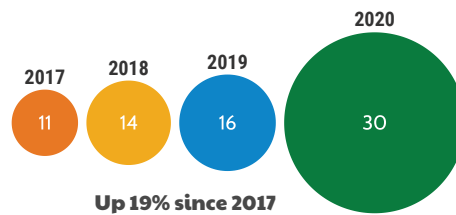
## Referral Type



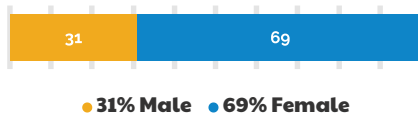
**82% Employee; 11% Concerned; 6% Formal**



## Increase in Anxiety



## Gender Variance



**Average Number of Appointments Per Client Case**

## The SWEAP Connections ROI

We utilize the Workplace Outcome Suite to determine the effectiveness of our services with regards to five specific outcomes: Work Presenteeism, Life Satisfaction, Work Absenteeism, Work Engagement, and Workplace Distress, analyzing the level of each both before and after intervention through EAP.

Our 2020 Results across our client base:



Absenteeism



Presenteeism



Work Distress



Work Engagement



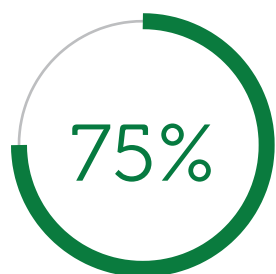
Life Satisfaction

# Emotional PPE: Moving Mental Health to the Forefront

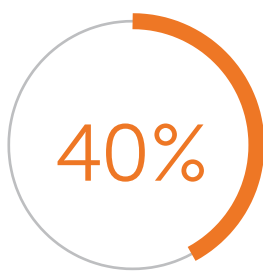
2020 taught everyone the meaning of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for our bodies.

But what about PPE for our mental and emotional health?

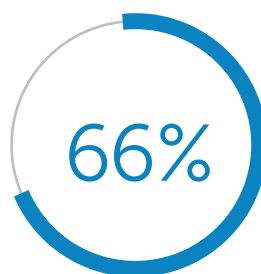
Employees are reporting increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of burnout. Employees and supervisors new to remote work are citing additional struggles with managing productivity while balancing the transition of working from home, often with children present and trying to cope with remote education instruction.



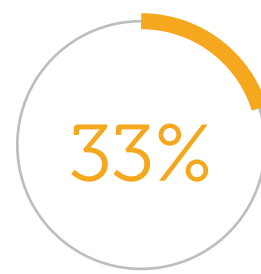
of employees report increased burnout



of employees are suffering from one mental health or substance abuse issue since the beginning of the pandemic



report increase stress



report social isolation and loneliness

One thing that becomes clear, companies must move employee wellbeing - including mental health - to the forefront. Providing employees support, information, resources, and programs in this area increases wellbeing, safety, productivity, and company loyalty, as well as provides a significant return on investment. As we look at what is within an organization's control regarding employee mental health, start with the basics.

**Talk About It Positively.** From the CEO to your supervisors, encourage language that is positive regarding mental health and seeking support. Leaders should actively participate and encourage others to do so.

**Provide Easy to Access to Resources.** Everyone is quick to dismiss generic looking emails, so look for fun alternatives. Use simple, engaging communication that quickly answer the question "What's in it for me?" Make sure to use at least two additional channels – like social media or banners/posters/TV monitors – to reach people and add some emotion by sharing success stories that show how these programs are making a difference. Most companies already have several great wellness benefits. A push to make sure that employees know and have easy access to those resources can be all that is needed to start seeing results.

**Targeted Awareness Campaigns.** Identify your population's primary concerns and create awareness campaigns to increase knowledge in those areas. Feature wellbeing and mental health topics throughout the year in company newsletters and employee publications. SWEAP provides content on mental health topics and tools that are easy to understand and share with employees.

**Build a Network of Wellness Champions.** Online communication is a powerful tool, but personal connections are priceless. Recruit a community of employees who are passionate about well-being or have a knack for rallying the troops. Give them the tools to champion the benefits of the program and publicly recognize their leadership.

# Managing Remote and Semi-Remote Workforces

Many companies now expect to maintain remote and semi-remote workforces even after the pandemic subsides. This means managers and supervisors now need additional skills to manage remote and blended teams.

Challenges inherent in remote work include:

- Lack of face-to-face supervision
- Lack of access to information
- Diminished collaboration
- Social isolation
- Distractions at home
- Enhanced issues with already existing silos



Whether a team was already remote or became semi- or fully- remote during the pandemic, the last year has brought enough change that considering these aspects of virtual team management can be beneficial.

**Set Expectations.** The most important thing you can do is to establish shared expectations. These expectations encompass everything from virtual work hours to responsiveness to project scheduling to adjusting timelines.

**Over communicate.** When employees are working remotely and lack the casual connectedness of the office, communication is paramount.

- **Conduct Individuals Check-ins.** Consider setting up a short one-on-one meeting (10 or 15 minutes) once or twice a week with everyone on your team.
- **Schedule Weekly Team Meetings.** Managers must plan their meetings thoughtfully, with an established productive rhythm while leaving space for the natural rapport building between teammates.

**Designate communication channels.** Provide written guidelines about team communication. What information should utilize which tool? What norms apply to each tool? Ex. Can you be in your car? Do you have to have the camera on? Should you leave chat open at all times? What is the expectation of timeliness? etc.

**Prioritize outcomes over activity.** Clearly defining the goals and desired results, then allowing employees to develop a plan of execution enhances creativity and ownership.

**Show flexibility and empathy.** Keep in mind that some people will adjust better to remote work than others. Some folks need the social interactions that come from being in an office with a team of colleagues. Be sure to dedicate some time to ensuring everyone is doing well in their remote work.

**Watch for Signs of Increased Stress.** With isolation risk, work life balance issues and increased stress levels increasingly present in the homes of employees, managers also need to know how to watch for signs of stress and burnout virtually. Understanding how performance issues can indicate the need for support and knowing how to intervene and offer that support can be the crucial difference between employee improvement and ultimately, retention.

# Diversity, Equality, Inclusion (DEI)

## Efforts receive a major focus

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While DEI has been an important initiative for many organizations over the past few years, this year brought an increased need for change in the workplace. In 2020 we saw an increased focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs that produced real results. Then, the coronavirus triggered concerns of an expanding pay gap, as many parents, mainly mothers, had to choose between work and childcare.

The business case for diversity and inclusion is stronger than ever. Research shows that the most diverse companies are more likely to outperform less diverse peers on profitability.

In 2021, companies that prove to be leaders in their industries will be those who place a renewed focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Initiatives include:

- Forming employee resource groups
- Following diversity recruiting best practices
- Focusing on equitable opportunities for all employees
- Creating more inclusive workplaces



Companies lagging in both gender and ethnic/cultural diversity were

**29%**

less likely to achieve above-average profitability

However, some employees still feel left out of DEI initiatives, and even speculate that their presence is unwanted, or they are at a disadvantage because of them. In order for DEI initiatives to be most effective, all employees need to support them. In doing so, these efforts can benefit everyone. It may be best to start with education and clear up some of the common misconceptions.

- **Diversity is about ethics and morality.** This is true, but it is also very much about the bottom line. Overall, companies in the bottom quartile for both gender and ethnic/cultural diversity were 29% less likely to achieve above-average profitability.
- **The bar is being lowered.** In reality, we are throwing out biases about what indicators are evidence of a high talent bar. Research shows diverse companies perform better, so the bar is really being raised, or at least, redefined.
- **Diversity is just about gender and race.** While race and gender are more obvious elements of diversity, diversity focuses on a variety of traits such as age, disability, sexual orientation, thinking style, cultural background, and marital status.
- **Diversity is a Human Resources responsibility.** While it's common to find diversity initiatives led by Human Resources, organizations who are successful report that these initiatives must be fully embraced by leadership and cascade down through middle management.

It's also important to remember that diversity and inclusion efforts should be tailored to the needs of each specific organization. While diversity efforts are typically focused on engaging underrepresented minorities within an organization, those groups can vary depending on the setting.

# The Importance of Supervisor and Manager Development

Managers and supervisors can have the single largest impact on your organization. A good or bad manager or supervisor affects employee performance, productivity, efficiency and turnover, and the overall health of the organization. A survey conducted by HR Dive found that 75% of employee turnover is preventable (through the direct supervisor). And 78% of employers are worried about a talent shortage but do not take actions, like adding supervisor training, to prevent turnover. They also found employees supervised by highly engaged supervisors are 59% more likely to be engaged.

In any company, the supervisor is basically the representative of the employer. They have to fully understand all laws and policies in order to be sure that violations will be avoided. Then, it is necessary to know how to deal with concerns and complaints. Supervisors have the huge responsibility of making sure that issues that pop up will be resolved before it affects retention or goes to legal action. The work also includes making employees comfortable with tasks and responsibilities.

The benefits of putting trained, capable supervisors in place cannot be overstated. The core skills that new supervisors need in order to boost employee engagement, emotional commitment, and work output. They are:

- Communication skills
- Setting clear expectations
- Giving feedback to help employees
- Delegating effectively
- Ensuring all team members feel valued and have a voice
- Making decisions and solving problems in transparent and predictable ways
- Understanding coaching vs. managing
- Conducting team and one-on-one meetings
- Leading change proactively
- Demonstrating positive leadership behaviors

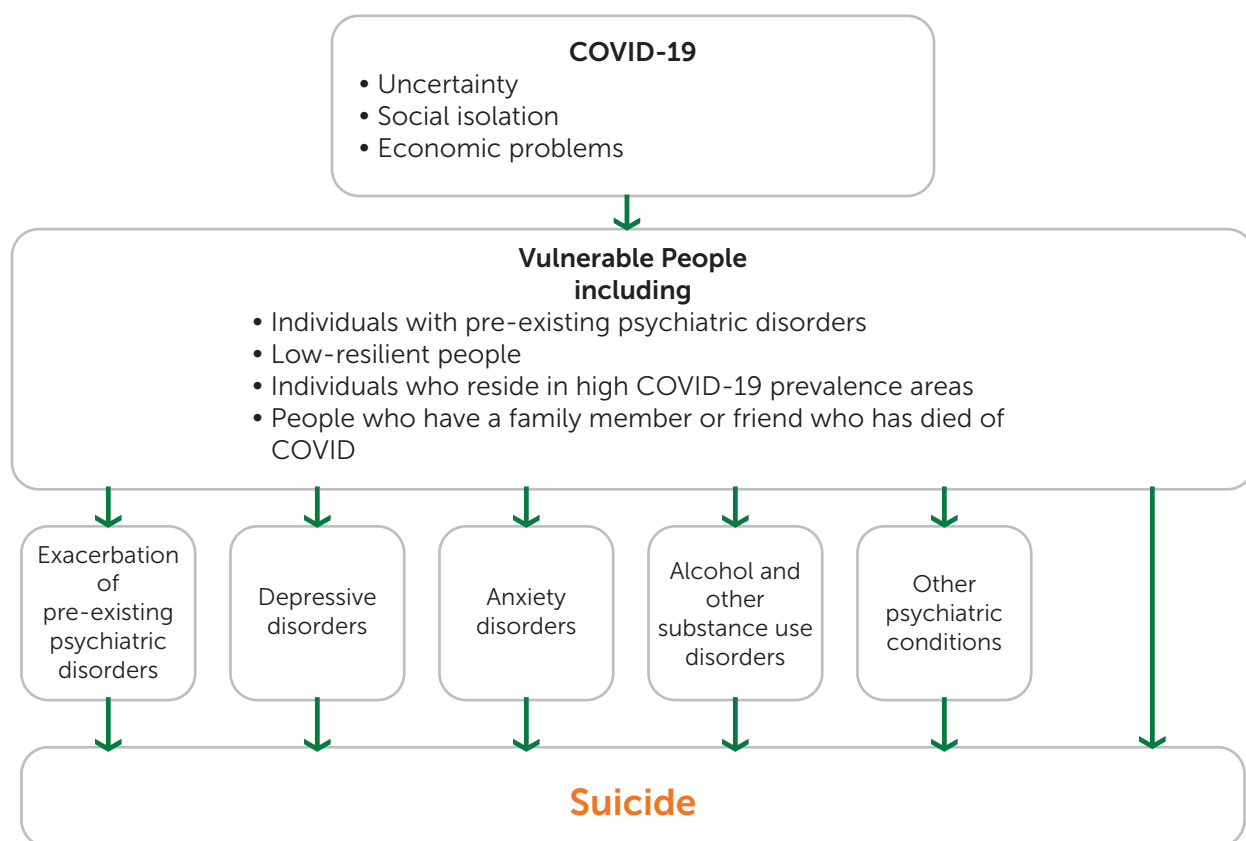
Most of these skills are not learned or instinctively picked up without formal training. When individuals are promoted into supervisory roles without training, they are more likely to rely on policies and authority. This alienates employees and negatively impacts workplace morale.



# How to Address Increasing Suicide Rates

Mental health issues are rising among adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitals and therapists are reporting an increase in suicides in nearly all age groups. A CDC report shows more than 40% of U.S. adults say they've had at least one mental health event with 11% reporting they have seriously considered suicide.

Suicide is complex, involving layers of risk factors, including biological and environmental ones. And it's hard to know the exact factors involved in each situation but tackling known risk factors that are likely to be exacerbated by the pandemic is crucial. These include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, hopelessness, feelings of entrapment and burdensomeness, substance misuse, loneliness, domestic violence, child neglect or abuse, unemployment, and other financial insecurity.






Best Practices can include:

- Leadership creating a culture of well-being
- Addressing high-turnover areas and identify toxic environments
- Launching awareness campaigns regarding signs and symptoms of suicide
- Training to build employees' resources with stress management and resiliency tools
- Providing Peer Support utilizing both informal and formal initiatives
- Providing Mental Health and Crisis Resource Services ensuring people have access and know who to connect



# 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.

|   | <br><b>Reduced Employment</b>  | <br><b>Working Remotely</b>   | <br><b>Working Under High Stress</b>   |
|---|---|---|---|
| Where are they on this continuum?           | <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>  |
| What do they need?                          | Grief & Resource Support  | Change Management Support   | Trauma & Crisis Support   |
| What are they dealing with?                 | <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> |
| Level of Risk to Mental and Physical Health | Med-High  | Low-Med   | High  |
| Suggested Supports                          | <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>  |
| Self-Help Focus                             | The Resilience Journey at <a href="http://southwesteap.com">southwesteap.com</a>  | Time Management & Managing Change Courses at <a href="http://southwesteap.com">southwesteap.com</a>   | Relaxation & Mindfulness Techniques at <a href="http://sweapconnections.com">sweapconnections.com</a> or Crisis Support 800-777-1797  |
| Additional things to watch for              | <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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