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Executive Summary

Introduction

The following is the report of the 2011 evaluation of the Prince Edward Island Public Service Commission's (PSC) Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The report outlines the objectives, evaluation methodology, evaluation findings and results, and proposed recommendations.

The specific objectives of the evaluation included:

- To evaluate the EAP to determine if the current mandate, objectives, services and processes will continue to meet the future needs of the public service.

- To evaluate the EAP to determine if the program is successfully meeting the current employee and employer requirements, including:
  - Identifying the strengths in processes, service delivery quality and effectiveness in meeting the stated outcome of improved job performance.
  - Identifying the gaps and/or weaknesses in processes, service delivery quality and effectiveness in meeting the stated outcome of improved job performance.

- To review and comment on the current EAP Advisory Committee governance model, the EAP organization structure, and the reporting relationship to the Public Service Commission within the provincial government structure.

- To make recommendations for improvement to ensure that the EAP will continue to meet employee and employer requirements in the future, recognizing fiscal realities as well as the evolving work environment.

Evaluation Approach

The Atlantic Evaluation Group (AEG) Inc. was contracted to complete the evaluation. The AEG evaluation team utilized a mixed methods approach to collect the evaluation data, including: a comparative best practice literature review; a review of program utilization data; an extensive survey of employees and managers across the public service system; and a series of qualitative interviews with program stakeholders, members of the EAP Advisory Committee, EAP Counselors, and employees who had used the program.

Findings and Results

Generally speaking, the EAP evaluation findings from all data collection streams revealed program and operational strengths on a number of levels. The best practice comparative review noted that in addition to offering services that the majority of Canadian EAPs provide, PEI's Employee Assistance Program demonstrates leadership in four other distinct areas, including: responding to critical incident situations; providing consultation and training for ongoing organizational development and team-building initiatives; enhancing the health of work units through the provision of support such as mediation and conflict-resolution services; and supporting work unit support groups to decrease work-related stress.

With respect to the individual confidential counseling service, there was strong positive feedback expressed by all those interviewed and/or surveyed for this part of the EAP program. The perception among stakeholders interviewed indicated that the counseling service is well utilized, well received, and the sense of satisfaction from those who have used the program is high. The service was seen as easy to access, and the existing referral protocols seem to be working well. EAP counselors are viewed as professional, well experienced, very dedicated to their work, and providing an important 'add value' service to the public sector.
Employees who had used EAP services indicated that it was easy to access the program in terms of knowing where and who to call; that the wait time for the first contact session was very reasonable; and that their level of satisfaction with the service was very high. They indicated that they felt listened to, supported, and helped to develop practical steps to deal with their concerns and issues.

In short, the evaluation data indicates that the existing EAP program has been well established, is well utilized, and generates high ratings of satisfaction and helpfulness. This provides a strong foundation from which to further strengthen and develop the capacity of the program.

**Program Strengths**

With respect to the strengths of the EAP Program, the evaluation concluded that:

- It is a well established program with wide acknowledgement and acceptance of its importance and value to both employees and employers.
- The PSC is, and has been, highly supportive of the program; the governance structure includes involvement and input from all key public sector stakeholders and unions (Advisory Committee).
- The EAP counseling staff are highly regarded; viewed as knowledgeable, experienced, and skilled professionals by both users and management at all levels across the public service.
- The EAP best practice review identified several areas of strength:
  - The PEI EAP offers all but two services that the majority of Canadian EAPs provide.
  - The PEI EAP demonstrates leadership in four areas not commonly offered by other EAPs:
    - Responding to critical incident situations with trained peer debriefers.
    - Providing consultation and training for ongoing organizational intervention, development and change including team-building initiatives.
    - Enhancing the health of work units through the provision of technical assistance including mediation or conflict-resolution services on both individual and organizational issues.
    - Development of or assistance with work unit support groups to decrease work related stress and to act as problem solving and/or peer social support groups
  - A review of PEI EAP policies versus a database of best practices across Canada indicated that PEI’s policies scored slightly above average compared to the Canadian best practices.
- Surveys revealed a high level of awareness of the EAP program (86%) and that it offers confidential counseling for employees (84%).
- A high proportion (over 90%) of survey respondents using the service indicated some degree of satisfaction with EAP individual counseling.
- A high proportion (over 90%) of survey respondents using the service indicated EAP counseling helped deal with the issue and helped them complete their work duties.
- Employees interviewed who used EAP individual counseling indicated that the service was a help to them; they felt they were listened to, supported, helped to resolve issues, and helped to become better employees.
• While the feedback on EAP group sessions was more limited in both interviews and surveys, employees who had attended EAP workplace and wellness sessions were positive regarding the experience.

Program Gaps

With respect to EAP Program gaps and areas to address and strengthen, the evaluation concluded that:

• While overall EAP awareness was high (as noted above), program profile and visibility across the broad public sector is still lower than ideal in some subgroups such as newer employees and for specific aspects of the program such as availability for family members.

• There are some perceived concerns by a small minority of non-users of individual counseling surveyed regarding confidentiality and potential impact on job promotions.

• There is no defined strategy, and limited financial support for, the ongoing professional development needs of EAP counselors.

• There is insufficient focus on some aspects of management of the program due to pressures of individual counseling demand; e.g., promotion of program.

• There are not enough EAP staff resources to address worksite education, early intervention, prevention and wellness promotion to the extent desired.

• There is a lack of after hours counseling service and support (at the time of evaluation).

• While the current governance model, organizational structure and reporting relationship were generally viewed to be adequate, it was felt that the Advisory Committee might be strengthened and union representation and engagement could be stronger.

Proposed Recommendations

A condensed list of proposed steps to improve and strengthen the EAP Program include (see Section 6.2 for full list):

1. Update and further strengthen written EAP policies in reference to the detailed best practice information available from this evaluation.

2. Strengthen and target ongoing promotion of EAP individual counseling services.

3. Further explore best practices as to how to manage the small proportion of EAP cases which are formal referrals to EAP counseling.

4. Collaborate with HR managers to develop a strategy to improve workplace wellness and quality of worklife, within the limits of available resources.

5. Strengthen ongoing professional development for EAP Manager and counseling staff.

6. Strengthen program management through development of a workplan/strategy, to be presented and discussed with the Advisory Committee on an annual basis, addressing issues raised by this evaluation and other emerging issues.

7. Further engage the Advisory Committee representatives and their organizations in policy renewal, program promotion, strategy development, and other aspects of ongoing management of the EAP.

In summary, the evaluation indicates that the existing EAP program has been well established, is well utilized, and generates high ratings of satisfaction and helpfulness. This provides a strong foundation from which to further strengthen and develop the capacity of the program.
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1. Background

1.1 Program Overview

The mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is to contribute toward the total health of employees in order to have a productive and satisfied workforce. This mission is achieved through two main program thrusts: 1) a confidential counseling service offered to employees (and family members of employees) whose job performance is, or has the potential to be, adversely affected by personal or work-related stress; and 2) the offering of timely group-based education and wellness sessions designed to act as a preventive or early intervention support to the workplace.

An EAP has positive benefits for both employees and employers. Employees are supported in obtaining early help with emotional problems and other types of issues that are affecting their work performance, family relationships, and/or their personal well-being. The employer benefits by retaining employees with valuable skills and knowledge, and helping the individual employee become as productive as possible.

The PEI EAP program was designed around several founding principles, including:

- **Joint partnership:** Management and unions are committed to work together to help the employee deal with personal and/or work-related issues that can impact negatively upon work performance.
- **Confidentiality:** Employee confidentiality and privacy of information is of paramount importance.
- **Voluntary participation:** Employees are encouraged and supported to voluntarily seek help for personal problems which may affect job performance.
- **Early intervention:** Both management and unions encourage and support early intervention in wellness programming in the workplace.
- **Granting of leave:** There is recognition that the granting of leave for the purpose of counseling and/or treatment may be important to a successful outcome for the employee.
- **Clarity of roles:** The supervisor or manager is responsible for identifying with the employee when job performance is below standard, not for diagnosing a personal problem.
- **Scope of support:** A wide range of problems and issues are addressed, including: physical, emotional, marital or family distress; legal or financial problems, compulsive behaviors, impulse control disorder and addiction; and issues related to harassment, job-related stress or job conflict.
- **Equal access:** The Employee Assistance Program applies equally to all employees covered within the Agreement.

1.2 Stakeholders

The range of stakeholder groups served by the program includes all public workers (and family members) from the health, education and civil service sectors. The initial agreement to establish the EAP program was signed in the spring of 1990. The original parties to this agreement included: the PEI School Boards, the PEI Teachers’ Federation, the Union of Public Services Employees (UPSE), and four locals from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Ministers signing on behalf of the provincial government included: the Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission and the Minister of Education. A short time later, several other agencies also joined the Agreement including: the broader health system; the PEI Nurses’ Union, the International Union of Operating Engineers, and the Excluded Employee Groups and their employers.
1.3 Target Groups - Nature of Services

The EAP Program is available to all probationary and permanent employees, contract employees, interns, and other employees (and their immediate families) with six months continuous service, within all provincial government departments, agencies and commissions that are party to the EAP Agreement. Services are also made available to retirees, upon request. As of 2010/11, there were approximately 10,200 employees in the provincial civil service including:

- 3,000 employees in civil service
- 3,000 employees in the education sector
- 4,200 employees in the health sector

Key features of the EAP service include:

- The Program acts as an assessment, short-term service, and referral system, if necessary. Early recognition of a problem is the goal to enable an employee to receive help before a crisis develops.
- The Program is not a method of avoiding discipline, nor is to be used by management as a disciplinary measure. The intent is to allow employees the chance to voluntarily seek help with personal problems which may affect work performance.
- Any employee can consult with EAP regarding access to the program, how to raise a concern regarding a co-worker or supervisor experiencing problems, or to ask general information (i.e., resources available in the community). In addition, any worksite can request a group session on wellness programming.

1.4 Program Resources and Operations

The EAP program currently consists of a team of four (4) staff; a full-time manager/counselor who because of service demand spends 80% plus of his time providing counseling services and to a lesser extent workplace education sessions; two full-time counselors who also spend the major part of their time seeing employees who are requesting services (also do some workplace education as well); and a full-time Receptionist/Administrative Assistant. The main EAP office is located at Burns Ave. in Charlottetown. While the EAP offices are located in one end of a building that houses other services, care has been taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of employees coming for services (e.g., a separate entrance, a protected waiting area). In other parts of the province where counseling services are provided (Montague, Summerside, O'Leary), the location is private as well (e.g., an office in a church).

The large majority of cases tend to be self-referred while the remaining cases are formal referrals by managers/supervisors. There is a clear policy in place regarding referrals for an addictions assessment. In terms of numbers, more referrals tend to come from the health sector, followed by education, and then the civil service. Workplace education and wellness workshops have been a part of the EAP program mandate since the inception of the program. However, delivering on this has always been an issue of EAP staff time and capacity. The priority service is individual counseling, and if the need and demand is high, this is where staff time and resources are committed. EAP staff will see any employee in serious or urgent need as quickly as possible (1-2 days), and to the extent possible, counselors try to keep 'wait times' for new referrals to 1-2 weeks.
1.5 Governance

The EAP program is located and managed within the Public Service Commission (PSC) structure. The EAP Manager reports to the Director of Staffing and Human Resource Planning. The PSC has supported the EAP program's gradual integration within all government departments and agencies, and works with the EAP Manager to promote the program. The Program has its own budget and has operated at 'status quo' for the past several years as is the case with many programs; this has limited the time available to respond to workplace education and early intervention, and the time and/or resources available to address other developmental needs (e.g., program promotion initiatives, maintenance and analysis of utilization data, professional development needs of counseling staff).

The EAP Advisory Committee is a vehicle which has representation from all stakeholder levels, including: the Government of Prince Edward Island; the Health System; the Department of Education; the Union of Public Sector Employees; the PEI Teachers’ Federation; the Canadian Union of Public Employees; the PEI Nurses Union; and the International Union of Operating Engineers. The Committee meets two to three times a year, and receives staff support from the EAP Manager and the administrative staff. The Advisory Committee's role is important in that it provides a forum for all stakeholders (EAP Manager/staff, PSC, unions) to come together to 'stay in touch' with the operational side of the program, and provide ongoing advice and support to program initiatives and directions.

1.6 Structure of Evaluation Report

The following sections of the evaluation report include: a description of the purpose and objectives of the evaluation; a description of the data collection approach and methodology; a summary of the best practice review results; a summary of the qualitative findings (interviews with EAP counselors, Advisory Committee members, HR managers, and EAP users); a summary of the survey findings and results; conclusions; and proposed recommendations.
2. Evaluation Approach

2.1 Purpose of Evaluation

Since its formation in 1990, the EAP Program has been evaluated twice; the findings from these evaluations confirmed widespread satisfaction with the Program, included recommendations to improve the Program’s overall operational efficiency, and resulted in the Program being established as a permanent Program within government. However, since the last evaluation in 1997, changing workforce demographics and the increasingly complexity of demands for public service from a diverse workforce continue to create an increasingly challenging work environment. It is important that the EAP continues to meet both employee and employer requirements.

The specific objectives of this evaluation include:

- To evaluate the EAP to determine if the current mandate, objectives, services and processes will continue to meet the future needs of the public service.
- To evaluate the EAP to determine if the program is successfully meeting the current employee and employer requirements.
  - Identify strengths in processes, service delivery quality and effectiveness in meeting the stated outcome of improved job performance.
  - Identify gaps and/or weaknesses in processes, service delivery quality and effectiveness in meeting the stated outcome of improved job performance.
- To review and comment on the current EAP Advisory Committee governance model, the EAP organization structure, and the reporting relationship to the Public Service Commission within the provincial government structure.
- To make recommendations for improvement to ensure that the EAP will continue to meet employee and employer requirements in the future, recognizing fiscal realities as well as the evolving work environment.

2.2 Evaluation Approach

The Atlantic Evaluation Group Inc. evaluation team utilized a participatory evaluation approach; the approach was designed to inform and involve key stakeholders in the evaluation process to the degree possible. An initial presentation to the EAP Advisory Committee outlined the evaluation objectives and methodology; and a second presentation outlined some of the preliminary evaluation results. In addition, members of the EAP Evaluation Steering Committee were consulted frequently on developing the specific data collection approach, and reviewing and approving the data collection instruments. A review of the final evaluation report draft was conducted with members of the EAP Evaluation Steering Committee prior to the report and its recommendations being finalized.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Best Practice Literature

A limited review of relevant reports, studies, and best practices approaches (focusing on the Canadian experience) was completed by Dr. Rick Csiernik. In addition, the PEI EAP Manager and staff completed a standard questionnaire about their service and the results were compared to a survey database from EAP programs in 133 other organizations maintained by Dr. Csiernik.
EAP Utilization Statistics

These statistics were provided by the EAP Program Manager and were summarized for the past five fiscal years (up to 2009/10; the year prior to the evaluation).

Qualitative Data Collection

With respect to the qualitative data collection process, a series of individual and groups interviews were held with key stakeholders involved in directing, managing, and/or delivering the EAP Program, several HR managers, and a number of employees who were users of the program. The following is a breakdown of the groups and the numbers interviewed.

- **EAP Program Stakeholders**: Twelve (12) persons were interviewed from this group, including: HR managers (6); PSC senior management (4); and representatives from unions (2).
- **EAP Counselors and staff**: Six (6) persons were interviewed, including: EAP counseling staff and Administrative Assistant (4); external (private) counselors (2).
- **Employees who used the EAP program**: Twelve (12) persons were interviewed in confidence; one person self-identified through the employee/staff survey; the other eleven (11) individuals were approached by the EAP counselors and subsequently agreed to be interviewed as part of the evaluation.

Quantitative Data Collection

The EAP program quantitative data was collected through an anonymous manager and employee survey (including deputy ministers, directors, managers, supervisors, and employees) that was circulated to all employees throughout the health, education and civil service sectors (to the extent that they could be reached). All managers and employees with a PEI public sector email address were emailed an invitation to participate in the survey with a link to an on-line survey. A reminder email was sent about two weeks later. Survey invitations were also sent via a paper cheque stub insert that invited participants to visit the on-line survey site to complete the survey. It also included a telephone number to call for assistance or to request a paper copy of the survey with a stamped, addressed return envelope. Paper surveys received by the consulting firm were entered into the on-line survey and immediately shredded. No reminder was sent via the cheque stub insert method. Three prize draws (one per sector) for a gift certificate were used as an incentive to increase the survey response rate. Only a limited number of demographic items were included on the survey to preserve anonymity of respondents. Furthermore, respondents had the option to choose ‘prefer not to say’ on several of the demographic items (excluding sector and whether they were a manager/supervisor or employee).

Forced-choice (check box) survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as proportions and differences between demographic subgroups were analyzed using simple inferential statistics such as chi-squared tests at an alpha level of 0.01. The open-ended (fill in the blank) type survey questions were coded into themes based on frequency of response and relevance to the evaluation issues.

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1 The alpha level of 0.01 was chosen instead of 0.05 due in part to the larger number of tests being performed (though a specific adjustment for experiment-wise alpha was not performed) and due to the fact that the large sample size for many comparisons rendered very small differences significant at alpha = 0.05.
2.4 Limitations

The limitations experienced in the evaluation of the EAP program included:

- Potential survey respondents who did not have a public sector email address had a lower likelihood of completing the survey because it required more effort to go on-line and type in the web address to complete the survey; there was no survey reminder as was the case with emailed invitations; and the cheque stub inserts were sent later than the emails due to the timing of cheque mailings resulting in a shorter time period to complete the survey. Nevertheless, efforts were made to give everyone the opportunity of participating in the survey.

- It is possible that users of EAP services were more likely to complete the survey than non-users, thus inflating estimates of awareness of, and need for, the program. Efforts made to stress the applicability of the survey to all employees and managers and use of survey incentives were intended to limit this potential bias.

- Users of EAP individual counseling that were interviewed were self-identified or were identified by EAP counselors and subsequently agreed to be contacted for the interview creating a potential bias toward the inclusion of more satisfied users in the interview process. This was counteracted to some degree by the inclusion of open-ended questions on the anonymous survey that was circulated to the entire PEI public sector.
3. Summary of Best Practice Literature Review

3.1 Characteristics of EAPs in Best Practice Database

The best practice review was conducted on a database that consists of respondents from all provinces and two territories though not from Canada’s newest territory Nunavut. The greatest number of responses came from Ontario (40%) which also has the largest population and greatest number of organizations in Canada while Prince Edward Island, the smallest province had only one (1%) reply as did the Northwest Territories. As well, there were 14 (9%) national organizations that returned the survey. Government organizations constituted one-quarter of the replies followed by manufacturing (16%), health care (13%) and education (13%). Of the databases 154 responses 100 (65%) were from the public sector. Ten (7%) of the respondents had fewer than 100 employees, 29 (19%) organizations employed between 100 and 500 persons while 21 (14%) had between 501 and 1,000 workers. Sixty-eight organizations employed between one thousand and five thousand persons (44%) while twelve (8%) had between five and ten thousand workers and nine (6%) had over ten thousand employees. The range of workforce sizes in the study was from seven to 60,000, with a mean of 3,144 and a median of 1,350 employees.

3.2 Key Findings

This review of EAP programs revealed that:

- Best Practice EAP Programs have:
  - a comprehensive program description including purpose, range of issues covered, important design principles (e.g., confidentiality)
  - well developed referral procedures and operating protocols
  - ongoing program promotion and program development features
  - a well-defined description of the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders

- Larger organizations (more than 5,000 employees) tend to have an internal EAP model (employing an internal coordinator and internal counselors)

- Key benefits of the internal model include:
  - not artificially ‘capping’ the number of counseling sessions
  - having higher utilization rates and being more likely to deal with substance abuse and work-related issues
  - having a better understanding of workplace dynamics and culture due to better organizational positioning (quadrants three and four of the integrated model of occupational assistance see Section 3.3)

- More and more organizations have moved to a ‘hybrid’ model (internal and external) to deal with fluctuations in demand or unique needs

- The existing literature and findings from the database clearly indicate that the delivery model can impact the nature of the service provided to employees, their families, and the organization
The ultimate solution for organizations committed to providing the best possible EAP service, would be to use a combined internal-external program. This could utilize a mix of resources including referral agents, union counselors, self-help groups, an EAP coordinator, and short-term counselling specialists integrated with external providers who work with long-term or very specific issues such as violence and trauma, compulsive behaviors, or identified substance abusers. Disadvantages inherent in both internal and external models could be minimized by using a dual pathway and thus finding a common ground between the two prominent factions within the EAP profession.

3.3 The Integrated Model of Occupational Assistance

Peer supports and self-help groups acted as the foundations for the development of the occupational assistance movement (Csiernik, 1993). As self-help evolved throughout the 20th Century from having primarily a treatment and normalization orientation to taking on a greater social change direction, it has played a central role in transforming the focus of the occupational assistance movement from tertiary to primary prevention. As well, formal employee participation in workplace decision-making is not a new concept as it has existed in a variety of forms for decades. Different organizational methods of enhancing employee participation in the workplace have emerged throughout the world. Some of the better known initiatives include:

- Total Quality Management (Deming 1938; 1950; Ishikawa, 1985; Juran and Gryna, Jr., 1970)
- Quality Control Circles or simply QC Circles (Crocker, Chiu, & Charney, 1984; Dewar, 1980)
- Theory Z of Management (Ouchi, 1981)
- Quality of Working Life (QWL) enterprises (Ferman, 1985; Giordano, 1992; Ingle & Ingle, 1983; Kolodny & van Beinum, 1983)
- The broader industrial democracy movement (Davies, 1979; Emery & Thorsrud, 1969; Obradovic & Dunn, 1978; Prasnikar, 1991)

The Integrated Model of Occupational Assistance draws upon the existing practice models of occupational assistance while placing a renewed importance upon self-help. Worker participation is incorporated within an ecological framework to create an organizational plane to complement the historical emphasis upon the individual worker. The proposed model consists of two dimensions. The first focuses upon the target. Individual wellness is balanced with organizational wellness, taking into account the needs of the range of stakeholders that exist in the immediate and extended workplace environment. The second axis is the method of intervention. It is divided into the categories of professional intervention and mutual aid/self-help. By combining both forms of assistance four quadrants are created allowing for a greater range of access points and prevention alternatives, as shown in Figure 1.
i. Professional - Individual Quadrant

The first quadrant of the Integrated Model of Occupational Assistance is the individual-professional intersection. It consists of activities that are or should be currently provided by the majority of main stream Employee Assistance Programs and workplace health promotion programs. These activities include ongoing health promotion programming together with an increased emphasis on the provision of counseling and preventative services to family members of employees and retirees. This inclusion is an acknowledgement of the fact that workplace stresses are brought home and that home stresses brought to work by employees further intensify organizational stresses. This interrelationship manifests itself at the worksite through decreased performance and productivity.

Highlighting the importance of the family within occupational assistance programming can be done in a variety of ways. Simple promotion activities such as sending information about the program to family members or sponsoring seminars and activities for families are standard mechanisms. Another option is actually changing the name of this component of occupational assistance. Organizations such as the Canadian Pacific Rail, the City of Saskatoon, MacMillan Bloedel and the Canadian Graphic Communications Workers Alliance have already changed the name of their EAPs to "Employee and Family Assistance Programs" (EFAPs).

Critical components of this quadrant include:

- one-to-one counseling by formally trained counseling professionals
- educational seminars and/or workshops to the workforce (problem focused)
- 24 hour program crisis access/consultation

[See Table 1 on page 12 for a listing of all the components of each of the four quadrants.]

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ii. Mutual Aid/Self-Help - Individual Quadrant

Mutual aid initiatives have a greater potential to span the gap between wellness and traditional one-to-one counseling than do professional, individually-focused counseling services. It has been stated by various EAP stakeholder groups that peer social support could be the best potential bridge between health promotion, prevention programming, and Employee Assistance Programming.

While the issue of confidentiality will always arise when discussing EAPs, this has not been a hindrance to many existing programs with very active self-help components (Bisgona, 1992; Csiernik, 2002; Eisman, 1991; Grant, 1992; Windsor, 1988). Self-help can be introduced through a variety of means. If there is uncertainty on how a mutual aid initiative will be received by a workforce, it would be judicious to initially begin with a physical health related or psycho-educational focused group. Treatment orientated groups could be considered if a specific request occurs from members of the workforce, or, of course, if a group arises spontaneously. For many organizations, on-site mutual aid/self-help groups will be much easier to support if they are focused upon wellness themes or upon issues of daily living such as child care or dealing with the demands of ageing parents.

Critical components of this quadrant include:

- use of peer supports (union counselors, referral agents, peer resource teams and/or peer advisors) to aid employees access appropriate forms of assistance and/or to provide on-going social support
- use of community-based self-help groups as an adjunct to individual assistance

iii. Professional - Organizational Quadrant

The third quadrant now moves occupational counseling into a new realm. It offers increased possibilities for organization-wide primary prevention and more proactive initiatives including acting as mediators between individuals and between work units in an alternative-dispute resolution process. The activities within this quadrant recognize that workplace health does not simply relate to employees’ engaging in healthy behaviors but also includes making the work environment healthier. This would enhance the probability that both individual risk factors and broader environmental and structural issues would be integrated into program undertakings.

This quadrant also introduces the idea that occupational assistance can and should enter into the broader context of policy change and advocacy beyond the workplace. There is a place for workplace wellness to be discussed and debated at societal and political levels. While the immediate impact of this aspect of the model may be minimal, in the long term it could be the most important dimension in creating not only well workplaces but also healthier communities. Advocacy efforts may come from researchers or professional associations as well as from groups with vested interests in the workplace. Examples of these are Chambers of Commerce, the Canadian Labour Congress and government mandated health and safety associations such as the Industrial Accident Prevention Association (IAPA) along with professional associations such as the Canadian Association of Social Workers.

Critical individual components of this quadrant include:

- provision of worksite wide health promotion, safety and/or critical incident awareness and related wellness education programs (prevention focus)
- enhancing the health of work units through the provision of technical assistance including mediation or conflict-resolution services on both individual and organizational issues
iv. Mutual Aid/Self-Help - Organizational Quadrant

The fourth segment of the model is the organization-mutual aid/self-help dimension. Programming arising from this quadrant reflects the needs of labour and management to work conjointly to define, identify, and diagnose organizationally created problems. The two groups need to work together to find and implement solutions that can counter organizationally-produced reductions in both productivity and wellness. There are two primary options for these types of support groups; either broad organization-wide groups open to all employees or groups organized along departmental or work unit lines. The organizational culture will be the predominant factor in determining whether either or both types of groups emerge. Training and education on what teams are, which is rarely done prior to implementation, how to use them, and their strengths and limits would be essential steps in properly developing the goals identified in this quadrant. Beginning the process by providing training would be much preferable to simply telling employees that they were being placed in teams and expecting them to know not only how to function in this new manner but also how to function more efficiently. The education process that precedes this dimension could be conducted by peers or by professionals internal or external to the workplace, as previously discussed in the professional/organizational quadrant.

Critical individual components of this quadrant include:

- team building exercises and activities to educate workers about expectations, rights and responsibilities of being a team or group member
- development of, or assistance with, work unit support groups to decrease work related stress and to act as problem solving and/or peer social support groups

3.4 Examining the PEI PSC Employee Assistance Program

Of the 20 components of the Integrated Model of Occupational Assistance, the Public Sector Commission of Prince Edward Island’s Employee Assistance Program currently offers 13 (65.0%) (see Table 1). This includes six of nine (66.7%) from the Professional - Individual quadrant, three of four (75.0%) of the Mutual Aid/Self-Help - Individual quadrant, three of four (75.0%) of the Professional - Organizational quadrant, and one of three from the Mutual Aid/Self-Help - Organizational quadrant. For comparative purposes Table 1 also presents the percentage of the 133 EAPs included in the best practice review that provided each of these to the workforce and the workplace.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Public Service Commission of Prince Edward Island EAP compared to a national sample.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PEI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional - Individual Quadrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) one-to-one counseling by formally trained counseling professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) crisis intervention, brief solution-focused counseling and case management for employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) crisis intervention, brief solution-focused counseling or case management for family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) educational seminars and/or workshops to the workforce (problem focused)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v) voluntary health screenings or wellness appraisals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi) self-care activities (library, reading materials with a prevention focus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii) critical incident debriefings conducted by professional counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii) 24 hour program crisis access/consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix) follow up for employees absent from work for an extended period of time from the workplace to inquire if any additional, non-financial, assistance is required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual Aid/Self-Help - Individual Quadrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x) use of peer supports (union counselors, referral agents, peer resource teams and/or peer advisors) to help employees access the appropriate forms of assistance and/or to provide ongoing social support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi) use of community-based self-help groups as an adjunct to individual assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>xii) on-site self-help groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>xiii) respond to critical incident situations with trained peer debriefers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional - Organizational Quadrant</td>
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<tr>
<td>ivx) provision of worksite wide health promotion, safety and/or critical incident awareness and related wellness education programs (prevention focus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>vx) provide consultation and training for ongoing organizational intervention, development and change including team-building initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>vix) enhance the health of work units through the provision of technical assistance including mediation or conflict-resolution services on both individual and organizational issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>vii) participate in EFAP groups external to the workplace for EFAP advocacy related issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual Aid/Self-Help - Organizational Quadrant</td>
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<tr>
<td>viii) team building exercises and activities to educate workers about expectations, rights and responsibilities of being a team or group member</td>
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<tr>
<td>ix) development of, or assistance with, mutual aid group(s) open to employees that examine stressors both internal and external to the workplace affecting individual and group wellness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x) development of, or assistance with, work unit support groups to decrease work related stress and to act as problem solving and/or peer social support groups</td>
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4 It should be noted that while Occupational Health and Safety training and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) are offered by the PEI government, though not directly through EAP, EAP staff do participate in the management of CISM and provide CISM debriefs. The EAP does offer some workplace wellness workshops.
Of the seven areas not currently being offered through the auspices of the EAP, only two are offered by the majority of EAPs from across Canada used in the baseline data, one from the Professional - Individual quadrant, the second from the Professional - Organizational quadrant. Twenty-four hour access to EAP services, either crisis counseling or consultation is provided by 71.4% of EAPs whereas slightly over one-half of EAPs provide worksite-wide health promotion, safety and/or critical incident awareness and related wellness education programs with a prevention focus. The remaining areas that are also not widely offered nationally are:

- Voluntary health screenings or wellness appraisals (15.9%)
- Follow up for employees absent from work for an extended period of time from the workplace to inquire if any additional, non-financial, assistance is required (20.5%)
- On-site self-help groups (15.9%)
- Team-building exercises and activities to educate workers about expectations, rights and responsibilities of being a team or group member (23.9%)
- Development of, or assistance with, mutual aid group(s) open to employees that examine stressors both internal and external to the workplace affecting individual and group wellness (20.5%)

It should also be noted that along with offering services that the majority of Canadian EAPs do provide, the Public Sector Commission of Prince Edward Island’s Employee Assistance Program demonstrates leadership in four areas, with particular strengths in the organizational sector of service provision:

- Responding to critical incident situations with trained peer debriefers (39.8%)
- Providing consultation and training for ongoing organizational intervention, development and change including team-building initiatives (33.0%)
- Enhancing the health of work units through the provision of technical assistance including mediation or conflict-resolution services on both individual and organizational issues (35.2%)
- Development of, or assistance with, work unit support groups to decrease work-related stress and to act as problem solving and/or peer social support groups (28.4%)

Additional areas of strength of the PEI PSC program are that it has a formalized policy and a monitoring system as well as a formalized critical incident response protocol. In addition, a new employee orientation exists and is supported with regular promotion of the EAP and specific training for supervisors and managers, though not for labour representatives. A major growth opportunity would be expansion into wellness programming, a component of nearly two-thirds of Canadian EAPs.

3.5 Examining the PEI PSC Employee Assistance Program Policy

Table 2 summarizes the items included in the Canadian database in terms of comprehensiveness of the various characteristics using the EAP Policy Best Practices guidelines, and compares them to the Public Service Commission of Prince Edward Island’s EAP policy based upon the EAP handbook found on the PSC website. The Public Service Commission of Prince Edward Island’s EAP policy is a clearly presented document, easy to read and follow. It scored marginally higher than the average score on the Canadian database, 59.6% versus 58.7%. The Public Service Commission of Prince Edward Island’s EAP policy had greater values for 16 of the 28 scored items while having lower ratings on only eight. The policy’s introductory statement of principles was slightly stronger than the average Canadian policy while the roles section was slightly below average. The strongest component of the policy was the procedures section which scored 81.7% versus 56.8% of those in the database. However, in terms of program development, which is the weakest section in most EAP policies, the Public Service Commission of Prince Edward Island’s EAP policy scored only 14/50 (versus 23.7 for the average Canadian policy) being below average on four of the five items and above average only upon publicizing the program to the workforce (7/10 versus 5/10).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: EAP Policy Scores: Comparing National Findings to the Public Service Commission of PEI's EAP Policy. 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Included N=80 (%)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Union and Management Support / Endorsement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range of Problems Covered by EAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidentiality of Program</td>
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<td>Anonymity of Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefit Provision</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. PROCEDURES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary access to program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal referrals to program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal referrals to program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of Supervisors/Stewards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation of Workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicizing Program to Workforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publicizing Program to Families/Family Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Liaison (EAP groups, community services &amp; related agencies)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. ROLES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>EAP committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees Group (non-unionized)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stewards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referral Agents/Union Counselors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Resources (personnel/industrial relations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Department (OHN/Occupational Physician)</td>
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<td><strong>Sub-Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5. OVERALL DOCUMENT CRITIQUE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
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<td>Thoroughness</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Thus, in the process of EAP renewal it is recommended that the EAP committee revisit the EAP policy outlined in its EAP Handbook using the best practices guidelines presented above to enhance the existing policy. Specific items the EAP committee should consider including in a revised policy document are:

- Limits of confidentiality and a discussion of anonymity
- The formal training of supervisors and stewards within the scope of EAP practice
- How the workforce will be initially and regularly informed about the EAP
- How the program will be publicized and promoted to families
- The interaction and collaboration that staff will have with external EAP organizations in terms of affiliations and professional development
- Formal inclusion of the role of non-unionized groups within the EAP
- Formal discussion of the role of human resources within the EAP

Upon program renewal and revision of the policy document to reflect the agreed upon changes and updating of the program, current labour and management representatives should re-sign the policy adding their signatures to those who initiated the program in 1990, indicating their ongoing support for this joint initiative.
4. Summary of Data Collection Findings and Results

4.1 Program Utilization Data

A five-year profile (2005/06 to 2009/10 fiscal years) of EAP program utilization data was obtained from the EAP Manager; the following series of figures provide an overview of key utilization trends and results.

The number of new EAP individual counseling clients varied somewhat by year but remained in the range of 346 to 422 per year over the five-year period, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. New EAP Individual Counseling Cases by Sector.

![Figure 2](image)

*Note: The higher number in the health sector in 2007-08 was attributed to health system reorganization.*

The number of referrals made by EAP to external (private) counselors increased somewhat to 108 or 109 in the past two fiscal years for which data was available, as shown in Figure 3. Some of these clients may have received EAP services, such as initial assessments, prior to being referred.
Figure 3. External Referrals for Individual Counseling.

Note: There is some overlap between the number of external referrals and the number of counseling cases above as some clients were assessed by EAP and later referred.

The type of referrals to EAP for individual counseling were primarily self-referrals until 2007-08, as shown in Figure 4. While self-referrals remained the majority of referrals, informal referrals by managers/supervisors became more frequent in the past two years, in part due to manager/supervisor training (see figure footnote).

Figure 4. Type of Referral for Individual Counseling.

Note: The increasing numbers of informal referrals may be due in part to recent supervisor-assisted referral training and in part to different methods of counting referrals over time.
The most common presenting reasons for attending EAP counseling from 2005-06 to 2009-10, according to program utilization records, were:

1. Marital/relationship issues
2. Anxiety
3. Family/children issues
4. Other personal issues such as addictions, grief, and depression
5. Job or career issues

Finally, the other aspect of EAP services is described in Figure 5. Though limited by demands placed on it for individual counseling, the EAP Manager and staff have completed a number of information and wellness workshops each year.

Figure 5. Total Number of EAP Workshops (EAP Information Sessions and Wellness Workshops) Offered by Sector.

*Note:* 6 of the 2009-10 Civil Service sessions were supervisor-assisted referral training.

*Note:* The higher number of sessions in the health sector in 2005-06 was due to health system reorganization.
4.2 Stakeholder, Key Informant, and EAP User Interviews

Summary of Qualitative Evaluation Data

The qualitative data collection exercise involved interviews with individuals from three groups of key informants. The list of groups to be interviewed was determined in consultation with the EAP Evaluation Steering Committee.

The Groups Interviewed included:

- **EAP Program Stakeholders**: there were twelve (12) persons interviewed from this group, including: HR managers (6); PSC Senior Management (4); and representatives from unions (2).
- **EAP Counselors and staff**: there were six (6) persons interviewed, including: EAP counseling staff and Admin. Assistant (4); external counselors (2).
- **Employees who used the EAP program**: there were twelve (12) persons interviewed; one person self-identified through the employee/staff survey; the other eleven (11) individuals were approached by the EAP counselors and subsequently agreed to be interviewed as part of the evaluation.

The Key Issues Explored

EAP stakeholders and EAP counselors were invited to respond to questions related to three main areas regarding the EAP program; the confidential counseling service; the workplace education and wellness part of the program; and program promotion, program operation, and governance issues.

EAP employees who used the program were interviewed with respect to their experience with the counseling service only.

In each instance, a structured interview guide was developed outlining the questions to be explored with each group. These interview guides were reviewed and approved by the EAP Steering Committee. A copy of each of the interview guides is attached in the appendices.

The following section of the report provides a summary of the observations, comments, and suggestions provided by all three levels of respondents.

1. Overall Awareness of Program

Both stakeholders and EAP counselors indicated that there was a general level of awareness of EAP, and that it offers confidential counseling for employees. However, there are still ‘misconceptions’ about the true purpose and nature of the program and how it is intended to assist employees, and the workplace generally. In addition, there was lower level of awareness regarding the fact that family members are also eligible to receive counseling, and that the EAP program offers workplace education and wellness (early intervention and prevention) sessions as part of its mandate. A number of stakeholders also observed that while the program has been in place for a long time, they perceived that its overall profile and visibility tended to be lower, especially for newer employees.

‘....for the most part people seem generally aware of program, but occasionally there are instances where an employee who is experiencing a situation where EAP could help.... but the person either doesn't see EAP as being able to help....or doesn't see their situation as being the sort of thing that EAP could help with....’ (Stakeholder)

‘.... a lot of staff within the system are not aware of it....or some feel it is just deals with things like addictions issues... so it carries a bit of a stigma....and some are still wary of confidentiality...’ (Stakeholder)
EAP counselors noted that employees who used the service often remark that, prior to receiving counseling services, they really didn't know much about EAP services. Counselors believe that the program needs more profile and visibility, more efforts are needed to distribute information about what is offered, and what the benefits are. Also many people are not aware that EAP is available to family members.

Employees who used EAP services also indicated that, while many employees may be vaguely aware that such a program exists, knowing more precisely what EAP offers is not immediately clear, and locating the contact information may not be easy for everyone.

‘....the phone number was hard to find in the phone book.....and it is not clear that it is a counseling  service for employees.....maybe have it listed in the general listings under EAP - Private Counseling service - or something like that....’ (Employee)

‘.....a lot of people have heard about EAP but don’t really know how easy and convenient it is to access....and I don’t think people realize that these are top-notch counselors that can really help....’ (Employee)

‘....the program needs to be marketed as a more proactive service....it is now mostly a reactive service (after someone or some workplace is in crises)....it definitely needs to have a more positive marketing approach....’ (Employee)

2. Confidential Counseling Services

With respect to confidential counseling services, there was strong positive feedback expressed by all respondents for this part of the EAP program. The perception among all stakeholders interviewed indicated that the counseling service is well utilized, well received, and the sense of user satisfaction appears high. The service was seen as easy to access, and the existing referral protocols seem to be working well. EAP counselors are viewed as professional, well experienced, very dedicated to their work, and providing an important ‘add value’ service to the public sector.

‘.....EAP is an important resource to staff and managers within the system....’ (Stakeholder)

Employees who had used EAP services indicated that they self-referred to the program, and for the most part they were at least somewhat aware of the program prior to their using it. It was easy to access in terms of knowing where and who to call, and the wait time for the first contact session was very reasonable; for most it was within 1-2 weeks. In all cases, users worked with an internal EAP counselor, and their level of satisfaction with the service was very high. Users felt listened to, supported, and helped to develop practical steps to deal with their concerns and issues.

‘.....without the EAP service and the support I received - I may not have been able to stay working....’ (Employee)

‘.....it was very much a life-changing experience.... I’m a better person, a better employee, and a better parent ... I feel this is a direct result of my EAP counseling experience....’ (Employee)

‘..... a really good service...helped me through a difficult time....nothing but a positive experience for me...nothing but good things to say....’ (Employee)

Stakeholders generally indicated that they believe that privacy and confidentiality regarding the service is well maintained. However, they indicated that those employees who have never used the program may have some hesitancy regarding the issue of confidentiality, and there is some ambiguity regarding confidentiality and the sharing of information in the case of formal referrals.
‘..... the program is solid and well run.....confidentiality is solid and well maintained....I have heard no anxiety or concerns expressed regarding confidentiality....’ (Stakeholder)

‘.... I am very positive about this.... I feel that both the staff and the system have done everything possible to protect privacy and confidentiality ....I am very confident in and impressed with the professionalism shown by staff....’ (Stakeholder)

‘.... I have heard that some staff worry about the confidentiality of service..... especially before they first go.....however once they have that first contact they are reassured and confident....’ (Stakeholder)

‘.....some are concerned about confidentiality....especially as to whether information is shared with their supervisor or manager.....it’s important that this point is clear.....workers need to be reassured that it is confidential.... managers don't get feedback on them when they go for counseling....or if they do in what circumstances....this needs to be clarified....’ (Stakeholder)

EAP counselors indicated that client privacy and confidentiality is of paramount importance, and counselors are committed to ensuring that it is respected and maintained. Upon first contact with a new client, this issue is discussed and the client is reassured of the confidentiality of the service. In addition, the main EAP office is in an 'out-of-the-way' location, there is a separate entrance and waiting area for EAP clients, and a separate entrance for those who work in other parts of the building. In other parts of the province where counseling services are provided, the location is private as well (e.g., an office in a church).

All EAP counselors indicated that, once the client has made contact with the service, they are fully confident that their issues will be held private and confidential. They have “not heard a concern or a complaint about this over the years in working with the program.”

Counselors did note that the issue of confidentiality can become confusing or ambiguous in instances where there has been a formal referral by management. A formal referral to EAP involves an instance where a supervisor or manager has concluded that an EAP intervention with the employee is necessary to help address either attitude or behavior issues that are negatively impacting the employee's performance in the workplace. Ideally, it is hoped that the manager has already consulted with the EAP counselors and there is a sense that all other avenues have been followed to encourage the employee to self-refer. In instances like these, some managers feel that they should be entitled to feedback on the employee’s 'progress.'

These situations place the EAP counselor role in a somewhat difficult situation; client confidentiality must be maintained to ensure the integrity of the program, at the same time the manager is attempting to deal with the employee's workplace job responsibilities and obligations. While these situations are not numerous, EAP counselors indicated that this is an area in which they must ensure that client confidentially regarding the counseling intervention is maintained. While counselors can indicate that the employee did follow through on the formal referral (he/she is attending counseling sessions), the manager or supervisor is not entitled to any feedback or information regarding the actual counseling sessions.

‘.....in cases where there is a formal referral, managers and supervisors at times feel they have a right to client progress reports.....we need to re-visit this with HR managers from time to time ....in addiction type referrals there is a policy that clearly outlines what information is to be shared between EAP and the employer...... but this is the only area where this is clearly spelled out....it's an on-going education piece with managers and supervisors....’ (EAP Counselor)
There were also some concerns regarding dealing with the issue of confidentiality in those few instances where there may be other processes 'in play' involving the EAP client and the employer (e.g., a labour grievance).

‘.....the existing process around confidentiality works well for the most part....however, there are situations where a EAP client may be involved in another issue with the employer such as a labour grievance where other staff are trying to seek a solution....in cases like this the boundaries around confidentiality and privacy may be too rigid....’ (Stakeholder)

Again, from a confidentiality perspective, some stakeholders wondered how EAP clients, or employees generally, feel about the location of the main EAP counseling office at Burns Ave. in Charlottetown. While, on one level, the office is located 'away from the main government offices downtown,' the building where it is located is still a 'busy' place (IT staff offices, a staff training room). EAP staff have taken steps to ensure privacy as much as possible (divider in reception area, blinds covering training room windows). Some stakeholders asked whether people still feel uncomfortable with this set up?

‘.....I sometimes wonder what more could be done regarding confidentiality and the location of current office....EAP has taken steps to provide as much privacy as possible in the situation....it this enough?....’ (Stakeholder)

In all instances, employees interviewed who had used EAP reported that they were very confident in, and comfortable with, the confidential nature of the service. A few noted that there was some initial anxiety regarding the confidentiality issue, but they were then completely comfortable after their first contact with the counselor.

‘.....I was 110% comfortable with confidentiality....’ (Employee)

‘.....was 100% sure of confidentiality.... you were absolutely sure that anything you talked about was not going to be used against you....’ (Employee)

‘....at first I wasn’t sure....a civil servant going to counseling to a service where the counselors are employed by government.....but once I met with the counselor....I had no worries after that point....’ (Employee)

3. Needs and Demands - Program Utilization

The demands on the individual counseling part of the service have increased in recent years, both in terms of volume and the types of presenting issues. Stakeholders indicated that today’s workplace is one of ongoing change driven by the introduction of new service mandates, new service methodologies, new information and communication technologies, and new or changing public expectations and demands. Add to this the intergenerational and cultural dynamics involving an aging workforce, younger workers and managers, and immigrant workers, and one can get an appreciation of the need for, and the impact on, the EAP program. Given this context, stakeholders generally believe that the counseling needs have become more complex, and consequently the demands on the time and skills of EAP counselors will be greater in terms volume (more cases) and complexity.

‘.....there is a younger generation of employees and managers....some have moved into managerial and supervisory roles with limited experience.....also many younger employees are starting their families and are feeling pressures as new parents....’ (Stakeholder)

‘.... people are generally more aware of mental health stressors and more aware of the impacts of stress....they are more open to seeking help....this will impact on EAP as time goes on....’ (Stakeholder)

‘.....the workplace has become multi-generational and this results in a certain level of tension and conflict...there are differences in work values, job expectations, communication styles....’ (Stakeholder)
EAP counselors indicate that their workloads are steadily increasing, and the nature of issues that many employees are dealing with has resulted in a heavier and more complex counseling workload, which in turn sometimes results in longer wait times for new referrals.

‘.....we are seeing different types of issues.... more couples and more family counseling requests.... these type of cases have become a much bigger part of the workload.... families are dealing with children and adolescents with special needs or other behavior issues, coping issues...... families also need help in connecting up with other family and community resources.....’ (EAP Counselor)

‘.....there is a younger workforce, younger families with a lot on their plate....there are more family and workplace stressors and people are looking for strategies to better cope....’ (EAP Counselor)

‘.....there are more couples issues and more demand for marital counseling ....more family issues, children and young people dealing with addiction issues, school issues....the nature of the counseling work has become more multi-layered and complex in recent years....’ (EAP Counselor)

‘....there are times where it seems that workers simply become exhausted with the emotional impact of workplace change, and this is reflected in such things as increase in sick time, low morale, workplace tension and stress......’ (EAP Counselor)

‘....other counseling service agencies such as Community Mental Health have longer client waiting times...there are times when these agencies suggest that the client go to EAP if they are eligible....’ (EAP Counselor)

4. Referral Protocols

The majority of EAP users are self-referred; and the stakeholders indicated that the existing referral protocol are working; as far as they could judge, there were no barriers or difficulties for users wanting to access the program. However, HR managers indicated that there can be confusion with respect to the referral process with new managers coming into the system. There is always a certain level of turnover in the manager ranks, and not all new managers are necessarily fully aware of the EAP, the nature of the service, and the practice around self-referrals, and formal manager referrals.

In particular, new managers need to be aware of the protocols and expectations regarding confidentiality once a formal referral is made by a manager to EAP. There is a clear policy in place regarding referrals for an addictions assessment, but in other manager referrals, the issue regarding information sharing practice and expectations is ambiguous and needs to be formally clarified.

‘..... there is always a turnover of managers.... there is a need to do regular EAP sessions with new managers to ensure that they are aware of EAP, the confidential nature of the services, and practices around information sharing .....’ (Stakeholder)

EAP Counselors indicated that referral mechanisms and protocols generally work well, and there are no barriers or issues regarding the referral process itself. However, they are concerned about the program’s profile and visibility within the public sector generally. In the distant past, EAP was profiled as part of the PSC orientation program, but this program has not been in use for awhile. There hasn’t been enough time and resources placed on the promotion and marketing of the program in recent years. However, in January 2011, the PSC orientation program has been restarted including a component on EAP.

‘....it’s important that managers and supervisors know about EAP and how the program can benefit their staff and their workplace....it’s important that they know there are things they might be able to do as a manager to become more aware of personal and workplace stressors, and be in a position to address issues earlier, rather than having the situation to go into a crises stage....’ (EAP Counselor)
5. Level of User Satisfaction

While stakeholders acknowledged that they are not in a position to directly know about or judge user satisfaction levels, some did offer their perceptions.

‘....almost on a weekly basis, I hear positive comments about the program and the counselors from the managers in the system....’ (HR Manager)

‘.... I believe that user satisfaction is high....with the exception of 1-2 situations over the years.... I have not heard any critical complaints by clients regarding the quality of service, the timeliness of services....' (Senior Manager)

‘....the EAP staff proved to be very helpful during times of major organizational changes....their availability to provide individual counseling and group session support at these stressful times was critical....' (Stakeholder)

EAP Counselors indicated that, in their view, EAP program user satisfaction is high; clients themselves often tell the counselors that the service was helpful and that they felt listened to and supported. In addition, workshop participants (EAP information sessions and wellness workshops) are invited to complete a workshop evaluation form; more than 80% of the clients who complete the evaluation form express their satisfaction with the service.

Interviews with employees who have used EAP services confirm the above perceptions.

‘.....the EAP staff are very experienced and skilled....and are able to deal with many types of emotional and personal issues.... it’s very humbling to know that this level of professional skill is available to us....’ (Employee)

‘.....I have recommended this service to others many times over the years that I have known about it...' (Employee)

‘.....it is a great service, great staff, a very welcoming and supportive place, great books and resource library...’ (Employee)

In three instances, a member of the user’s family was also involved in receiving EAP services; all three users indicated that this was a very positive and helpful experience for these family members.

6. Group Education and Wellness Sessions

Group education and wellness was also viewed as important with most stakeholders indicating that there is a definite need, but it comes down to a time and resource issue, with individual counseling the priority service. While EAP counselors continue to offer a limited amount of workplace education type sessions, some stakeholders indicated that there is a need to provide more training and support to managers across the system to increase their capacity to better assess and intervene with workplace dynamics at an early point (prevention).

Workplace education and wellness workshops have been a part of the EAP program mandate since the inception of the program. However, delivering on this has always been an issue of EAP staff time and capacity. The priority service is individual counseling, and if the need and demand is high, this is where staff time and resources are committed. In recent years this has been the case. While the need for workplace education and wellness workshops is evident, and EAP staff do respond to requests when time is available, there is limited room for staff to develop and expand in this area.
‘....this type of need exists....workplace assessments, wellness sessions, and prevention work in the workplace helps to create a healthier workplace .... but it is a resource issue....’ (Stakeholder)

‘..... staff need wellness information, resources and supports to help them better deal with work-life balance issues...to help them better cope with workplace stressors......’ (Stakeholder)

Generally, stakeholders indicated that workplace education and wellness workshops are very valuable, and can serve an early intervention role in addressing emerging workplace conflicts and tensions. Using the workshop model to provide new information, coping strategies and skills can be a 'normalizing' event and provides a positive message that today's work environments can be demanding, and there are times where all of us need to develop new strategies and skills to ensure healthy work-life balance.

Stakeholders believe that it is important that this work continue at some level, and that HR managers and EAP staff should explore strategies on how to accomplish this. In particular, efforts need to be made to work more directly with the managers across the system on a number of levels. In addition to providing managers with the general EAP orientation and manager referral training sessions, stakeholders perceived a need to develop a broader series of manager training modules specific to managing workplace stressors more effectively as a preventative measure. Some of these sessions might include: a general session dealing with understanding workplace dynamics; skill development in workplace assessment, conflict resolution and mediation; and recognizing and identifying the early signs of stress. The sessions could be customized by sector (health, education, civil service) depending on the needs and issues relevant to each area.

‘.... we need to concentrate on building the capacity and confidence of HR and mid-level managers to deal more effectively with stressors in the workplace, and to address workplace issues at an earlier point....we need to do more of this type of training....’ (Stakeholder)

While they offer as many workshops as possible, EAP counselors acknowledged that this is an area of unmet need. The demand for counseling services remains high, and this limits the amount of time EAP staff have to prepare for, and deliver, education and wellness workshops to worksites on a regular or consistent basis.

‘....this is a gap.... more could be done in this area.... staff in many worksites are hungry for new information and skills that would help then both personally and in the work place......’ (EAP Counselor)

‘.....when we have done workshops in the past such as conflict resolution, participants often say they would like a more 'in-depth' experience.....they would like more time to better understand the issues, and develop skills to better manage conflicts....’ (EAP Counselors)

‘.....some of the workshops requested include stress management, work-life balance, and the workshop evaluations are usually very positive....’ (EAP Counselors)

7. Promotion of Program

Initiatives are undertaken periodically to promote the EAP program (e.g., information on website, brochures, newsletter inserts, presentations to HR managers, table at PEITF Annual Convention). However, these efforts tend to be offered mainly in response to inquiries, rather than the result of a well-developed promotion and communication strategy. Many stakeholders perceived there to be a general lack of awareness among front-line staff, and to some extent managers as well, with regard to the EAP program, how it can be accessed, what services are provided, and the privacy and confidential issue. [It should be noted that the survey results outlined in the next section show a very high level of awareness of EAP and confidential counseling with somewhat lower awareness among newer employees and lower awareness of specific aspects of EAP services.] There needs to be a more proactive strategy to promote the program; i.e., what it is, how it can help, how it can be accessed, and the professional credentials and experience of EAP counselors.
Stakeholders indicated that ongoing promotion of the EAP program is important to ensure that the program's profile and visibility are maintained in the minds of employees and managers across the system. There should be a promotional strategy that is 'rolled out' annually; it should include: orientation sessions with key managers and supervisors; bulletin type inserts in various union newsletters, updated information posters and flyers; electronic updates sent out to the 'managers forums;' and an updated website that is linked to all websites of government departments and agencies, as well as union websites. Furthermore, stakeholders suggested using GroupWise to target updates and other program initiatives to members of the Leadership Forum, HR managers, school administrators, health managers and other groups. Finally, it was suggested to place the EAP phone number on GroupWise so that when a person types in EAP, the EAP phone number comes up.

EAP counselors acknowledge that more needs to be done to promote the EAP within public sector generally. In their view the program has limited visibility. Over the years there have been efforts to promote the program, but there has never been a well developed and sustained promotion strategy for the program.

Developing and implementing a promotional strategy requires more dedicated time from the EAP Manager. However, because of the current demand for individual counseling services, and the need to keep waiting times for new clients to a minimum, EAP managers have always had to take a strong clinical role to meet the demand. The consequence of this is that the EAP Manager has limited time and resources to devote to the management side of the program (e.g., program promotion, monitoring and analyzing workload trends, and developing strategies to address workplace education and wellness needs).

All EAP counselors indicated that increasing the profile and visibility of the program is important, and they offered several suggestions as to how this could be accomplished:

- Update the EAP portion of the PSC staff orientation program, and ensure that EAP staff are available to assist when the sessions are being offered.
- On a once-a-year basis, have the EAP Manager deliver a series of 'introducing you to EAP' sessions with key groups within the system (e.g., Leadership Forum, HR managers group, Board of Directors of various public sector unions, workshops at annual conventions of public sector workers).
- Develop a more informative and interactive EAP website; provide more information; current happenings, upcoming events; explore the potential of the new social media tools.
- Develop more up-to-date program promotional materials (brochures, posters, bookmarks, fridge magnets), and have them made available and widely distributed to public sector employees at all levels through unions, placing them in public areas at worksites, and other means.

8. Program Budget

Generally speaking the EAP has operated with a 'status quo' budget for the past several years, as has many government programs. In the view of some stakeholders, this has limited the capacity to further develop and strengthen the program. The priority focus has been meeting new demand for counseling services, and this has
limited the time available to respond to workplace education and early intervention, and the time and/or resources available to address other developmental needs (i.e., program promotion initiatives, maintenance and analysis of utilization data, professional development needs of counseling staff). In addition, the program has a limited travel budget; with counselors traveling to both Prince and Kings counties (O’Leary, Summerside and Montague) on a regular basis, and increasing travel costs, there will be growing pressure on the travel budget.

There has never been designated money in the budget for professional development of EAP counselors, but the PSC has taken advantage of general government training funds and EAP counselors have maintained the training requirements for their professional designations. In the past, government has suggested that unions might assist with professional development dollars (and one union has helped in the past), but generally their view is that the EAP is a government program, and government should acknowledge the importance of the need for professional development and fund it.

'.....there is a future concern regarding travel costs to other delivery sites.....both in terms of travel costs and travel time.....' (Stakeholder)

'.....there are no dollars for professional development....EAP counselors should be provided support to add to their counseling knowledge base and skills.....there should be dollars in the budget to support this....' (Stakeholder)

The EAP Manager indicated that the program’s operational budget has essentially remained the same for the past number of years, and while this is a positive thing on one level, there is very little, if any, additional resources to address much needed program management and program development issues.

As noted earlier, the primary demand on the EAP Manager’s time is (and has been since the program’s inception) the counseling function. This is important because there is a need to keep waiting times to a minimum (1-2 weeks) for new referrals, plus there is a need for a male counselor to be available. As the scope of, and demands on, the program have grown, there are limited dollars for staff travel to the satellite counseling offices, limited dollars for the promotion and marketing of the program, and no dollars for professional development for EAP counselors.

'.....the operational budget has not been increased for years.....there is a limited amount of dollars for things like travel, the marketing and the promotion of the program, and professional development....' (EAP Manager)

9. Governance

Stakeholders agreed that having a well-developed governance structure in place is important. Most stakeholders indicated that the existing governance structure generally works well. The EAP Advisory Committee is a vehicle which has representation from all stakeholder levels - unions, EAP staff, PSC, and HR management; the Committee meets two-three times a year, and receives staff support from the EAP Manager and the EAP administrative staff. Members of the Advisory Committee who were interviewed indicated that Committee’s structure (who’s represented around the table), role (advisory, advocacy and support), and operation is generally suitable to them. It provides them an opportunity to ‘stay in the loop’ regarding the program, as well as provide the opportunity to ask questions about, or provide input into, program operation issues.

'.....yes, the Advisory Committee has an important and positive role....it brings together EAP staff, PSC management, and representatives from unions and government agencies and....it provides an opportunity for input, feedback and discussion regarding the operation of the program.....' (Stakeholder)

Some stakeholders wondered if, periodically, the Committee should engage itself in ‘more in-depth’ discussion and reflection about 'longer-term' questions and issues.
'......perhaps there is the potential to take the discussion further.....maybe once-a-year be involved in a future directions planning exercise....where is the program now, what are the new challenges, where does the program need to go...?' (Stakeholder)

Other stakeholders wondered about the continuity and consistency of Committee membership, and whether there is a need to provide new Committee members with a more formal orientation and introduction to the work of the Committee, how members can contribute to the work of the Committee, and support the work of the EAP program.

'.....at times there is turnover in Committee membership...this is to be expected with any Committee....but perhaps we could be doing more to introduce new members to the Committee and help them through the learning curve.....' (Stakeholder)

'....would like to see them (Committee members) become more engaged and active with the Committee and helping to promote the EAP generally....there is a need to work on re-engaging the Committee membership....' (Stakeholder)

10. Program Management and Operation

Stakeholders noted that the Public Service Commission has always been very supportive of the program, and has done a good job in promoting and advocating for EAP’s integration within all government departments and agencies.

At the program management and operations level, many stakeholders noted that there are several tasks that need more attention in order to further strengthen the program, including: developing and implementing an ongoing promotion strategy (including developing the promotional flyers and posters); monitoring, interpreting, and reporting on program utilization trends (e.g., workload demand, nature of demand, emerging needs); training and development initiatives with HR managers and other managers (e.g., workplace dynamics, assessment skills, conflict resolution skills).

There was a concern expressed regarding the need to free up more of the EAP Manager’s time to devote to program management and development tasks.

'.....while it is important for the EAP Manager to have a good connection with the counseling piece.... there needs to be more time available for program management....there are program development issues to be attended.....' (Stakeholder)

While many stakeholders were not exactly aware of how the EAP structure and internal reporting relationships were ‘positioned’ within government (most simply acknowledged that it was ‘with government’), their sense was that it appeared to be adequate and effective.

'....it (the current model) is the most effective way to deliver this type of service to a broad range of public departments and agencies.....it’s a comprehensive approach supported by all labour unions, government and managers and administrators across the system.....' (Stakeholder)

'.....if the existing program was not in place we would need several other structures in place to meet the individual needs of all sectors....this would be more time consuming and costly to operate.....' (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders also noted that, in terms of looking ahead, EAP will continue to be an important and necessary counseling and support service to the public sector on PEI in the years to come. Workplace stressors and work-life balance issues are a reality for all workplaces in today’s complex world.

'..... EAP has served a lot of people well over the years and will continue to do so.....everyday stressors on people and in people's lives are not going to change....plus other counseling services that were generally available to people in previous years, mental health services for example, have long waiting lists.... workers in these services often refer or suggest clients go to EAP if eligible....'(Stakeholder)
4.3 Survey Results

As noted in Section 2.2, the EAP forced-choice (check box) survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as proportions and differences between demographic subgroups were analyzed using simple inferential statistics such as chi-squared tests. The open-ended (fill in the blank) type survey questions were coded into themes based on frequency of response and relevance to the evaluation issues.

Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

A total of 2,263 surveys were completed including 2,002 surveys completed via the email invitation and 261 surveys completed via the cheque stub insert invitation (including 255 surveys completed electronically and 6 surveys completed in hard copy and returned by mail - these hard copies were requested by telephone as per the paycheque insert instructions). The number of returns by sector and approximate response rates are shown in Table 3. Overall, there was a response rate of approximately 22%. The large number of respondents resulted in a low margin of error of +/- 1.9% (19 times out of 20) when adjusted for the finite population of PEI public sector employees. Thus, there was a high level of statistical accuracy for those survey questions applicable to all respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Approximate number of employees</th>
<th>Approximate response rate</th>
<th>Margin of error, 19 times out of 20 (corrected for finite population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil service</td>
<td>919 via email invitation, 40 via cheque insert invitation</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>534 via email invitation, 65 via cheque insert invitation</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>549 via email invitation, 156 via cheque insert invitation</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,002 via email invitation, 263 via cheque insert invitation</td>
<td>2,263</td>
<td>10,200</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the number of responses, it is also important to ensure responses represent all groups of employees (i.e., to reduce response bias). The above responses suggest that there was a higher response from employees with a government email address and there was a higher response from within the civil service than the health and education sectors, though there were high numbers of respondents from the latter sectors.

Table 4 shows the proportion of the permanent provincial government workforce versus the survey respondents that had worked for the provincial government for varying lengths of time (i.e., tenure). There were small differences between the survey and the total workforce though it cannot be determined if this difference is due to a differential response to the survey or the fact that the survey went to all employees, not just permanent employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of time worked in provincial government (including health and education)</th>
<th>% of workforce versus survey respondents</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial government (permanent workforce only)</td>
<td>Survey respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5 years</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 or more years</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 The response rate is considered approximate since the exact number of employees per sector was not known and it is not certain that all employees received the survey invitation, despite the attempt to do so.
Table 5 shows the proportion of the permanent and non-permanent provincial government workforce of each gender versus the survey respondents. There were small differences between the survey and the total workforce in that females made up a slightly greater proportion of survey respondents than the provincial government workforce.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>% of workforce versus survey respondents</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provincial government</td>
<td>Survey respondents</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional demographic information from the survey included management role and residence.
- Survey respondents included 415 deputy ministers, directors, managers and supervisors (18%) and 1,848 employees (82%).
- A majority of respondents (65%) lived in Queens County whereas 21% lived in Prince County and 14% lived in Kings County.

**Awareness**

There was a high level of awareness of the EAP (86%) and the fact that the public service offered confidential counseling for employees (84%) among survey respondents, as shown in Figure 6. There was lower awareness that confidential counseling was available to family members of employees and lower awareness of group sessions.

**Figure 6. Awareness of EAP and Services Offered. Public Service Employee Survey, 2011.**
Awareness of EAP was related to a number of demographic factors, particularly sector and tenure in the public sector, as follows:

- **Sector**: Awareness was highest in health (91%) and civil service (87%) and lowest in education (78%).

- **Email address**: Awareness was highest among those who completed the survey via their government email address invitation (87%) versus those who completed the survey via cheque stub insert (who do not have a government email address) (72%).

- **Management role**: Awareness was higher among managers/supervisors (97%) than non-management employees (83%).

- **Used confidential counseling**: Not applicable.

- **Length of time worked for the public service**: Awareness was highest among those with 11 or more years tenure (93%) and those with 6 to 10 years tenure (89%) and lowest among those with 5 years or less tenure (68%).

- **Length of time in management role**: No difference.

- **Gender**: No difference.

- **County**: No difference.

**Needs**

Survey responses indicated a high need for individual counseling services in the past three years. A substantial proportion of survey respondents indicated that confidential counseling may have helped them (39%) or a family member (47%) deal with an issue in the past three years, as shown in Figure 7. Nearly half of those who indicated that counseling may have helped them deal with an issue in the past three years indicated that the issue affected their ability to perform work duties. The need for individual counseling was corroborated by management ratings of the need for counseling for their staff.

**Figure 7. Need for Individual Counseling in the Past Three Years. Public Service Employee Survey, 2011.**
Responses on whether confidential counseling may have helped employees deal with an issue in the past three years was related to a number of demographic factors, particularly gender, as follows:

- **Sector**: The proportion that indicated confidential counseling would have helped them deal with an issue in the past three years was slightly higher in health (45%) and education (42%) than in civil service (34%).
- **Email address**: No difference.
- **Management role**: The proportion that indicated confidential counseling would have helped them deal with an issue in the past three years was higher among non-management employees (41%) than among managers (32%).
- **Used confidential counseling**: The proportion that indicated confidential counseling would have helped them deal with an issue in the past three years was, not surprisingly, higher among those that had used confidential counseling services in the past 10 years (71%) than those that had not (30%).
- **Length of time worked for the public service**: No difference.
- **Length of time in management role**: No difference.
- **Gender**: The proportion that indicated confidential counseling would have helped them deal with an issue in the past three years was higher among females (44%) than among males (31%).
- **County**: No difference.

Survey responses indicated that a majority of respondents felt that EAP group sessions would be useful, as shown in Figure 8. However, only a minority of managers indicated that there were issues in workplace creating a need for EAP wellness workshops or other interventions (such as conflict resolution) not offered by EAP.

**Figure 8. Need for Group Sessions in the Past Three Years. Public Service Employee Survey, 2011.**
Indications that it would be useful to have an EAP information session in their workplace were widespread across the public sector, with differences by two demographic factors only, as follows:

- **Sector**: The proportion that indicated it would be useful to have an EAP information session in their workplace was higher in health (73%) than in education (63%) and civil service (62%).
- **Email address**: The proportion that indicated it would be useful to have an EAP information session in their workplace was higher among those who completed the survey via cheque stub insert (who do not have a government email address) (76%) than among those who completed the survey via their government email address invitation (64%).
- **Management role**: No difference.
- **Used confidential counseling**: No difference.
- **Length of time worked for the public service**: No difference.
- **Length of time in management role**: No difference.
- **Gender**: No difference.
- **County**: No difference.

Indications that it would be useful to have an EAP wellness workshop in their workplace were also widespread across the civil service, with differences by two demographic factors only, as follows:

- **Sector**: The proportion that indicated it would be useful to have an EAP information session in their workplace was higher in health (78%) than in education (69%) and civil service (66%).
- **Email address**: No difference.
- **Management role**: No difference.
- **Used confidential counseling**: No difference.
- **Length of time worked for the public service**: No difference.
- **Length of time in management role**: No difference.
- **Gender**: A higher proportion of females (73%) than males (65%) indicated it would be useful to have an EAP wellness workshop in their workplace.
- **County**: No difference.

Similarly, manager’s ratings of the need for EAP wellness workshops or other group interventions not offered by EAP were consistently higher in health than education and the civil service.

Three open-ended questions explored managers’ perceptions of the need for EAP individual and group services and other group interventions not offered by EAP such as conflict resolution.

The most frequently mentioned workplace issues that managers indicated had created a need for EAP individual counseling in the past three years were in descending order:

1. Job or career issues
2. Other personal issues such as addictions, grief, and depression
3. Anxiety
4. Family/children issues
5. Marital/relationship issues

This contrasts with the frequency of issues counseling was actually provided for by EAP in the past five years (see program utilization section above) where marital issues were most frequent and job and career issues were less frequent. [Note: It should not be surprising that managers were more aware of job-related issues.]

The most frequently mentioned workplace issues that managers indicated had created a need for EAP workplace wellness sessions in the past three years were in descending order:

1. Workplace stress
2. Change management/coping with change
3. Work-life balance
4. Workload
5. Various personal issues (e.g., marital, health)
6. Employee relations/conflicts (interpersonal or with management)

Finally, the large majority of comments as to issues creating a need for other group interventions such as conflict resolution not offered by EAP were focused on conflict, mainly between employees and sometimes with management/supervisors. Harassment or bullying were occasionally mentioned.

Attitudes

Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of attitudinal statements that correspond with the EAP principles. High levels of agreement indicate perceptions that the program is following these principles to the extent that people are aware (keeping in mind that only a minority of respondents had actually used EAP services). Figure 9 shows that there was a high level of awareness or agreement with most statements but somewhat lower agreement that EAP counseling services are offered in all three counties or without a long wait, in which case there was a high proportion of respondents who were ‘not sure.’ Of those statements where most respondents rated their level of agreement, the agreement that EAP counseling services are available for issues not directly rated to work and that EAP counseling will not affect your chances of promotion was somewhat lower (80% and 74%, respectively).
**Figure 9. Agreement With Attitudinal Statements About EAP. Public Service Employee Survey, 2011.**

Agreement with attitudinal statements reflecting EAP principles varied by demographic factors, as follows:

- **Sector:** There were no differences in attitudes by sector except managers/supervisors in health (89%) were much more likely to agree that it is not the role of supervisors to diagnose personal problems of employees compared to managers/supervisors in education (67%) and in civil service (68%).
- **Email address:** No differences.
- **Management role:** There was consistently higher agreement (generally 4% to 13% higher) among managers/supervisors than among employees across every statement except ‘employees may voluntarily seek help for personal problems that may affect their work’ where there was no difference. The greatest difference was related to chances of promotion where 86% of managers/supervisors agreed that ‘using EAP counseling will not affect your chances for getting a promotion’ compared to only 68% of employees, a difference of 18%.
- **Used confidential counseling:** There was consistently higher agreement (generally 5% to 11% higher) among previous users of confidential counseling than among non-users across every statement except the two questions asked of managers only. However, there was much higher agreement (a difference of 16% or greater) among previous users that:
  - Using EAP counseling will not affect your chances for getting a promotion
  - EAP counseling services are available without a long wait

* An update in the survey software caused this question to be omitted for the last 843 respondents to complete the survey, so there is reduced sample size and a possible bias in the type of respondents.
- EAP offers counseling for issues not directly related to work such as marital problems and addictions

- **Length of time worked for the public service:** There was higher agreement (generally 8% to 14% higher) among those with greater tenure in the PEI public sector that it was voluntary, counseling is available for non-work related issues, it is available in all three counties, it is available without a long wait, and it is not a disciplinary measure.

- **Length of time in management role:** No differences.

- **Gender:** The only difference was that female managers/supervisors were more likely to agree that ‘it is not the role of supervisors to diagnose personal problems of employees’ (80%) compared to male managers/supervisors (66%).

- **County:** No differences.

The small proportion of respondents who disagreed that EAP counseling services are strictly confidential were asked an open-ended question as to why they feel it is not confidential. The most common responses among this subgroup of respondents were that the employer is aware or informed about their EAP involvement; that PEI is a small place where everyone knows everyone; that people will talk or gossip; or that they were simply not sure if it was confidential.

The small proportion of respondents who disagreed that EAP counseling services are not a disciplinary measure were asked an open-ended question as to why they feel it may be seen as a disciplinary measure. There were no common responses. A few respondents indicated that it creates a perception of you as an unfit or unstable worker; that you are forced to go; or that the image of the program is as a disciplinary measure.

The small proportion of respondents who disagreed that EAP counseling will not affect your chance of getting a promotion were asked an open-ended question as to why they feel it will affect their chances of getting a promotion. The most common responses among this subgroup of respondents were that it creates a perception of you as an unfit or unstable worker followed distantly by the notion that PEI is small and/or rumors get around. A few people thought that it went on your record. [Note: The PSC would be advised to communicate that information about counseling received does not go on employee’s personnel file.]

**Experience with Confidential Counseling**

Over one-quarter (29%) of survey respondents and/or their family member had used confidential counseling (including EAP and private counselors) in the past 10 years. Use of confidential counseling varied by demographic factors, as follows:

- **Sector:** The proportion that used confidential counseling in the past 10 years was somewhat higher in health (33%) than in education (30%) and civil service (26%).

- **Email address:** No difference.

- **Management role:** No difference.

- **Used confidential counseling:** No difference.

- **Length of time worked for the public service:** Use of confidential counseling increased with tenure rising from 16% of those with up to 5 years worked with the PEI public sector to 29% of those with 6 to 10 years tenure to 33% of those with 11 or more years tenure.

- **Length of time in management role:** No difference.

- **Gender:** No difference.
- **County**: Use of confidential counseling was highest among respondents living in Queens County (31%) and Prince County (29%) and lowest in Kings County (17%).

The majority of those using confidential counseling (81%) had used EAP counseling services (n=428) while 16% had used private counselors (n=87) and a few respondents were ‘not sure.’ The following data refers to users of EAP counseling only.

Figure 10 illustrates a high level of user satisfaction with EAP counseling. Ninety-two percent of respondents indicated some degree of satisfaction (including ‘somewhat satisfied’) while 73% were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied.’

**Figure 10. Satisfaction with EAP Counseling. Public Service Employee Survey, 2011.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall satisfaction with EAP counseling services provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11 illustrates respondents’ rating of the helpfulness of EAP counseling. Ninety-two percent\(^7\) indicated EAP counseling helped deal with the issue ‘a little’ or ‘a great deal.’ Furthermore, 91% of those for whom it was applicable indicated that EAP counseling helped them complete their work duties.

**Figure 11. Rating of Helpfulness of EAP Counseling. Public Service Employee Survey, 2011.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent EAP counseling services helped you/your family member to deal with the issue for which you sought help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent EAP counseling services helped you complete your work duties satisfactorily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) The numbers in the figure add to 91% instead of 92% due to rounding error.
An open-ended question asked users of confidential counseling (EAP and private) to tell us about your/your family member’s experience with the counseling services. Most respondents made a number of comments regarding their experiences. The most common response, from over 40% of those who had used counseling services, was:

- It helped/provided guidance or in a few instances was life altering/changing/saving
  
  “...help allowed me to move on and regain my productivity at work and balance at home.”
  
  “It was a life changing experience and I am grateful for this service every day...”
  
  “…the counselor provided advice as to how to approach my issues.”
  
  “They have made all the difference in my life! Thank you EAP!!!”
  
  “I hate to think about what may have happened if the service had not been available to me.”

Other common positive responses, in decreasing order of frequency, included:

- It was a satisfactory/great/excellent service
  
  “…excellent service, helped a lot at the time.”
  
  “It was a very positive experience and very helpful in every way.”

- It was welcoming/caring or the staff were professional/friendly or felt comfortable with the counselors
  
  “I felt very comfortable and supported throughout the counseling service provided.”

- Having someone to talk to and/or talking to someone in a neutral/safe environment or feeling supported during counseling
  
  “I was very pleased to have an ear to listen to help me sort through an issue which did affect my work.”
  
  “It felt good to have someone to listen and to make me feel understood.”

- Fast/easy/flexible access
  
  “I was able to see a counselor right away, which I appreciated...”

- Confidential service
  
  “… service was timely and very confidential.”

- Gratefulness for the service
  
  “I cannot express enough appreciation to the program and to my counselor.”

Some negative feedback was received that included:

- Service was not helpful for a variety of reasons or respondent offered a complaint about the service
  
  “…did not find the sessions helpful.”
  
  “I felt the counselor was not equipped to deal with my problem...”
  
  “…the counselor basically listened, but didn’t offer much help.”

- A need for more follow-up was occasionally mentioned
  
  “…it did help but there was no follow-up to ask how we were doing.”
Workshop Session Experience

Eight percent of survey respondents (n=148) indicated that, in the past three years, they attended a workplace presentation about EAP. Nearly all (98%) of these respondents indicated the workshop was useful; 16% rated it ‘somewhat useful,’ 51% ‘useful’ and 32% ‘very useful.’

Eleven percent of survey respondents participated in workplace wellness workshops offered by any source in the past three years. Of those that were sure the workshop was offered by EAP (n=56), 98% indicated the workshop was useful; 13% rated it ‘somewhat useful,’ 54% ‘useful’ and 32% ‘very useful’ [caution: very small sample size].

Preferences for Future EAP Services

Respondents were asked, if they needed EAP counseling services in the future, how likely they would be to use services delivered in various ways. Figure 12 shows that the most preferred methods to receive counseling were in-person counseling with private counselors or EAP staff (42% and 38% ‘very likely,’ respectively) followed by talking with a counselor over the phone, with on-line communication being least preferred. A substantial minority 33%-39% were also ‘somewhat likely’ to use phone or the two types of in-person counseling in the future.

Figure 12. Preferences for Future EAP Service Use. Public Service Employee Survey, 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Somewhat likely (%)</th>
<th>Very likely (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with a counselor on-line such as instant messaging</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with a counselor over the phone</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-person counseling with private counselors (outside government)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-person counseling with EAP staff</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were few demographic differences in preferences for future use of counseling. A few differences were as follows:

- **Sector**: No differences.
- **Email address**: No differences.
- **Management role**: No consistent differences.
- **Used confidential counseling**: No differences.
- **Length of time worked for the public service**: The proportion of respondents indicating they were ‘somewhat likely’ or ‘very likely’ to communicate with a counselor on-line was higher among those with up to 5 years worked with the PEI public sector (40%) than those with 6 to 10 years tenure (32%) and those with 11 or more years tenure (28%).
- **Length of time in management role**: No difference.
• **Gender**: A higher proportion of females (44%) were ‘very likely’ to use in-person counseling with private counselors compared to males (37%).

• **County**: No consistent differences.

An additional analysis of the various options each respondent chose revealed an overlap in preferred future options. Generally speaking, those likely to use one type of in-person counseling (EAP versus private) tended to be likely to use the other type of in-person counseling. Many of those likely to use telephone and on-line options were a subset of those survey respondents willing to use in-person counseling. Further detail is as follows:

• Those likely to use one form of in-person counseling were also likely to use the other form. Specifically, 87% of respondents who were likely to use in-person counseling with EAP counselors were also likely to use in-person counseling with private counselors. Conversely, 85% of respondents who were likely to use in-person counseling with private counselors were also likely to use in-person counseling with EAP counselors.

• Further, respondents who selected telephone counseling tended to be a subset of those respondents that selected in-person counseling. For example, only 7% of all respondents were likely to use telephone counseling but were ‘not likely’ or ‘not sure’ if they would use in-person counseling with private counselors.

• Similarly, respondents who were likely to communicate with a counselor on-line were an even smaller subset of those that were likely to use in-person counseling. For example, only 4% of all respondents were likely to use on-line communication with a counselor but were ‘not likely’ or ‘not sure’ if they would use in-person counseling with private counselors.

**Other Comments**

A final open-ended survey question asked respondents to provide other comments about EAP. Many employees who responded felt that the service was beneficial and indicated it is important that it continue to be provided. Some comments indicated that EAP needed to ensure that the services are available to all employees (including casual and part-time employees). [Note: While EAP services are in fact available to all employees, this perception is an indication that the availability of services to all employees needs to be stressed in communications.] Some employees also suggested that the service needed to be more visible; this was supported by comments from some respondents who did not know the service existed or what it provided. There were a few comments about the qualifications of EAP staff. [Note: While all staff are in fact professional certified counselors, this perception among a few people suggests a need to stress this point in communications about the program.]
5. Summary

5.1 General Overview

Generally speaking, the EAP evaluation findings from all data collection streams revealed program and operational strengths on a number of levels. The best practice comparative review noted that in addition to offering services that the majority of Canadian EAPs provide, PEI's Employee Assistance Program demonstrates leadership in four other distinct areas, including: responding to critical incident situations; providing consultation and training for ongoing organizational development and team-building initiatives; enhancing the health of work units through the provision of support such as mediation and conflict-resolution services; and assisting work unit support groups to decrease work-related stress.

With respect to the individual confidential counseling service, there was strong positive feedback expressed by respondents for this part of the EAP program. The perception among stakeholders interviewed indicated that the counseling service is well utilized, well received, and the sense of satisfaction from those who have used the program is high. The service was seen as easy to access, and the existing referral protocols seem to be working well. EAP counselors are viewed as professional, well experienced, very dedicated to their work, and providing an important 'add value' service to the public sector.

Employees who had used EAP services indicated: that it was easy to access the program in terms of knowing where and who to call; that the wait time for the first contact session was very reasonable; and that their level of satisfaction with the service was very high. They indicated that they felt listened to, supported, and helped to develop practical steps to deal with their concerns and issues.

In short, the evaluation data indicates that the existing EAP program has been well established, is well utilized, and generates high ratings of satisfaction and helpfulness. This provides a strong foundation from which to further strengthen and develop the capacity of the program.

A detailed summary of findings, including areas where improvement is possible, is presented in the remainder of this section. These form the basis for conclusions and recommendations presented in Section 6.

5.2 Governance, Policy and Operations

Governance and Policy

- Stakeholders generally indicated that the current governance structure and model is adequate. Some noted that the Advisory Committee might be strengthened, and that union representation and engagement could be stronger; especially with respect to taking a more proactive role in program promotion and advocacy within their own membership ranks.

- A review of PEI EAP policies versus a database of best practices across Canada (see Section 3) indicated that PEI’s policies scored slightly above average compared to the Canadian best practices. Identified strengths within the PEI program included: having a clearly presented document that is easy to read and follow; the policy’s introductory statement of principles; and the program’s operating procedures. Areas where PEI scored below average included stakeholder role clarity and program development (e.g., training of supervisors/stewards; orientation of workforce; community liaison with EAP groups, community services and related agencies; publicizing program to workforce; publicizing program to families/family orientation).


**Program Operations and Management**

- The program needs to address ongoing program management issues such as monitoring and analyzing utilization trends; developing and implementing a promotion strategy; developing a strategy to further the workplace education and wellness component of the program; monitoring current and future operational budget requirements; and making the case for additional resources to government.

- Of the 20 components of the Integrated Model of Occupational Assistance (see Section 3), the PEI EAP currently offers 13. Of the seven areas not currently being offered, only two are offered by the majority of EAPs from across Canada: Twenty-four hour access to EAP services, either crisis counseling or consultation, and worksite-wide health promotion, safety and/or critical incident awareness\(^8\) and related wellness education programs with a prevention focus. It should also be noted that along with offering services that the majority of Canadian EAPs do provide, the PEI EAP demonstrates leadership in four areas, with particular strengths in the organizational sector of service provision. Additional areas of strength of the PEI PSC program are that it has a formalized policy and a monitoring system as well as a formalized critical incident response protocol.

- Some stakeholders, especially HR managers, noted the potential for on-line EAP related information, resources, and supports to 'add value to,' and complement, core EAP services.

- Survey respondents indicated their preferences regarding a variety of EAP counseling service delivery models; the highest expressed preference was for one-on-one personal contact with a counselor; there was a lower level of interest for talking with a counselor via the telephone or online.

- There is no defined strategy, and limited financial support for, the ongoing professional development needs of EAP counselors.

**5.3 Need and Utilization**

**Need**

- Stakeholder comments indicated that there is a significant level of demonstrated need for EAP services, both confidential individual counseling and group sessions; many stakeholders note that there are ongoing workplace and family stressors that are impacting on workers (changing work roles, changing service delivery models, younger workers dealing with parenting and family issues).

- Survey responses indicated a high potential need for individual counseling services. A significant number of survey respondents indicated that confidential counseling may have helped them (39%) or a family member (47%) deal with an issue in the past three years. Nearly half of those who indicated that counseling may have helped them deal with an issue indicated that the issue affected their ability to perform work duties.

\(^8\) It should be noted that while Occupational Health and Safety training and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) are offered by the PEI government though not directly through EAP, EAP staff do participate in the management of CISM and provide CISM debriefs. The EAP does offer some workplace wellness workshops.
Survey responses indicated that a majority of respondents felt that EAP group sessions would be useful. However, only a minority of managers surveyed indicated that there were issues in workplace creating a need for EAP wellness workshops or other interventions (such as conflict resolution) not offered by EAP.

**Emerging Issues**

- EAP counselors are dealing with more individuals who are facing/struggling with more complex personal and family needs.
- Stakeholders and managers indicate that there are increasing workplace needs and stressors; i.e., rising levels of workplace conflict; lack of respect in workplace; ‘toxic’ work environments. There is a need for more workplace assessments and healthy work environment interventions.
- An emerging issue noted in the literature review was exposure of counselors to vicarious trauma, or counselors reactions that are secondary to the clients’ presentation of personal or work-related trauma, which may occur in addition to burnout caused over time by the general psychological stress of working with difficult clients.

**Program Utilization**

- There has been a consistently high level of demand for confidential counseling from all three sectors; the largest number of users come from the health sector, the next largest number come from civil service, with the education sector having a slightly lower number of referrals in any given year.
- Utilization of individual counseling services (based on program statistics) averaged 369 cases per year over the past five years.
- More than one-quarter (29%) of survey respondents had used individual counseling in the past 10 years, four-fifths of whom had received counseling from EAP staff.
- EAP staff delivered on average 13 workplace education and wellness workshops per year over the course of the past five years; this is fewer than in prior years, as EAP staff have limited time due to heavier counseling workloads.

**5.4 Awareness, Satisfaction and Outcomes**

**Awareness**

- Surveys revealed a high level of awareness of the EAP program (86%) and that it offers confidential counseling for employees (84%). Awareness was lower in the education sector (78%), among employees who do not have a public sector email address (72%) and employees with less than five years experience with the public sector (68%).
- However, there is a lower level of awareness that family members are also eligible to receive counseling, and that the EAP program offers workplace education and wellness (early intervention and prevention) sessions as part of its mandate.
- The perception of some stakeholders was that, while the program has been in place for a long time, its overall profile and visibility could be improved, especially for newer employees, and specific elements of the program’s promotion activities could be improved.
- There is general agreement among stakeholders regarding the importance of the key program design principles to the integrity of the program, and there is a high level of awareness among
survey respondents of key program principles such as the voluntary nature of the program, the confidentiality of the service, and that EAP is not a disciplinary measure.

- For a smaller group of survey respondents (primarily non-users); there is still a concern or lack of knowledge about confidentiality (about 1 in 7) and that 'going for' EAP counseling might impact on one's opportunities to seek a promotion (about 1 in 4); i.e., PEI is a small place, and questions as to what information is shared with supervisors and/or management remain a concern for some employees.

User Satisfaction and Outcomes

- Ninety-two percent of survey respondents indicated some degree of satisfaction (including ‘somewhat satisfied’) with EAP individual counseling while 73% were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied.’

- Ninety-two percent of those surveyed indicated EAP counseling helped deal with the issue ‘a little’ or ‘a great deal.’ Furthermore, 91% of those for whom it was applicable indicated that EAP counseling helped them complete their work duties.

- Employees interviewed who used EAP individual counseling indicated that the service was a help to them; they felt they were listened to, supported, helped to resolve issues, and helped to become better employees.

- Stakeholders and EAP counselors interviewed also perceived there to be a high level of satisfaction with EAP individual counseling.

- While the feedback on EAP group sessions was more limited in both interviews and surveys, employees who had attended EAP workplace and wellness sessions were positive regarding the experience.
6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The key conclusions, presented in Table 6 below, are based on the findings of the evaluation including a review of best practices in other organizations; a review of program documentation and utilization statistics; interviews with EAP Manager/staff, stakeholders, and users of individual counseling; and a large scale survey of managers and employees. The conclusions are structured according to the evaluation objectives, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Evaluation Objectives and Conclusions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTIVE: To evaluate the EAP to determine if the current mandate, objectives, services and processes will continue to meet the future needs of the public service.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The mandate, objectives and policies of the EAP was generally equivalent to or above that of most EAPs across Canada with demonstrated strengths in several areas. Two exceptions were stakeholder role clarity and program development.

- The services offered by the EAP were generally equivalent to or greater than most EAPs across Canada with demonstrated strengths in several areas such as formalized policy and a monitoring system as well as a formalized critical incident response protocol. Two exceptions are twenty-four hour access to EAP services and worksite-wide health promotion, safety and/or critical incident awareness. On-line EAP related information, resources, and supports would complement core EAP services.

- The overall program operations, such as timely delivery of counseling services, maintenance of confidentiality and supervision of counselors, were generally strong though the program needs to strengthen ongoing program management (e.g., additional promotional activities, monitoring and analyzing trends – see Section 5.2 above) and ongoing professional development of EAP counselors.

- There is a significant level of demonstrated need for EAP services, both for confidential individual counseling and group education and wellness sessions. There appears to be an increase in workplace stressors and the complexity of individual counseling needs. There has been a consistently high level of demand for confidential counseling from all three sectors.

- EAP staff delivered an average of 13 workplace education and wellness workshops per year over the past five years; this is fewer than in prior years, as EAP staff have limited time due to heavier counseling workloads.
OBJECTIVE: To evaluate the EAP to determine if the program is successfully meeting the current employee and employer requirements.

a) Identify strengths in processes (e.g., policies, stakeholder engagement, program management, promotion of the service) service delivery quality and effectiveness in meeting the stated outcome of improved job performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths identified during the evaluation included:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A well established program; wide acknowledgement and acceptance of its importance and value to both employees and employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The PSC is, and has been, highly supportive of the program; the governance structure includes involvement and input from all key public sector stakeholders and unions (Advisory Committee).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• EAP counseling staff are highly regarded; viewed as knowledgeable, experienced, and skilled professionals by both users and management at all levels across the public service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The EAP best practice review identified several areas of strength:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The PEI EAP offers all but two services that the majority of Canadian EAPs provide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The PEI EAP demonstrates leadership in four areas not commonly offered by other EAPs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to critical incident situations with trained peer debriefers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing consultation and training for ongoing organizational intervention, development and change including team-building initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing the health of work units through the provision of technical assistance including mediation or conflict-resolution services on both individual and organizational issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of or assistance with work unit support groups to decrease work related stress and to act as problem solving and/or peer social support groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Additional areas of strength of the PEI PSC program are that it has a formalized policy and a monitoring system as well as a formalized critical incident response protocol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A review of PEI EAP policies versus a database of best practices across Canada indicated that PEI’s policies scored slightly above average compared to the Canadian best practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Surveys revealed a high level of awareness of the EAP program (86%) and that it offers confidential counseling for employees (84%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A high proportion (over 90%) of survey respondents using the service indicated some degree of satisfaction with EAP individual counseling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A high proportion (over 90%) of survey respondents using the service indicated EAP counseling helped deal with the issue and helped them complete their work duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employees interviewed who used EAP individual counseling indicated that the service was a help to them; they felt they were listened to, supported, helped to resolve issues, and helped to become better employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• While the feedback on EAP group sessions was more limited in both interviews and surveys, employees who had attended EAP workplace and wellness sessions were positive regarding the experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b) Identify gaps and/or weaknesses in processes (e.g., policies, stakeholder engagement, program management, promotion of the service), service delivery quality and effectiveness in meeting the stated outcome of improved job performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaps or weaknesses identified during the evaluation, in no particular order, included:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Although overall EAP awareness was high (as noted above), program profile and visibility across the broad public sector is still lower than ideal in some subgroups such as newer employees and for specific aspects of the program such as availability for family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There are some perceived concerns by a small minority of non-users of individual counseling surveyed regarding confidentiality and potential impact on job promotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is no defined strategy, and limited financial support for, the ongoing professional development needs of EAP counselors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Insufficient focus on some aspects of management of the program due to pressures of individual counseling demand; e.g., promotion of program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There are not enough EAP staff resources to address worksite education, early intervention, prevention and wellness promotion to the extent desired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a lack of after hours counseling service and support (at the time of evaluation).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OBJECTIVE:** To review and comment on the current EAP Advisory Committee governance model, the EAP organization structure, and the reporting relationship to the Public Service Commission within the provincial government structure.

- The current governance model, organizational structure and reporting relationship were generally viewed to be adequate though the Advisory Committee might be strengthened and union representation and engagement could be stronger.

**OBJECTIVE:** To make recommendations for improvement to ensure that the EAP will continue to meet employee and employer requirements in the future, recognizing fiscal realities as well as the evolving work environment.

- See Section 6.2 below.
6.2 Recommendations

Based on the evaluation results and conclusions noted in Section 6.1 above, a number of recommendations are suggested for program improvement. Recommendations are based on locally collected evaluation data and/or a comparison to best practices in other jurisdictions and are necessarily focused on areas of improvement.

These recommendations for improvement are intended to ensure that the EAP will continue to meet employee and employer requirements in the future, recognizing fiscal realities as well as the evolving work environment. Most of these recommendations are intended to be made within existing program resources though it is recognized that some additional budgetary resources may be required such as travel within the province (this has already been noted as an issue).

It is also acknowledged that the recommendations will likely be implemented over a period of time given that there are finite limits on existing PSC and EAP Manager/staff resources. Hence, it is suggested that program management prioritize which of these recommendations may be accomplished within a given year, what resources are required, and who will be responsible for implementation.

Specific recommendations include:

1. Update and further strengthen written EAP policies in reference to the detailed best practice information available from this evaluation, as follows:

   a. Specific items the EAP committee should consider including in a revised policy document are:
      i. Limits of confidentiality and a discussion of anonymity
      ii. The formal training of supervisors and union stewards within the scope of EAP practice
      iii. How the workforce will be initially and regularly informed about the EAP
      iv. How the program will be publicized and promoted to families
      v. The interaction and collaboration that staff will have with external EAP organizations in terms of affiliations and professional development
      vi. Formal inclusion of the role of non-unionized groups (such as excluded employees) with the EAP
      vii. Formal discussion of the role of human resource managers with the EAP

   b. Upon program renewal and revision of the policy document to reflect the agreed upon changes and updating of the program, current labour and management representatives should re-sign the policy adding their signatures to those who initiated the program in 1990, indicating their ongoing support for this joint initiative.

2. Strengthen and target ongoing promotion of EAP individual counseling services. This may include, though not be limited to, some of the suggestions from this evaluation, such as:

   a. Continue recently reinstated practice of inclusion of EAP information in new employee orientation.

   b. Focus on improving awareness in the education sector, among employees who do not have a public sector email address, and employees with less than five years experience with the public sector.

   c. Update the website and other promotional materials such as posters and flyers to include specific information on qualifications of counselors, and confidentiality; i.e., what information is shared with supervisors/managers, and other relevant information and explore the potential for other social media tools.
d. Work to include links to the EAP website in other public sector and union websites.

e. Send electronic updates to members of the manager’s forum.

f. Raise awareness of the availability of counseling to family members of employees.

g. Engage union representatives in program promotion.

h. Include inserts in various union newsletters including the information noted above.

i. Include EAP contact info in the provincial GroupWise email/contact system.

j. Update and circulate written information on EAP individual counseling to employees without public sector email addresses.

k. Develop a schedule for workplace presentations on EAP services so that employees and managers in all major worksites are covered in a predetermined period of time.

l. Develop a schedule for presentations to other key groups such as the manager’s forum, unions’ board of directors and other key groups.

3. Further explore best practices as to how to manage the small proportion of EAP cases which are ‘formal’ referrals to EAP counseling.

4. Collaborate with HR managers to develop a strategy to improve workplace wellness and quality of worklife, within the limits of available resources.

5. Strengthen ongoing professional development for EAP Manager/staff such as (but not limited to):

   a. Develop a written annual professional development plan for EAP Manager, counselors and staff to focus on common and emerging needs presenting in counseling cases.

   b. Continue to ensure EAP counselors have the resources to meet their professional certification.

   c. Put a mechanism in place whereby the EAP Manager can meet with an external counselor who could act as a mentor and review complex cases.

6. Strengthen program management through development of a workplan/strategy, to be presented and discussed with the Advisory Committee on an annual basis, addressing issues raised by this evaluation and other emerging issues.

7. Further engage the Advisory Committee representatives and their organizations in policy renewal, program promotion, strategy development, and other aspects of ongoing management of the EAP.
Appendices

A. EAP Logic Model
Employee Assistance Program (EAP) - Program Logic Model

Program Components

Confidential Counseling (preliminary focus)
- Engage with callers re: program services and access, how to raise a concern re: a co-worker or supervisor, etc.
- Assess clients
- Provide short-term counseling to clients
- Provide counseling in four local areas
- Refer to private practitioners or other professionals, as needed
- Provide training & supervision to counselors
- Take steps to maintain confidentiality & privacy

Group Education & Wellness Sessions (secondary focus)
- Respond to requests for education or wellness sessions
- Assess requests for education and wellness sessions
- Develop and/or adapt session content and materials, as needed
- Deliver education sessions such as introduction to EAP and supervisor-assisted referral
- Deliver wellness sessions such as work-life balance

Promotion & Governance
- Hold regular meetings of EAP Advisory Committee with active participation from all 9 stakeholder groups
- Review and oversee established guidelines
- Receive input and advice from interested parties
- Develop and implement changes in guidelines
- Develop & implement strategies to raise awareness

Target Population
- All probationary, permanent, temporary and casual employees (and their immediate families) for civil service, Health PEI and school boards
- Types of inquiries responded to
- # clients assessed
- # clients provided counseling service
- # clients referred to outside counseling
- Training and supervision provided
- Practices re: confidentiality and privacy

Outputs
- Employees receive relevant services by program or external counselors
- Services provided in accessible locations
- Counseling services assist employees to deal with personal problems that affect job performance
- Clients and counselors feel that confidentiality and privacy is maintained
- # requests for education and wellness sessions
- Session content and materials
- # education and wellness sessions delivered

Short-term Outcomes
- Supervisors and employees are satisfied with the sessions received
- Supervisors and employees learn about the EAP program generally
- Supervisors learn about their role with the EAP program
- Supervisors and employees gain information that is helpful to promote personal and workplace wellness

Long-term Outcomes
- Contribution to total health of employees
- Contribution to a productive and satisfied workforce

Promotion & Governance
- Representatives of nine key stakeholder groups
- Supervisors and employees across various departments, agencies and commissions that are party to EAP agreement
- EAP meeting schedule/attendance
- Guidelines in place
- Changes to guidelines
- Input received re: EAP program
- Strategies to raise awareness
- Website & promotional materials such as brochures
- EAP part of orientation to government program

Contribution to total health of employees
Contribution to a productive and satisfied workforce

Promotion & Governance
- Clear understanding of role of EAP Advisory Cmte.
- Agreement and understanding of ongoing rules and operational procedures
- Adequate guidelines in place to govern program
- Guidelines respond to changing program context and input received
- Supervisors and employees are aware of program, how to access it, and that it is available to all levels of employees
- Supervisors and employees aware of EAP principles such as voluntary participation, not a disciplinary measure, etc.