

During times of economic uncertainty, issues related to mental health rise to the surface. Financial strain, employment instability, loss to investments or retirement plans....all of which in turn impacts marital relations, substance abuse, physical health, parent-child dynamics....The list of stresses faced by the average American family today challenges our resilience, threatens our sense of safety, encourages dysfunctional coping strategies, and has the potential to break down the relationship bonds that years were spent building.

Depression and anxiety disorders emerge when our stress loads exceed our resilience; substance addictions take certain stage as a result of individuals looking to escape their distress with a "few" drinks. The symptoms related to these disorders, unfortunately, go on to interfere with our ability to maintain employment and further disrupt the interactions with our family and friends. The cycle continues...

The State of Colorado recognizes the burdens the economy has placed on our families. Thus, despite significant budget constraints, the Department of Personnel and Administration has prioritized supportive services to all state employees and their families. C-SEAP is just one example.

The Colorado State Employee Assistance Program (C-SEAP) is a branch of the Department of Personnel and Administration (DPA) that exists to provide counseling and supportive services to any state employee and their direct family members. Each employee has the benefit of six free counseling sessions with a licensed mental health therapist in order to help that employee, or the employee's family members, through this economic hardship.

The DPA acknowledges that problems outside the workplace do not sit patiently at home while the employee goes to work. Supporting an employee who is going through hardship at home is an investment of that employee at work. Production is less likely to be affected if that employee has assistance in using coping skills, solution focused strategies, and stress management practices. The six free sessions through C-SEAP has minimal limitations. Couples counseling, family therapy, budget assistance, substance abuse treatment, stress management education, anger management, conflict resolution, grief issues, sleep problems....anything that causes distress for the employee or the employee's family is appropriate for C-SEAP.

Therapists through C-SEAP are required to follow the same laws of confidentiality as

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independent therapists. Thus employers are not made aware of an employee using the service unless that employee gives written consent for that information to be disclosed. Failure of a therapist to maintain confidentiality is grounds for legal action, loss of practice rights, and permanent public record of violations.

This author is honored to be a new addition to Colorado's Employee Assistance Program. Appointments and services for employees in the Sterling and surrounding regions are available on a weekly basis and are provided through an office based in Sterling. For more information about C-SEAP, or to schedule an appointment with Rhonda Osborne, LPC, CAC III, contact C-SEAP at 1-800-821-8154.