





The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) industry is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by rising mental health needs, caregiver stress, and evolving expectations from employees and employers. As a South Carolina-based EAP with a 32-year legacy and a book of business that serves clients across America, First Sun is uniquely positioned to offer well-being and workplace leadership insights. This report provides a forward-looking view of the EAP landscape in 2025. It blends national trends with South Carolina-specific realities and highlights how First Sun delivers responsive, caring, and compliant solutions with flexible benefit offerings for your company.

Our utilization data shows engagement is 13 times greater since 2020, with marked growth in requests related to grief, family support, legal and financial concerns, and organizational consulting. This growth shows not just an uptick in volume; it's a sign that EAPs have become a first-line support system in a climate of uncertainty, complexity, and transition.

At the heart of First Sun's approach are the values of being Easy to Work With, Caring, Responsive, and Inclusive. By embodying these values, our employees are entrusted with the decision-making authority to provide exceptional, personalized customer service.

We have designed this report to inform brokers, apprise prospective EAP buyers, and support our current corporate customers as we navigate 2025 and beyond.





South Carolina employers face rising employee needs around mental health, caregiving, and work-life stability. From cities, municipalities, small manufacturers, health care, construction, and school districts, organizations are increasingly aware that workforce well-being affects productivity, retention, and organizational risk.

With the passage of South Carolina House Bill 3927 in early April 2025, many organizations, especially public sector institutions, are adjusting how they frame and deliver workplace support.

As a South Carolina-based EAP with deep roots in the state, First Sun understands these nuances intimately. First Sun's services will seek to be compliant, effective, and trusted by our South Carolina-based customers. What remains constant will be the delivery of confidential, responsive, and results-driven services that employers can trust.







TREND 1 EAP as Part of a Strategic Infrastructure

EAPs are increasingly viewed as essential to business continuity, on par with cybersecurity and legal compliance.

DRIVERS

Rising absenteeism, mental health-related disability claims, and leadership turnover.

IMPLICATIONS

Brokers and human resources professionals are re-evaluating their view of EAPs as more than a well-being vendor but also a human resources partner.

FIRST SUN IN ACTION

We deliver proactive crisis support, on-site response, unlimited risk management consultations, formal workplace referrals, and executive consultations to integrate well-being into an organization's risk management strategies.

TREND 2 Emotionally Complex Workforce

The mental health needs of employees are deeper, more varied, and more trauma-impacted than ever.

DRIVERS

Anxiety, grief, depression, relationship strain, and trauma from loss or crisis.

IMPLICATIONS

EAPs must offer flexible, clinically sophisticated support that addresses more than just "stress."

FIRST SUN IN ACTION

Our utilization shows elevated grief, marital, and trauma-related cases. We meet this with advanced counseling protocols, trained providers, and proactive mental health initiatives, including specialized training and leader-facing content. Purchasers can choose scaled service options to fit the needs of any sized organization.



TREND 3 Whole-Family Support

Caregiving stress, parenting pressures, and dependent needs drive utilization.

DRIVERS

Multigenerational households, special education stress, fertility journeys, and return-to-work challenges.

IMPLICATIONS

EAPs must support the whole family, not just the individual employee.

FIRST SUN IN ACTION

We've expanded our Life Management Services to include virtual consultations with lactation specialists, fertility coaches, special education consultants, registered dietitians, additional parenting resources, and mental health awareness kits.

TREND 4 Legal, Financial, and Life Stress

Employees aren't just struggling emotionally — they're overwhelmed by legal and financial uncertainty.

DRIVERS

Debt, caregiving legalities, estate issues, and housing instability.

IMPLICATIONS

EAPs must expand their definition of "support" to include practical tools.

FIRST SUN IN ACTION

Our legal and financial consults accounted for over 14% of usage in 2024. In response, we expanded our financial services beyond budgeting and financial planning to include assisted tax preparation, pre-divorce planning, and more service access options.



TREND 5 Cultural Responsiveness Without the Labels

Employers still want inclusive, respectful services — but are cautious about politicized terminology.

DRIVERS

Shifting public discourse, policy debates, and organizational sensitivity.

IMPLICATIONS

EAPs must deliver culturally aware care that focuses on individual dignity without triggering controversy.

FIRST SUN IN ACTION

We train our providers in inclusive care, trauma awareness, and communication that meets people where they are while avoiding politicized or polarizing language.

TREND 6 Confidential, Digital-First Access

Employees want support that is fast, discreet, and accessible outside of traditional hours.

DRIVERS

Hybrid work, rural access barriers, self-care practices and lingering mental health stigma.

IMPLICATIONS

EAPs must build mobile, text-based, and asynchronous pathways to care.

FIRST SUN IN ACTION

Our enhanced Well-Being Center includes a digital portal, self-assessments, topic-based tiles, mobile-optimized learning content, and the "My EAP" highlights feature. We also offer leadership-focused videos and webinar series. Later this year, we seek to launch a self-service portal and text-based referral information as additional access and engagement features for members.



TREND 7 **Internal Workforce Sustainability**

EAP professionals are at risk for burnout and compassion fatigue.

DRIVERS

High emotional labor, staffing shortages, and ongoing crisis response.

IMPLICATIONS

EAPs must care for their teams to maintain uninterrupted customer service quality.

FIRST SUN IN ACTION

We reduce burnout for our providers by offering onboarding, roundtables and an annual conference with free CEUs. As needed, our risk team also offers clinical supervision and monitoring for risk cases. We support our First Sun teams with a flexible schedule, clinical supervision, coaching and team autonomy that fosters well-being and sustainability for high-touch EAP services.

TRENDS Statistics and Resources in Support of Trends



Our Well-Being Center offers 24/7/365 self-care access to mental health assessments, EAP benefit details, legal forms, articles, videos, webinars, calculators training and more!



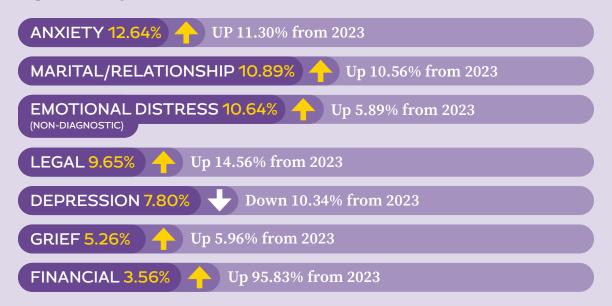


What Our Utilization Reveals

Our utilization rate increased 1221% from 2020 to 2024. This rise reflects our successful commitment to communicating the importance of well-being to members but a fundamental shift in how they rely upon EAP services. Our EAP is a frontline resource for your employees and their household members' mental, emotional, well-being, and life-related concerns.

76.8%
In-person counseling rose more than phone or video in 2024.

Top Presenting Problems in 2024



How First Sun Responded

- Introduced virtual family-focused services for lactation, fertility, diet, special education, and more parental resources
- Increased trauma and grief care training
- · Scaled legal and financial services to meet demand
- Added interactive well-being assessments
- Continued investment in organizational services with 761 critical incident and organizational consultations in 2024
- Launched free training tips video series Well Hello, Leader
- Held multiple What's Important Now (WIN) webinars for leaders





Strategic Recommendations for Employers and Brokers

- 1. Reposition EAP as a business continuity partner, not "just" a counseling service.
- 2. Offer family-centered options. There is more of this stress than ever before. Employees bring their home stress to work, and vice versa.
- 3. Use digital access tools, like the Well-Being Center, to increase reach and utilization.
- 4. Train leaders to use EAP proactively (referrals, consultations, and coaching).
- 5. Track practical outcomes, not just utilization numbers.
- 6. Integrate formal referral tools and manager support into your organization's leadership strategy.
- 7. Encourage frequent check-ins and engagement with EAP's account management point of contact.

First Sun's Commitment Going Forward

We are proud to be South Carolina's leading EAP provider, grounded in local expertise and ready to meet demand across the U.S. Whether serving a single location or a multi-state workforce, our promise is the same: We Help People Be Better at Work.



