

# Administrator Wellness

A conversation  
with Jack MacNeill  
of humanworks  
on the BCPVPA  
Early Intervention  
Program (EIP)



Administrators are often the key to developing a **healthy school environment** but often lack the resources and support to maintain their own well-being

*Administrators are struggling like never before with their ability to remain well at work. “They are often in need of guidance to help prioritize their wellness needs and identify important next steps”, explains Jack MacNeill of humanworks, whose consulting company has partnered with BCPVPA to provide EIP services. “The EIP helps administrators overcome their wellness challenges and gain greater control of their concerns.”*

The BCPVPA has recognized the increase in members’ professional and work-life challenges, which became the catalyst for developing an Early Intervention Program. In a K-12 public education sector where there are greater systemic demands, more engaged stakeholders, and higher expectations on student performance,

BCPVPA Benefits Plan members are experiencing more workplace stress than ever before. Compound that with one’s life demands and there has been a noticeable increase in members feeling greater stress and being overwhelmed.

humanworks has partnered with the BCPVPA for more than five years to enhance the means to provide better support to member wellness. Through their collective commitment to further address member wellness concerns, the BCPVPA Benefits Plan Early Intervention Program (EIP) was developed.

Jack MacNeill has a personal interest in the well-being of administrators and teachers. Jack was a high school teacher and school counselor early in his career. His father and mother were both

teachers, and his father pursued educational leadership roles, including school-based administration and superintendent roles. Jack has been an advocate for professionals in the education sector for more than 25 years. Jack and his business partner, Wade Repta, have worked together in the K-12 educational sector for close to 20 years and their professional focus has been on supporting educators. Wade has provided clinical supervision for the humanworks team and has recently authored *The Well Teacher*, a resource manual to help educators better understand and address their wellness needs. Like Jack, Wade provides direct consulting support to administrators and is also recognized for his workshops and webinars on remaining well at work.

“BCPVPA Plan members often reach out to us when they are feeling overwhelmed with personal and professional issues”, says Jack. “These issues often threaten their ability to remain at work or their ability to meet the demands of their job effectively. Our approach starts with seeking to understand the member’s context and why they have sought our assistance.” Jack emphasizes that, “We work together to gain a common understanding of the member’s current challenges, and what they see as the most pressing issues. From there, we prioritize their concerns and together we develop a plan of action.”

Jack believes that helping administrators work through their challenges allows them to be their best selves and leaders at work. “We are consistently impressed at how this professional membership takes such personal responsibility and are accountable in attending to their issues. After developing a plan of action together, we find the BCPVPA Plan members are often action-orientated and take a very active role in their health and well-being.”

“We have been amazed at the relief members express after we talk through their challenges. They convey gratitude for their ability to share their circumstances without fear of judgment or evaluation. The ability to be heard and validated without concern about confidentiality is very powerful,” says Jack. “There are very few places where administrators feel understood and supported when sharing their stories.”

## PROGRAM TIMELINES

The BCPVPA Benefits Plan EIP Program has evolved, and the scope has grown. All BC School Districts will have access to the EIP program by September 2019.

Conceived –	Fall 2017	
Pilot –	Spring 2018	6 school districts
2nd Phase –	September 2018	22 school districts
3rd Phase –	September 2019	60 school districts

Total number of BCPVPA members accessing services from humanworks to date:	<b>100</b>
direct EIP referrals	50
BCPVPA directed referrals	50

Jack shares more about the EIP:

### What is the EIP?

“The EIP is designed to provide members with quick and easily-accessible resources and confidential counsel on how to best navigate their health-related concerns. The goal of the EIP is to help members to remain healthy and well at work or to provide support to get healthy and return to work.”

“It’s humanworks’ role to support and empower Benefits Plan members who are experiencing personal and/or professional disruption to gain greater control and direction on how to best attend to their health and well-being,” Jack explains.

humanworks is committed to maintaining confidentiality and will not disclose any information

a member has shared unless they provide explicit consent to do so. “We are committed to ensuring all members’ information is securely held in trust and that accessing the program remains a safe and confidential relationship that members can rely on with 100% certainty,” Jack reiterates.

### **When should members contact the EIP?**

“How you feel is always a good way of judging when you might need assistance,” says Jack. “If you find yourself experiencing any of the following, you may want to seek assistance through the EIP: constantly distracted by problems at work, chronically tired and overwhelmed, missing deadlines and calling in sick, becoming involved in conflicts, emotionally, physically, mentally, or cognitively unwell.

Common issues that can lead members to refer to the EIP include: stress and resilience, anxiety, depression and emotional health, relationship and family problems, grief and loss, conflict and harassment, organizational pressure and/or lack of organizational support, addictions, life transitions and change, and pain and/or decreased physical capabilities. For many members we are in contact with, they have typically reached their ‘limit’ and are struggling to remain at work.”

***“How you feel is always a good way of judging when you might need assistance.”***

### **What can members expect from the EIP?**

“I think what differentiates us from other programs is our extensive experience working in the K-12 sector over the past 20 years, particularly our knowledge of the role of school administrators,” Jack says. “Members often comment how grateful they are to be working with someone who truly ‘gets’ their working context.”

“By participating in the program, a Benefits Plan

member is connected with a humanworks EIP consultant who equips them with a plan that helps them feel a greater sense of control and direction. This provides Plan members the means to address their health-related challenges more effectively, so that they can stay at work or resume their work roles in a safe and durable manner.”

“Typically a member will be in direct contact by phone, and at times in person, with an EIP consultant for an average of three to four months or until they feel appropriately supported and resourced,” says Jack.



Jack shares an example of one person’s experience:

*“Sandra” sought support from the EIP program as she was struggling with a host of issues that had left her feeling overwhelmed, struggling with fatigue, and emotionally spent. She had recently lost her mother to cancer, and in the early Fall her fellow school administrator was undergoing significant scrutiny from some teachers and was facing an investigation. She had a young family at home she felt she was neglecting, and she experienced signs of heightened anxiety: a racing heart, “panicky” feelings and occasionally crying in her car after work. Through a number of conversations with her EIP consultant, Sandra was able to prioritize her concerns and develop*



a plan of action she felt was manageable and which helped her regain a sense of control. She and her EIP consultant remained in contact for just over twelve weeks to ensure continuity of her plan, and a sounding board for her ongoing juggling of priorities.

“What I have found truly amazing, which has further reinforced my experience throughout my time working with Plan Members, is that they are highly resilient, self-directed, and highly engaged professionals driven by strong intrinsic values that few professions can boast. That can come at a price sometimes though, as they are vulnerable to over-responding and accommodating others’ needs at their own expense,” says Jack. “At times, this leaves them susceptible to compounding personal/professional issues that become too much to juggle in spite of their very best efforts. It doesn’t take a lot at this stage, whereby they are left feeling exhausted, emotionally unsettled and inadequate. Many express feelings of being very alone and under-resourced at this stage and are definitely in need of a helping hand to sort out what they can do to reclaim a greater sense of control and direction.”

**For more information about the  
BCPVPA Benefits Plan Early Intervention Program  
[humanworks.ca/programs/bcpvpa-eip](http://humanworks.ca/programs/bcpvpa-eip)**



*“... As the principal of a large school, meeting with Jack on a regular basis helped me establish a clear direction for the future. Jack was instrumental in helping me find my unique and authentic voice within a large and complex organization... His dedication and commitment to our meetings and my well-being was apparent from the beginning of our work together. Today, I chuckle at the company’s name (humanworks) as it was Jack’s very human approach that was extremely meaningful for me.”*  
Metro Administrator

*“... Being able to access humanworks has allowed me to have a confidential conversation about issues that are affecting my professional capacity and having an impact on my personal life. I have appreciated that the conversations have been scheduled at times that work for me and I am not required to attend an appointment at an office...”*  
North Shore Administrator

*“... There is no doubt that the breadth of our roles as principals has grown significantly over the last decade. In order to keep up with this increase in demands, self-care is essential. For individuals in a role that puts the needs of others first, putting one’s needs before others is a challenge for all of us at some point...”*  
Anonymous Principal



**Jack MacNeill** has more than 25 years experience working with administrators and educators to help create positive changes in their personal and professional lives, as well as help create cultures of wellness within their organizations.

**Wade Repta** has over 20 years of experience as an Occupational Therapist working specifically with teachers and administrators to empower them to take greater control of their own wellness.

