

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: New program offers mental health, wellness resources to Wisconsin veterinarians

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MADISON—The Wisconsin Veterinary Examining Board (VEB) has launched the Veterinary Professional Assistance Program (VPAP) and Work-Life Services, a confidential program designed to help licensed veterinarians and certified veterinary technicians manage the physical and mental challenges associated with the profession. The program went into effect on Nov. 9, 2020.

The VPAP is a professional assistance and wellness program for veterinarians and veterinary technicians. The program's offerings include guidance and assistance with family issues, finding child and adult care, workplace concerns, legal and financial issues, stress, health and wellness, and other issues. Examples of wellness issues include chemical dependence, psychiatric illness, professional burnout, and compassion fatigue.

The VEB assumes all costs for the program, which was launched in partnership with Humana. VPAP services are confidential and available to veterinary professionals and their household members 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

According to a 2018 study published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, the veterinary profession has a disproportionality high suicide rate when compared to the general population, which may be caused by burnout, anxiety and depression.

“The VEB recognizes that those in the veterinary profession experience

extraordinary stress,” said Melissa Mace, executive director of the VEB. “Between working long hours, trying to maintain work-life balance, and carrying record high student debt, many of these professionals struggle with depression, compassion fatigue and burnout, and anxiety. The VPAP aims to provide resources to our veterinary medical community to help them combat these issues. We want to make sure those in the veterinary medicine community have the tools they need to stay healthy and happy while serving Wisconsin’s animals.”

Wisconsin’s VEB defines professional standards and regulatory policies for veterinary professionals. The board determines requirements for obtaining a credential, develops and evaluates credentialing examinations, and establishes and enforces standards of professional conduct.

To learn more about the VPAP, visit https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/-VeterinaryProfessionalAssistanceProgram.aspx.