



Employee Assistance Program Recommendations

What is an EAP?

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), an employee assistance program, more known as EAP, is a program that aims to assist employees in handling and resolving any psychological and emotional problems that may be affecting the employee's performance in the workplace. EAPs provide counselling, referrals, assessments, and follow-up check-ins for employees. Usually, the program is offered to employees' family members who are struggling mentally and emotionally.

What issues can be addressed by an EAP?

The employee assistance program usually deals with employees who are dealing with drug abuse, alcoholism, financial problems, legal issues, job stress, personal problems, separation and loss, and family violence. The program can be managed by the employer themselves or outsourced to a third-party service provider.

Are EAPs effective?

According to a study conducted by the Federal Occupational Health (FOH), employee assistance programs have improved employee factors. The most significant improvement was seen in absenteeism which saw a 69.2% reduction. There has also been an improvement in employee engagement by 2.8%, a 24.2% improvement in life satisfaction, and workplace distress has lowered by 10%.



How can employees be encouraged to use their EAP?

- 1) Emphasize the importance of confidentiality:** Typically, an EAP is conducted by a professional in-house counsellor that employees are familiar with or an unknown third-party service provider. While some employees can hold different opinions on whether they prefer to talk to someone they are familiar with or not, this can still make them feel uncomfortable in opening up and sharing personal information – making them shy away from the program entirely. When employees do not reach out for proper help, their situation or issue worsens over time and could create long lasting negative effects to their health, wellbeing, and work performance. Employers should thoroughly explain to employees the confidentiality that EAPs uphold. A good way to do this is to send out reminders about the assistance program and how every information shared stays private and confidential. Discussing the laws around confidentiality breaches and even having the counsellors themselves explain how all information is strictly confidential can help ease the worry of employees.
- 2. Promote the program constantly:** Sometimes, employees forget or are even unaware of the company's EAP. Therefore, employers should be proactive in promoting and reminding employees of the program, its benefits, and other important information such as how to schedule. Sending out emails and newsletters about the program is the easiest yet most effective method in raising awareness about the EAP. It is also the fastest and private way for employees to



reach out when they have questions or concerns about the program. Promoting the program all year round also helps in encouraging discussions on EAP between employees and the company. Employees who understand that the company is actively supporting and encouraging employees to seek help and better themselves increase their trust with the company and slowly help them be comfortable with topics in the workplace regarding mental health, burnout, stress, loss, and illness.

- 3. Confront stigma around mental health:** The stigma surrounding mental health is still evident in specific workplaces and employees. This makes many employees ashamed of being judged instantly disregard an EAP due to its association with mental health. It is up to companies to address any misinformation on the matter. Employees must understand the importance and health benefits of having talks regarding mental health. Therefore, holding seminars and lectures with professionals can help clarify any concerns regarding the topic. It is also important to emphasize that EAPs aid employees with various concerns aside from mental health. Because the stigma on mental health can make many ignore the EAP, employees are not aware that EAPs handle many other concerns that they could go through, such as grief, financial distress, and burnout. Having employees aware of other EAP services can make them interested in the program and can serve as a way to ease the topic of mental health within the workplace.



15 Questions To Ask To Strengthen the Mental Health Safety Net

Employers should remember they are the customers of their EAP, and they should do the due diligence of making sure they are getting the best benefit possible. Here are 15 questions employers should ask about their EAP to get the best services possible.

1. What services does your EAP cover? Are these services available 24/7?
2. Who answers the calls of the EAP, and how are they trained and supervised? What professional and educational preparation and certifications do they have? Are they licensed?
3. How are counselors selected and trained? Are certain licenses and other credentials required to be a part of the EAP provider network?
4. What types of training have EAP providers received? Specifically, when was the last time they received training in suicide risk formulation and treatment?
5. How is your EAP reporting utilization? How does your workplace's utilization rate compare to others in your industry, and what can be done by the EAP and by you as the employer to encourage more utilization?
6. Do your employees know about your EAP services and how to access them?
7. For those who have used the EAP, how satisfied were they with the services? Did the services have a positive impact on the problem for which they were seeking support?
8. When employees completed EAP services, did the EAP follow up (or attempt to follow up) with the employee to make sure all needs were adequately met?



9. How does your EAP interact with health plans? Are EAP providers also providers of outpatient mental health, and if not, are they well-versed in the benefits of employees to make effective and seamless referrals?
10. How is your EAP measuring outcomes? Can they also provide you with a return-on-investment or other cost-benefit analysis?
11. How is the EAP promoting "upstream" mental health efforts like prevention, resilience, positive psychology, and work-life integration?
12. Are there general mental health screening or other wellness tools the EAP can offer the workers to help them understand and monitor their mental wellness? Does the organization also assess its own culture of system-level mental wellness?
13. Does the EAP have experience serving clients in our industry? If yes, what are some recommendations that they have to improve how EAP services are promoted and offered at our workplace?
14. Is the employer receiving regular reports (i.e., biannual or annual?) from the EAP on utilization, presenting problems, satisfaction, and other workplace outcomes?
15. Does the EAP provide manager or human resources training on how best to support an employee experiencing a mental health or suicide crisis? Are there additional staff training on skills needed to identify and assist employees in distress?