

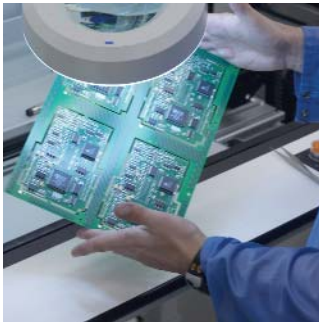


Using Your Employee Assistance Program

What Are Employee Assistance Programs?

Employee assistance programs (often simply called EAPs) are employer- or union-sponsored programs that serve the needs of employees by identifying and addressing a broad spectrum of health, economic, and social issues, including substance abuse and mental health. They can enhance the work climate of an organization and promote the well-being of everyone involved.^{1, 2, 3}

EAPs usually are multifaceted programs designed to help employees with personal problems that affect their job performance. Although some EAPs



concentrate primarily on substance abuse issues, most address a wide range of employee concerns: stress, marital difficulties, financial trouble, legal problems. Usually they

offer a range of services: employee education (onsite or offsite), individual and organizational assessment, counseling, referrals to treatment.

EAP providers typically offer a host of counseling services. These can include counseling for substance abuse, grief, sexual harassment, family violence, long-term illness, child care. Some EAPs offer services for wellness or retirement assistance. Some provide advice for dealing with difficult supervisors or coworkers. Not all EAPs provide all of these, and some provide more.

What Are the Major Types of EAPs?

When considering which kind of EAP might be most appropriate for an organization's needs, the following list⁴ should be helpful.

- **Internal/In-House Programs.** These are most often found in large companies with substantial resources. The EAP staff is

employed by the organization and works onsite with employees.

- **Fixed-Fee Contracts.** Employers contract directly with an EAP provider for a variety of services, such as counseling, employee assessment, and educational programs. Fees are usually based on the number of employees and remain the same regardless of how many use the EAP.
- **Fee-for-Service Contracts.** Employers contract directly with an EAP provider but pay only when employees use the services. Because this system requires employers to make individual referrals (rather than employees self-referring), care must be taken to protect employee confidentiality.
- **Consortia.** An EAP consortium generally consists of smaller employers who join together to contract with an EAP service provider. This approach helps lower the cost per employee.
- **Management-Sponsored Programs.** These programs are sponsored exclusively by management, as opposed to programs sponsored by a union or a union-management collaboration. Management-sponsored programs vary considerably in design and scope. Some deal only with substance abuse. Others treat a range of employee and family problems. Some include proactive prevention and health and wellness activities, as well as problem identification and referral, and some are actively linked to the employee health benefit structure.



- **Peer-Based Programs.** Less common than conventional EAPs, peer- or coworker-based EAPs offer education and training, assistance to troubled employees, and referrals—all through peers and coworkers. This type of program requires considerable education and training for employees.
- **Member Assistance Programs.** Member assistance programs (or MAPs) are provided by unions. Like EAPs, these vary considerably in design and scope. Unions have a long history of addressing member, family, health, welfare, and working condition concerns. MAPs undertake a range of prevention, problem identification, referral, and counseling activities for workers and their dependents.

How to Find a Qualified EAP Provider

Currently there are no national licensure programs for EAP providers, although several States are considering such programs. Two professional associations—the Employee Assistance



Professionals Association (EAPA) and the Employee Assistance Society of North America (EASNA)—have developed certification procedures for EAP

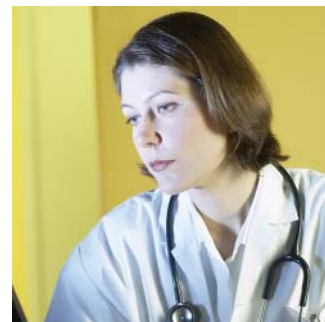
providers. The Certified Employee Assistance Professional (CEAP) credential indicates satisfactory knowledge about addictions, intervention, and related skills. For a fee, EAPA or EASNA will also provide directories of EAP providers by area or region.

- You may call EASNA at 763.765.2385 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, Central Standard or Daylight Time. EASNA's Web site is <http://www.easna.org/>.
- You may call EAPA at 703.387.1000 between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, Eastern Standard or Daylight Time. EAPA's Web site is <http://www.eapassn.org/>.

A variety of options are available for identifying EAP services. These include contacting organizations that describe themselves as EAPs and contacting other sources of health care.

Consider the following possibilities:

- Join with other employers and contract with an EAP provider. Consult the Yellow Pages (look under "employee assistance programs" or "drug abuse information and treatment centers"), call the local chamber of commerce or trade association, or call SAMHSA's Workplace Helpline at 1.800.WORKPLACE.



- Call local hospitals and ask about available EAP services.
- Contact a health maintenance organization that provides alcohol and other drug abuse treatment services, and ask about EAP possibilities.
- Contact a local mental health or substance abuse professional in private practice, and negotiate a contract for EAP services.
- Inquire whether health insurance carriers cover EAP services or can help identify local or regional EAP providers.
- Talk with other employers who have successful EAPs.

Prepare Information

When seeking to purchase EAP services, it is important to prepare certain information that providers can analyze and respond to. Information they generally seek includes the following:

- Your drug-free workplace or equivalent policy statement

- Information about your health benefits structure
- General information about the workplace— numbers of employees and supervisors, work sites, job categories, available demographics on employees, covered family members
- Services to be included
- Budget range or considerations for these services
- Reports that will be needed

Questions to Ask

Not every EAP will be right for every organization. To determine whether a particular EAP will be able to meet your specific needs, ask the EAP provider the following questions:

- Do members of your staff belong to a professional EAP association?
- Do the staff who will be assigned to my organization hold the CEAP credential?
- What is the education level of each member of your staff?
- Do you have references whom we can contact?
- Do you provide onsite employee education and supervisor training services?
- What cost/fee programs do you offer?
- Will you do onsite visits? Are you able to conduct a needs assessment of your organization?
- What types of counseling services are available to employees? How many sessions?
- How easy will it be for employees to use the EAP? Where and how often is the EAP available to employees?

- To which programs and services do you make referrals—and why?
- Does the EAP have a system for evaluating the effectiveness of the program?

For help with finding local initiatives and coalitions:

Look in the phone book, under your city's name, for entries like "Drug-Free Business Initiative" or "Coalition for Drug-Free Workplaces."

Call or write your State or county office for alcohol and drug abuse services, and ask if it has a list of groups near your workplace.

Call or write your local mayor's office, police department's community relations office, or office of economic development, and ask if the office has a list of coalitions.

Call or write your chamber of commerce or business or trade association and ask if it has services to help employers start a drug-free workplace program.

Call SAMHSA's Workplace Helpline at 1.800.WORKPLACE (800.967.5752).

Free and Low-Cost Services

SAMHSA's Workplace Helpline:

1.800.WORKPLACE

The Helpline provides telephone consultation to assist employers and union representatives with policy development, drug testing, employee assistance, employee education, supervisor training, and program implementation. It offers resource referrals and free publications. Helpline information specialists are trained to provide information tailored to each organization's unique characteristics. Lists of drug testing labs certified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) are available free of charge, and networking help is available for finding a Medical Review Officer (MRO).

Local Drug-Free Business Initiatives and Workplace Coalitions

Local initiatives and coalitions link employers who are interested in drug-free workplace programs. The coalitions may provide sample policies, technical assistance, low-cost drug testing services, and ongoing training sessions for supervisors. Some have developed special low-cost employee assistance programs designed for smaller employers. They may also have information about, and experience with, the services and costs of laboratories and MROs in your area.

Other EAP Information Sources

Drug-Free Workplace Consultants

Some employee assistance and management consulting firms specialize in helping employers and employees develop drug-free workplace policies and programs. Call the State alcohol or drug abuse agency for a list of EAPs and treatment programs available locally. That agency can also provide information about drug testing laws.

Attorneys, Arbitrators, and Mediators

Some law, arbitration, and mediation professionals specialize in helping organizations develop drug-free workplace policies. They also can assist in preventing or resolving policy disputes.

Drug Testing Labs

Many drug testing laboratories provide assistance with writing a policy and creating education programs, while charging only for their drug testing services. Contact SAMHSA's Workplace Helpline (1.800.WORKPLACE) for a list of DHHS-certified laboratories.

Health Insurance Carriers

Review your health insurance policy, and consult with your carrier or agent. Alcohol and other drug abuse coverage varies depending on the services you wish to provide for your employees. Some carriers offer "preferred provider programs," which cover all or part of the costs of substance abuse

treatment for employees who receive treatment at a preferred provider facility. Contact your carrier to inquire about options for treatment coverage.

Implementation Examples

A model is provided by the Federal Office of



Personnel Management's Model Employee Assistance Program for all Federal agencies. It describes the necessary functions and relationships of the employee assistance

program. Information about the Federal Government's policy and programs is provided in *Your Federal Employee Assistance Program: A Question and Answer Guide for Federal Employees*.⁵ Another example is provided by DHHS's employee assistance program offered to its employees and family members.

References

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- 5 U.S. Office of Personnel Management. N.d. *Your Federal Employee Assistance Program: A Question and Answer Guide for Federal Employees*. Available at https://www.opm.gov/Employment_and_Benefits/WorkLife/OfficialDocuments/handbooksguides/EAP_QandA/index.asp/.