EAP BEST PRACTICES

The Value of Employee Assistance Programs

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Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are employer- or group-sponsored programs that are designed to alleviate workplace issues due to mental health, substance abuse, personal problems, and workplace issues.[1] These programs strive to improve employee productivity and organizational performance. EAPs are also called employee and family assistance programs (EFAPs) or member assistance programs (MAPs). EAPs have become widely adopted by businesses in the last 25 years, as the number of organizations with an EAP has gone from 31% in 1985 to 75% in 2009.[2,3]

Employee Support — EAPs Provide No-Cost Counseling for Employees and Their Family Members

Healthy Workplaces — EAPs Provide Behavioral Health Consultation to the Organization

Business Value — EAPs Support Worker Productivity and Reduce Business Costs
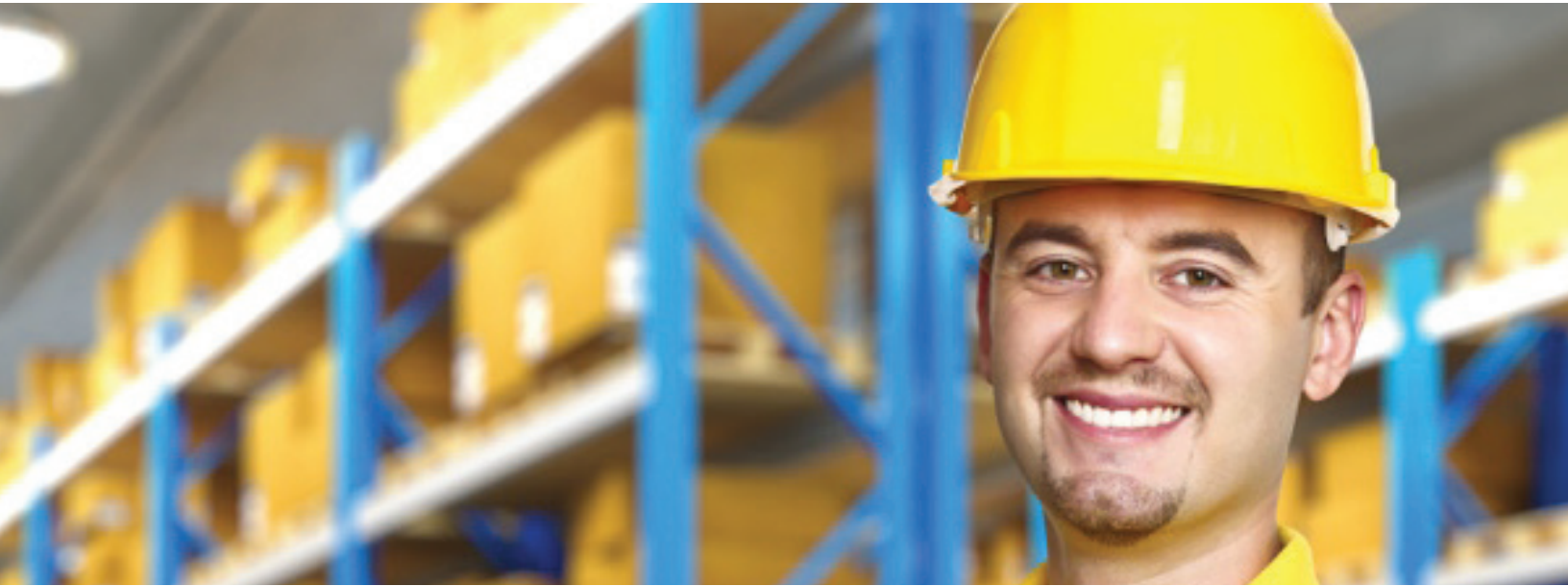
Better Mental Health — EAPs Restore Hope for Troubling Situations

Employee Support

*EAPs Provide No-Cost Counseling
for Employees and Their Family Members*

EAPs Provide No-Cost Counseling for Employees and Their Family Members

About 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. and Canada has symptoms of a mental health disorder,[4,5] a substance abuse disorder,[6,7] or both.[8,9] Over 75% of the people with these behavioral health disorders are employed. Sadly, most do not get care for the problem, often due to fears of social stigma, an inability to afford care, or lack of access to a provider.[10,11] But with an EAP, workers with such issues can talk confidentially (either by phone or office visits) with a licensed mental health professional at no cost and often with little delay. Lately the recession has increased the use of the EAP for assistance with family financial issues.[12]

Referral and Follow-up for Severe Cases

Employees with more serious problems are referred by the EAP to other providers for longer-term mental health treatment, for substance abuse specialty support and/or for psychiatric medications. Many of these "at-risk" individuals are prone to create significant costs if not treated.[13] A benefit of being referred from the EAP is that such cases are more likely to continue treatment because of knowing what to expect from the process and from the follow-up support from the EAP.

Organizational Risk and Employee Wellness

EAPs intervene in the workplace directly through offering educational campaigns for all employees, group-level interventions for work teams, and problem-specific coaching for individual managers.[14]

The EAP can work with leadership, human resources, work/life and wellness programs to raise awareness of mental health issues and to help identify unhealthy workplace practices.[15]

The EAP can play a role in motivating and supporting people in their personal wellness goals and in reducing stress which causes health problems.

EAPs also support organizations to prepare for, and respond to, traumatic workplace incidents, such as violence, crimes, deaths, and disasters.[16]

Providing psychological first aid is a specialty of most EAPs.[17]

Disability and Chronic Disease

Mental health disorders are now the fastest-growing and most costly kind of health disability in Canada.[18] Between 10% and 40% of people with the costliest chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, pain, heart disease) also have depression.[19] This high level of comorbidity presents opportunities for the EAP to collaborate more with primary care doctors, disease management programs, and disability case management to assist with mental health related issues.[20]

Business Value

EAPs Support Worker Productivity and Reduce Business Costs

Work Performance Focus

A focus on work performance is one of the components of the "core technology" that guides the EAP profession.[21]   Research shows that employees who use EAPs often experience positive changes in their work performance, such as having fewer days late or absent, higher levels of work productivity, and improved work team relations.[22,23,24] For example, a study of over 60,000 cases found that employee absenteeism was reduced from an average of 2.37 days of unscheduled absences or tardy days in the prior 30-day period before using the EAP to only 0.91 days after completing use of the EAP.[25]

Cost Savings

Dozens of applied studies have demonstrated that EAP services can produce positive returns for purchasers in direct cost savings from reduced medical, disability, and workers' compensation claims and even more savings from reducing indirect business cost losses related to poor work performance.[26,27] The typical ROI is $3 or more for every $1 dollar invested in the EAP.[28] According to the National Business Group on Health, "a well-run EAP will provide a positive return on investment."[29]

Better Mental Health

EAPs Restore Hope for Troubling Situations

Each Person is Unique

The real value of EAP is found in each person's story of why they used the service.

Every client has a unique and stressful circumstance that causes him or her to reach out for assistance.

Getting support from an EAP counselor usually brings relief and offers practical resources to resolve the problem.

And in so doing, it also gives one confidence to do what is needed.

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About the EASNA Advocacy Committee

Achieving Healthy and Productive Workplaces

Our Mission and Objectives

The mission of the EASNA Advocacy Committee is to represent and advance the interests of the employee assistance community in legislative and regulatory affairs at the state, provincial and federal levels, where applicable. Working collaboratively with other organizations and coalitions, the EASNA Advocacy Committee seeks to create a regulatory and legislative landscape throughout North America that will facilitate the maximum growth and positive societal influence of employee assistance programs.

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