



Special Issue: Effectively Using the EAP

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The focus of this issue of The Bridge is to provide information that can maximize utilization and allow the EAP to provide companies with the best services possible. The EAP offers many services outside of the one with which it is most identified, counseling of employees, and this issue will highlight some of these services.

Management Consultation

Often, supervisors and managers become aware, either through report or observation, that an employee is experiencing personal problems. The supervisor or manager may informally refer the employee to the EAP or they may try to deal with it themselves. While making a referral to the EAP is a valuable and worthwhile practice, it is not the only way the EAP can help. Consulting with the EAP can be a helpful additional step for a couple of reasons: First, the employee may decide not to use the service. Second, if the employee does use the service, the support at work still needs to be there. The employee may need accommodations due to his or her personal problems, or there may be lingering problems at work as a

consequence. The EAP can help the supervisor and manager deal with these issues.

We often say that we help employers deal with “personal” rather than “personnel” issues. When a manager or supervisor uses the consultation services of the EAP, we will provide some guidance regarding communicating effectively with an employee who is struggling with personal issues, in addition to helping the team remain cohesive and effective. We can also provide education about mental health, addiction, etc.

Front-line supervisors are often the first people that employees turn to when they are struggling with personal issues. While it is important for the supervisor to be supportive, it can be highly burdensome to be the only support for a struggling employee. The EAP can not only serve as a referral source in these situations, but also as a support for the supervisor.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of EAP work. However, fear of privacy violations can be a major barrier to accessing EAP services. It is important when referring employees to the EAP, to remind them that their use of the EAP is confidential. Even if an employee is formally referred to the EAP, confidentiality will be kept unless the employee signs a form allowing the clinician to release information. When

making a formal or mandatory referral, it is important to inform employees about this.

We do inform companies about usage rates, as this is an important piece of information when making decisions about how best to use EAP. When reporting usage, however, we do not give names of those using the EAP, and if a company is small, we use longer reporting periods, making it less likely that an employee who uses the EAP will be identified through the process of elimination.

Like any healthcare provider, without confidentiality, we cannot do our job effectively. Maintaining confidentiality allows us to best serve the employees seeking our services and the companies themselves.

Crisis and Grief Interventions

Companies can be faced with any number of crises: violence, robberies or thefts, death of an employee, etc., and we can help with the aftermath. Research over the past 20 years has shown that there can be significant negative effects on employees, both personally and professionally, after a crisis event. Some employees may only be minimally and temporarily affected and some employees may be more severely affected. Prompt intervention after a crisis event can help employees to manage their reaction to the crisis more effectively and possibly prevent

the development of long-term negative effects.

Most often, after a crisis event, EAP clinicians will facilitate a group session, providing education and information about reactions to stressful events, and, if there has been a loss, what to expect throughout the grieving process. Those who attend the group will be given the opportunity to share their reactions to the event and provide support to each other. In addition, the clinicians will screen for individuals who might need further intervention or a professional referral. After the group session, those who attended have an opportunity to meet individually with a clinician, whether onsite immediately after the session, or at the clinic.

In addition, front-line supervisors and managers may have concerns some time after the group session has taken place, and we can provide guidance in dealing with these concerns.

Getting the Word Out

There are a number of different ways to inform employees about EAP and each serves a very

important purpose.

The first method is to ensure that information is available and visible for employees to come across themselves. We can provide a number of options to serve this purpose, including brochures, posters, and cards. This method serves the employee who may not want anyone at work to know that they are having difficulties and, therefore, will not be a candidate for referral. The materials provide a reminder that there is a place that employees can receive help.

The next method is word-of-mouth, where one employee uses the EAP and tells another employee about their experience. This can be one of the most effective methods of boosting usage. There is sometimes mistrust in the EAP, as employees may believe that their confidentiality will not be kept or that their concerns will not be heard. When someone is able to share a positive experience with the EAP, it makes it much less likely for distrust to be a barrier.

Another means of getting the word out is through face-to-face

conversation. Managers, supervisors, and human resources professionals can speak to employees frequently about EAP as a benefit, either formally or informally. Staff meetings and one-on-one meetings are good places to remind and educate employees about the EAP.

The final method is through referral. There are a number of ways to refer an employee to EAP, and this has been discussed at length in previous issues of The Bridge. What all referral methods have in common, however, is that a manager, supervisor, or human resources identifies an employee that could benefit from EAP services and suggests that he or she attend, giving that employee information about EAP and how to access it.

*Please join us for our upcoming
EAP Supervisor Training on
Thursday, September 3, 2009 at
12PM.*

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Using the EAP

The Family Service, Inc. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential counseling and referral service to help you and your employees balance the demands of home and work.

- Call for help with: family/marital problems, substance abuse, parent/child problems, stress/anxiety, depression, coping with illness.
- Counseling and referral for employees and family members (locations in Merrimack Valley and So. NH)
- 24 hour a day, 7 days a week crisis support.
- Information and referrals for legal, financial and other support services.

1-800-683-9544

www.FamilyServiceInc.com/EAP