

The Value of Employee Assistance

How You And Your Company Benefit

Your company's success relies on how productive and creative your staff is. But things sometimes go awry. Personal problems, health conditions or abuse of chemical substances affect or have the potential of affecting your staff's work performance. An employee assistance program (EAP) can provide solutions to many of these problems.

What is EAP?

An EAP can simply be someone in the personnel department who refers employees to outside treatment or help for personal problems. Or it can be a separate department in your company with one or more trained staff members to assist employees. Help can come from internal sources or from outside agencies. Family members also can receive help through an EAP or can participate in the employee's counseling. Employees can enter the program voluntarily or a manager may refer an employee. Some important features of a good EAP are confidentiality, voluntary participation, and assurance that an employee's job security and promotion are not affected because he or she is seeking help.

The cost of an initial assessment is usually covered by your company or your insurance plan. Continued treatment may be paid for by insurance. If not, affordable help can still be found. Health agencies and insurance companies find that a dollar spent for an EAP can save at least \$5 in future health and emotional treatments.

How Can It Work For You?

The EAP will not take over your job as manager. It is still your ultimate responsibility to handle job performance and absenteeism problems. An EAP is there when intervention has failed to help. It is impossible for you to have the time and skills to continue working with an employee's problems if they call for professional help.

One poorly performing employee can permeate your entire department and reduce everyone's job performance. Letting an unhappy or unproductive employee go unassisted can be a costly mistake, both in loss of money and human potential.

How An EAP Can Help

An EAP benefits those people who have job performance problems. It is estimated that 18 percent of the work force have personal problems that have the potential of decreasing their productivity by as much as 25 percent. Absenteeism is often excessive.

An employee's personal problem is likely to cause stress, anxiety or depression. Employees can even become physically ill. An effective EAP can help an employee prevent or improve medical and emotional problems. Intervention can help reduce insurance premiums and health care costs. Kimberly-Clark has reported a 70 percent reduction in accidents with employees using an EAP. Phillips Petroleum has netted more than \$8 million annually in reduced accidents and sick leave with resulting higher productivity.

An EAP can help everyone. It assists your employees, and their family members receive needed support and counseling. It helps the company restore a valuable employee back to a productive work life.