



Coupled with health benefits, EAPs play a vital role in encouraging employee wellness and addressing substance abuse problems.

How employee assistance programs can address opioid painkiller abuse and addiction

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) play a vital role in drug-free-workplace programs (DFWP) and provide a low-barrier, confidential way for employees to seek help quickly.

EAP services can be an effective first step for employees to initiate support for nonmedical prescription drug problems, and can offer counseling and referral services; conduct substance abuse evaluations or connect an employee to a qualified substance abuse professional (SAP).

EAPs also can monitor employee's participation in, and compliance with treatment as well as return-to-work recommendations. A representative from the EAP may also offer training for managers and supervisors on the identification and handling of work-related difficulties that may be related to misuse and abuse of prescription painkillers, alcohol and other drug abuse. EAP services can be customized for any size company or organization.

Who initiates an EAP referral?

Employees may voluntarily seek EAP assistance on their own, or at the recommendation of a union representative, co-worker, friend, family member, nurse or other.

Supervisors and managers can also initiate a referral, typically as a result of a performance or conduct issue, or for an employee who is identified as using or abusing drugs. The EAP provider can work with the Medical Review Officer in cases where an employee is identified as a potential substance abuser through a drug testing program and refer the employee to a SAP to determine if the employee needs further care or treatment.

EAP services may include:

- crisis intervention
- assessment,
- referral
- short-term and follow-up counseling
- treatment monitoring
- supervisor and management training

How can you ensure a successful and effective EAP program?

Many companies have EAPs, however the national average for utilization has hovered around 3 percent for years. Often employees don't understand the scope of this valuable benefit and may fear negative ramifications if they access help. Effective EAPs are widely promoted and recommended by leadership (management and/ or unions). Promotion of EAP services needs to clearly spell out who an employee can talk to, how they can communicate with that resource, and where. Employees must be assured that EPA services are absolutely confidential and protected by HIPPA privacy regulations.

Selecting and Strengthening Employee Assistance Programs: A Purchasers Guide
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EAPS Modernize, but Employees Are Slow to Catch On. Workforce Rebecca Vesely Feb 21, 2012

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