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# EAC *Supervisor Wire*

**Employee Assistance Center at CARE**

Published by the staff at EAC to help supervisors in their goal of maintaining a safe, drug free, productive workforce.

**WINTER 2005**

## “Free” Employee Assistance Programs

These days, many health insurance companies, disability carriers, payroll management organizations and medical carriers are “branching out” into the behavioral health care field, offering “free” employee assistance programs (EAP) as part of their core plans. This seems like a great deal to the average consumer. The rationale goes “if you are already going to offer the medical or disability plan, why not throw in an EAP?”

The problem is that behavioral healthcare is not their main focus. As a result, some of the most important components of a valuable EAP are left out and left unmentioned, including:

### Face to Face Assessment and Brief Therapy Sessions

Many free EAPs only offer phone rather than face-to-face sessions. In most cases, counseling that is conducted over the telephone, rather in the privacy of a clinician’s office is ineffective. The “free” EAP plans are simply paper programs that can cause more harm than good by not giving the employee the opportunity to discuss a problem in the security of a clinician’s office.

### Statistical Reporting

When a company chooses to offer its employees a “free” EAP, they may not be invested in who utilizes the plan since they are not paying for the EAP. Because many of the “free” EAPs do not give employers utilization reports, company executives are unable to detect any problematic areas within the employee population.

### Crisis Intervention

In its “Standards and Guidelines for EAPs,” EAPA says that it is essential for EAPs to offer responsive crisis intervention. When a crisis occurs on the job or at home, employees and their family members often need help coping with the traumatic event. It is the EAP’s job to offer counseling to those affected. When employees think that the EAP is available for help, but find out that it does not cover emergencies. In most cases, employers with a “free” EAP find themselves without access to onsite intervention when it is needed most. They become even more distraught and the emotions escalate.

### On-Site Presence

Because the organization is not the “free” EAP’s main focus, they may put little time or attention into it. Most often, on-site meetings are not included as part of the “free” plan. Therefore, there is little to no contact between the EAP vendor and the company’s contacts.

### Management Referrals

An EAP can be an indispensable tool to those supervisors who appreciate its value. When supervisors observe poor work performance, they should be able to refer the employee to the EAP. The EAP presents a positive avenue for the supervisor to restore employee performance by providing effective tools for resolving problems. During this time, the EAP maintains contact with the referring supervisor, reporting specific information on the employee’s prognosis, attendance and compliance with the treatment plan.

The ability to refer employees to the EAP can also serve as a safety net for companies. For example, a supervisor can refer an employee who is performing poorly on the job to the EAP. If that employee continues to fail to meet expectations and is terminated, the employer has the knowledge and documentation that every effort was made to retain that employee, including the referral to the EAP.

Usually management referrals are not included in the “free” EAP. Supervisors cannot refer troubled employees to the EAP. They are only able to informally suggest to the employee that the EAP is available. Then it is up to the employee to seek help, if he or she is willing. More than likely, that employee will not seek help and will continue to be less productive. In most situations, even if the informally referred employee does go to the EAP, the supervisor never receives any feedback.

*CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE*

## **THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE CENTER CAN HELP WITH MANY CONCERNS**

Family Problems • Child Care • Personal/Job Stress  
Alcohol/Drug Abuse • Marital Tension • Elder Care  
Emotional Problems • Legal and Financial Referral

**Services are confidential and FREE to  
employees and their dependents**

***“Don’t argue for other people’s weaknesses. Don’t argue for your own. When you make a mistake, admit it, correct it, and learn from it--immediately.”***

— Stephen Covey



### **Cost-savings**

One of the goals of an EAP is to help manage health insurance costs by helping members solve their problems early, thus avoiding utilization of their medical insurance benefits. However, with a “free” EAP through the medical carrier, the employee is referred to a therapist within the carrier’s network. This results in an increased medical loss ratio and often in an increase in medical premium. This is where the “free” EAP is funded. As a result, utilization of the EAP does not result in any type of cost-savings; instead the cost actually increases.

### **Follow-Up**

It is important for EAP vendors to continually monitor and improve clinical practices and service quality if necessary. This is usually done through confidential patient satisfaction surveys. Since most “free” EAP vendors do not perform follow-up surveys, they have no way of knowing the perceived quality of the services that have been provided. How can a “free” EAP be at all tempting for companies that want to offer a truly worth-while benefit? The only truly worthwhile EAP is one that is full service and specialized.

The price of a specialized EAP is minimal compared to the rewards that companies reap.

As the popular saying goes, “There is no such thing as a free lunch.” In the insurance industry, there is no such thing as a “free” EAP. Employers are paying for the EAP premium as part of their disability, health, life or other plan premiums. Offering employees “value-added benefits” implies that the benefits that are being added have value. But by adding a “free” EAP, you are adding a benefit that has little or no value. In other words, you get what you pay for.

## **Stacking the Deck To Meet the Needs of the Workgroup**

Many employees do not bother to look at their own magnificence. Without that view, it is unlikely that they will recognize the need for strategies to maximize their strengths. When we buy an outfit for a special affair, we automatically try to coordinate each piece so that they enhance one another and amplify our sense of “looking good” from head to toe. A man will make sure his socks and tie are in sync while a woman will adorn herself with color coordinated makeup, jewelry, nail color, etc.



But when it comes to our gifts and talents, we get extremely casual or sloppy and so we stack skills on top that don’t bring out our best and sometimes we are so off kilter, our skills are actually a tacky appendage that detracts from our gifts and talents.

Your employees are your companies’ most valuable asset. Helping them identify their strengths, talents, preferences and skills that round out their life’s tool kit will result in more worth to themselves and their coworkers. Employees are more productive when they can spend more time doing what they love and value and less time doing what they don’t.

It’s best to have a final product in mind, meaning a vision of where you want your team to be. When is the last time you took note of the unique magnificence of yourself as a leader as well as the players on the team and stacked complimentary skills on top to increase productivity? Self-investment and self-actualization are two of the best ways to honor ourselves, honor life, and contribute to our professions and the world. Take your team to the next level by stacking the deck in your favor.

Robin Harris of DesignerLife Coach, has partnered with the EAC to offer a three-hour **complimentary** personal coaching workshop during the months of January, February and March 2005. Make a commitment to start the new year out right by bringing the best of your team forward.

***To schedule a workshop at your worksite call Lisa at the EAC at (866)-888-1555 extension 129.***



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**Clinician on call 24/7**

The EAC is located within the CARE office, which is on the southeast corner of Utica Road & Masonic (13 ½ Mile Road) in Fraser