



12 Questions to Ask When Choosing an EAP

What should you look for in an EAP? While 85-90% of program utilization by employees is voluntary, as much as 15% typically comes from management consultations and job performance referrals, both of which can produce substantial cost benefits for your organization. To help you choose the best EAP for your organization, ask your prospective vendor the following questions.

- 1) What qualifications do staff members who answer the phone and perform intake assessments have?** In the interest of public safety and for the health of your employees, a licensed, EAP-trained counselor with a master's degree from an accredited university should be available at all times.
- 2) Are referrals verified for clinical appropriateness and counselor availability?** Many EAPs give callers a list of affiliates and direct them to make the phone calls and decide which resource to use. But it can be difficult if not impossible for someone who is depressed or facing a crisis to successfully navigate that burden — nor should they have to. Your EAP should assign clients to a compatible counselor and verify that counselor's availability on the spot.
- 3) Do clients work with the same counselor throughout the course of their care?** For continuity, callers should be able to speak with the counselor they've worked with previously rather than waiting for the next available counselor or only having access to an unlicensed customer service representative. When a repeat client calls, the person taking the call should be able to determine which counselor that client has seen in the past and schedule a second appointment if that's what the client would like to do.
- 4) Are cases kept open until follow-up contact reveals the client is satisfied with their current situation?** Counselors should make several calls — and if phone contact cannot be made, send letters — to make sure the client is satisfied with the referral(s) he or she received and determine whether additional referrals are needed.
- 5) Is the EAP vendor collaborative?** Dealing effectively with a difficult and/or emergent situation requires an EAP team that is responsive, flexible and draws upon all its professional resources to help the employer in whatever way works best. Your EAP should have licensed counselors on staff who can immediately assess a caller who is in crisis.
- 6) Does the EAP offer management and organizational consultations?** Does the EAP vendor have trained organizational interventionists on staff who can deliver services at your work site? Managers and supervisors often struggle with a difficult or troubled employee and are not sure what to do or are uncomfortable taking corrective action. Management and organizational consultations provide the support and guidance leaders need in difficult situations.

7) Does the EAP provide job performance referrals? Job performance referrals are usually required when an employee's performance has deteriorated and further disciplinary action will likely result in termination. Performance referrals are also the best course of action following a grievous policy violation or a positive drug test result. When drug and alcohol users are seeking treatment, time is of the essence. Having a DOT-Qualified Substance Abuse Professionals (QSAP) on staff to address positive drug or alcohol test referrals immediately can be critical.

8) Does the EAP assign an account manager to your organization? A good account manager oversees all aspects of your EAP program implementation and responds to any problems or concerns.

9) Does the EAP offer in-person training? Access to in-person training is important and the overall cost of offering it is usually nominal when you incorporate it into your EAP vendor contract upfront. Reasonably priced training programs can have a positive impact on many people, providing a significant return on your investment. This is especially true when the EAP has on-staff trainers who are readily available.

10) Does the EAP offer online training? Savvy employers regularly use online training services for employee development, corrective action and as a starting point for discussions about a variety of workplace topics.

11) How will your workforce know what services the EAP offers? EAPs have little value if your employees don't know how they can benefit from using it. Promotional activities should include a variety of communications including printed and electronic posters, newsletters and flyers, orientation sessions for employees and training for managers/supervisors.

12) Is your EAP a member of the Employee Assistance Program Association? Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) is the leading provider of education and services to employee assistance professionals and others interested in issues affecting the behavioral health and well-being of employers and employees. EAPA promotes the highest standards of EA practice and the continuing development employee assistance professionals, programs and services. Make sure the EAP vendor you choose is a member of EAPA.

The workplace has changed in profound ways, but people are still the most important ingredient for a successful company. Employees and their dependents often struggle to address personal problems that limit their ability to be productive at work, which presents managers and supervisors with the challenge of identifying workplace behavior and performance issues that keep an individual or a team from working effectively. A well implemented and promoted EAP can be extremely beneficial to individual employees and their dependents, and a tremendous resource to an organization's leadership.

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