

White Paper on Employee Assistance Programs

The Competitive Advantage of Internal EAPs

- 1. The EAP Labor Management Advisory Committee.** This group comprises representatives from unions and management. They serve as advisors in support of EAP. The group evaluates EAP's performance and makes recommendations. In turn, EAP serves as a consultant to labor and management.
- 2. Knowledge of local community resources.** EAP staff members generally live and work in the same geographic area. This allows them to personally interview, screen and recommend providers. It helps to establish and maintain good working relationships with providers. Making a good match of client to providers is an expertise of EAP. An additional perk may be that the provider is willing to be flexible with referrals, occasionally slide their fees or do pro bono work. Consistent positive employee feedback about providers is often the best measure of having an effective resource and referral network. EAP staff has personal experience with their health benefit plans and know the Human Resources Benefit Managers.
- 3. EAP staff members are employees of the organization.** Our role provides us with knowledge and experience of the culture, people, players, policies, politics, informal systems and resources within the organization. This makes the EAP an effective tool in helping our clients and the organization maintain a safe, healthy and productive workplace. As employees, EAP staff has a vested interest in the survival and future of the organization. We have a pulse on the organization and can identify workplace trends and make recommendations.
- 4. EAP is visible.** We have an on site presence in the organization. We are a known entity. We are available and accessible. EAP staff members may have informal consultations with employees in the workplace that may otherwise not be able to come to the office or are not comfortable making an appointment. At workshops, on the phone and in New Employee Orientation employees see and hear the faces of EAP. They know if they call the office, they will meet with a familiar person and that there will be continuity in their care, particularly if there are follow up meetings. We interview most of our clients in person, conduct training, attend committee meetings, meet with colleagues and do our normal business transactions at work. We are also seen participating at family and cultural events in the organization or in the local community.
- 5. EAP consults on workplace interventions.** EAP guides supervisors on how to intervene with an impaired employee. This is a very delicate and sensitive situation that deserves careful thought, documentation, evaluation and a plan of action. Another type of intervention is called "upward intervention." It is a type of intervention to assist a supervisor/manager or high level administrator, who may be impaired, to get help. It is often challenging and subordinates often find themselves in difficult situations. The payoff is that a successful intervention not

only helps an impaired supervisor, but also improves employee morale and retention in the department.

- 6. EAP knows its employees.** It is the only group that EAP serves each day. EAP knows the communities in which the employees live. EAP does its best to address special needs. It develops extensive resource and referral networks, produces new materials and customizes educational workshops to better serve our people.
- 7. Management consultations are more prevalent.** EAP is accessible by phone and in person for consultations with supervisor and managers about employee referrals, available for emergency appointments and discussion about departmental issues. Departments request EAP to provide workshops that address workplace problems, enhance morale and develop good stress management techniques.
- 8. EAP participates in organizational consultation and development of workplace policies related to EAP's area of expertise.** Consultation around various organizational initiatives or policy include: Drug-Free Workplace, Workplace Violence Prevention, Critical Incident Stress Management and Emergency Management Response Plans, etc.
- 9. EAP develops partnerships by collaborating with other departments in the organization to share resources, increase awareness of services and promote wellness.** EAP staff develops positive working relationships with members of the EAP Labor Management Advisory Committee, Training and Organizational Development staff, labor and management, Employee Health Service, Wellness Center and various committees.
- 10. EAP has a wealth of knowledge about resources within the organization and a good working relationship with them.** Because of this, referrals are made much more efficiently. Employees meet with a contact person who is already apprised of the issues. This ensures the likelihood of good follow up with all parties involved: the employee, the referral and EAP.
- 11. EAP provides on site support following critical incidents.** EAP staff members are trained in Critical Incident Stress Management. They offer consultation on workplace violence prevention policy and related issues around safety, such as impairment due to substance abuse, emotional or psychiatric disorders.
- 12. EAP facilitates the establishment of mutual help or on site support groups.** These are usually held during lunchtime for the convenience of employees. They include problem solving, sharing resources, learning coping skills and developing a network of support.

Submitted by Donna L. Buehler in collaboration with the New York State Employee Assistance Program Council of Coordinators Subcommittee on the EAP White Paper. September 17, 2002.