

Use the right words when pointing employees to EAP

An employee assistance program (EAP) is an employee benefit available through many group health plans that helps employees deal with issues such as depression, family crises (divorce, death, etc.), alcoholism, drug addiction, teen problems and suicide prevention.

EAP counselors, typically by phone, will either handle the problem or refer employees to the appropriate local providers.

When you mention to employees that the company has an EAP service, do so in a generic and consistent manner.

Say something like: "I want to let you know that we have trained professionals available to assist employees in a wide range of areas, including family problems, illnesses, elder care, finances, depression, drug addiction and more."

Then write down the EAP's contact information or hand over a brochure. That puts the ball in the employee's court. Now it's up to him or her to contact the EAP.

That approach provides information to the employee without singling out a specific problem. Never say anything such as, "The EAP has good drug counselors" or "Mike was depressed and the EAP really helped him."

Note: If an employee seems unable to stop talking about her problem after she's opened up to you, say something like: "Laura, you're giving me too much personal information. I care about you, but I'm not your best resource. Remember, we have an EAP to help us at times like this. I'm sure they'll be able to help you better than I could."