

Keys to Selecting an EAP Program

A 3 Step Plan



Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), sometimes called Employee and Family Assistance Programs (EFAPs) are employee benefits programs, typically employer-sponsored, designed to support and assist in eliminating a variety of employee concerns. EAPs are usually focused on supporting individuals who are dealing with stress (work-related, family related, legal, financial), mental health, addictions, crisis, and sometimes are expanded to include wellness and other employee health services. EAPs typically provide assessments, brief interventions, information, guidance, referrals to other services and case management with long-term follow-up for mental health concerns and substance abuse problems.

Remember, the best vendors are partners and should be able to clearly demonstrate how they can deliver value and outcomes.

1) Determine what employee health challenges you are looking to support

- Review your STD, LTD and health benefit (including drug use) reports to determine if there are patterns or gaps such as common medications, reasons for absence etc.
- What current programs do you offer to your employees and are there areas of overlap or natural opportunities for integration?
- While stress and mental health concerns are a key area of focus for EAPs, are there other health or workplace issues that require a solution
 - Some examples may include chronic disease, serious illness support, caregiver support
- Are there specific organizational risks that an EAP can assist with? For example, addictions or occupational health risks, organizational threat response, etc.

2) Define Success

- Determining what success looks like is critical to ensuring the program you select propels your organization forward. Some common themes to define are:
- Rather than focusing on utilization, which while an important benchmark for engagement and program awareness, focusing on outcome measures can determine value for money as well as impact on the organization
- Effective partners will assist you with utilizing your existing health and usage data to establish a clear baseline from which to measure success.
- Determine a realistic timeline for assessing the success. In many cases trending or outcomes can be monitored monthly or quarterly and programs can be adjusted in response to those trends. This nimble response can contribute greatly to ensuring success.

3) Define Your Budget

Most organizations that have previously purchased an EAP service will have a current allocated budget amount, however there are ways to deliver increased value for the same dollars, or sometimes a savings, depending on how the program is strategically structured.

Your EAP provider should be able to customize a solution that not only meets your organizations strategic objectives, but one that also considers budget trade-offs and communicates those in a transparent manner.

Generally speaking, most EAPs are priced based on three different models.

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1. Fixed budget

Usually priced at a rate per employee per month, with a guarantee to hold the pricing for period of time (often three or five years) regardless of how much or how little use.

- Advantage: it is easy to budget and the organization receives a consistent service
- Disadvantage: In situations where use is low or not well understood, it can feel that the organization is not receiving value.

2. Pay for Use/ Fee for Service

Organizations pay for the services used, typically meaning an hourly rate per counseling session, although in some instances there is a minimal program management fee in addition,

- Advantage: Clear transparent value focused model
- Disadvantage: Can be difficult to budget. Great EAP providers understand this and will cap the fees at a certain amount (typically slightly higher than under fixed budget pricing).

3. Utilization Based

Also usually priced at a rate per employee per month, HOWEVER, there is a provision that if utilization exceeds an agreed amount, there is a pricing reconciliation, and a forward looking adjustment of the price.

- Advantage In theory, there is a clear value trade, however typically the reconciliation is only for excess, not for savings.
- Disadvantage: This can be difficult to budget. In addition, because each additional use is treated the same from an incremental cost perspective (i.e. a web click equates to a counseling session, even though the costs are vastly different). This can also lead to potential transparency issues where the usage rates are artificially inflated.

Conclusion

EAPs can be an important component of an overall employee health and engagement strategy especially when integrated with other health services. Careful consideration of these three items will determine the most effective approach when selecting an EAP service.

About HumanaCare

HumanaCare takes an integrated mental and physical wellness approach because a compassionate, holistic, employee centered care model is a prerequisite to more improved, long lasting outcomes. Employees are subsequently less absent, more engaged and productive at work, generating a significant return on investment for their company.

For our clients, we deliver improved outcomes through our Employee Assistance Programs, Disability Support Services, Medical Second Opinion Services and Health Services (such as healthcare navigation, Chronic Disease support and specialized case management services, HumanaCare has more than 35 years of Canadian healthcare experience.



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