



BASICS OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS



Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) are designed to help employees deal with emotional, behavioral and other issues that may interfere with work productivity. The EAP is a benefit offered by and paid for by the employer. Since EAP's can deal with sensitive employee information, privacy and confidentiality are critical questions for employees who may have concerns that employers may have access to private personal information. A key component of the EAP is confidentiality.

CONFIDENTIALITY STANDARDS:

EAP counselors comply with the same confidentiality standards required of all licensed counselors and therapists. This means that EAP counselors cannot release confidential information without the employee's written consent. They can neither confirm nor deny that they are seeing an employee, and all billing for EAP services are done without indentifying the employee utilizing the benefit.

MANAGER REFERRALS:

When a manager or supervisor recommends that an employee seek help through the EAP, the counselor cannot break confidentiality. The only information the EAP can share with a signed authorized release of information, is whether or not the employee is participating in the program and complying with the counselors recommendations. The exception to this standard is when the employee is covered under DOT regulations, or professional exceptions which are outlined next.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES:

EAP counselors who are also Substance Abuse Professionals (SAP) are working under the U.S. Department of Transportation regulations. If an employee is referred under these regulations by the employer, the confidentiality requirements change and these differences are outlined in the Federal DOT regulations. They should be explained by the employer in training provided to the employees.

PROFESSIONAL EXCEPTIONS:

EAP counselors, like all licensed counselors are required to break confidentiality in situations where employees are a danger to themselves or others or in cases of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or disabled.

For More Information:

Family Service Inc.

(605) 336-1974/800-589-1974

Sdfsi.org