

Employee Assistance Programmes

A guide for schools



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What is an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)?

An employee assistance program is an employee benefit program that assists school staff with personal problems and/or work-related problems that may impact their job performance, health, mental and emotional well-being.

An EAP can support staff facing a wide range of issues. Some examples include:

In their working lives:

- Relationships with colleagues
- Managing stress
- Managing transition
- Work-life balance
- Managing conflict and difficult behaviour
- Managing workload
- Coping with change

In their personal lives:

- Family relationships
- Miscarriage
- Support regarding alcohol and substance abuse
- Bereavement
- Infertility
- Getting married
- Serious illness
- Divorce



What makes an EAP successful?

There are several factors that make an EAP successful, including:

- Strict confidentiality
- Being open to staff and their immediate families
- Recognition and commitment by school leaders, staff and unions that an EAP is needed
- Policies and procedures supported by senior leadership teams and staff
- Establishment of both formal and informal referral procedures

- Promotion of the EAP and encouragement to use the service
- All staff educated in how to access EAP
- Periodic evaluation of the EAP to be sure the needs of both staff and school leaders are being met

In addition, the EAP must be monitored and evaluated to ensure continued quality of the referral/assistance and to correct potential trouble situations. An appropriate assessment, referral and follow-up of progress are important for continued success of the EAP.

What things should be considered when contracting an EAP provider?

Hiring professional services, no matter what the service may be, requires some investigation. It is the schools responsibility to find a competent provider who is qualified by education, knowledge, and experience. **The following questions are not meant to be the only questions you may ask, but rather they are a start to your checklist.**

1 What is the experience of the provider?

- How many years has the provider been serving clients?
- Can the provider provide a list of references?

2 Where are the provider's offices located?

A local organisation is generally preferred because they are familiar with the community and its resources.

3 What is the provider's scope of services?

Examples may include:

- Stress management.
- Child care or elder care referral.
- Wellness program.
- Counselling for crisis situations (e.g., death at work).
- Advice specifically for managers/supervisors in dealing with difficult situations.

Exactly how would the organisation provide services to your staff? For example, would the provider use an 800 number, referral network, on-site service, etc.

What is the policy on returning calls? How long before a call-back is placed (e.g., within 24 hours, 48 hours)?

4 How does the provider determine to whom the staff are referred? How and how often is the list of referral sources updated?

5 What is the provider's availability?

- How many staff members are available in typical and non-typical school hours?
- What services are available in non-typical school hours?
- What is the availability for people who may want to call at night?





6 How many counsellors are provided per staff member?

What are the backgrounds of the counsellors, i.e. education, credentials, years of experience, etc.?

7 Does the EAP offer education or training for your school? If so, what type of training is provided?

8 Does the provider have a follow-up or review service of utilisation? If so, how is it done?

9 What kinds of return-to-work, aftercare, or support services are offered?

10 What types of publicity and promotion of EAP services would be offered?

11 What is the fee structure? (E.g., flat fee? Based on average usage statistics and number of employees? Per referral?)

12 What types of reports are produced to school leaders? (E.g., number of referrals, what types, etc.)

Types of EAP services

The four main types of Employee Assistance Programme services. These are for:

- Individuals
- Organisation
- Managers
- Administrative

The most common EAP services are those delivered to individual staff members and their covered family members. Usually, this service includes individual assessment and referral with problem-focused counselling.

However, a comprehensive EAP also provides support to management and consultation regarding staff, organisational and management health and performance. It might be that your school does not need all these services and in fact, not all EAPs offer such a range of services. The mix of these services also depends on the delivery model of the Employee Assistance Programme.

EAP delivery models

There are different management models for EAPs:



External



Internal



Blended

These services are provided by professionals within the school, outside the school or a combination of both. Your choice needs to be based on the extent to which the program will integrate with your school and your staff.

Internal Programmes naturally have a high on-site presence thereby allowing walk-in contact between staff and counsellors. Promotion of the EAP is also more evident through various events, presence on the schools own intranet and communication channels.

External Programmes are delivered by a provider separate from the school and usually have a variable on-site presence which is usually lower than internal programmes. Phone-based counselling may be more emphasised in this program. Promotion of the EAP would be relatively lower or moderate with limited local events within the company and multiple mailings.

Blended Programmes primarily involve affiliate counsellors employed by the external EAP provider who conducts their activities through the internal EAP staff that is employed by the school itself.

Quality of EAP services

When you make the decision to implement an Employee Assistance Programme, it's a substantial investment. You want to make sure the programme follows what is considered the core functions of delivering an EAP:

Work-Performance Focus

The primary goal of an EAP counsellor is to understand how a problem is affecting the staff members' ability to function at work. Due to this, when the service is evaluated, focus on the changes in staff work performance.

Manager Awareness

It is important that the EAP staff work closely with the company to train school leaders, and line managers, on how to engage the EAP. The proximity with the school is also important for the EAP staff to understand what issues are of higher or lower relevance.

Internal & External Resources

The ability of the EAP to refer to resources within the school and outside to help the employee is crucial to the effectiveness of the program.

Staff want to know where to go and what to do. The EAP has the responsibility of providing this information in a tailored fashion based on the nature of the staff member's problem and circumstances. Make sure your EAP has a current and accurate database of resources.

Of course, these are just three of the several important characteristics you want to consider when evaluating the EAP you have in place already or are thinking of implementing. Other aspects include pricing options, utilisation and professionalism.

As an employer, you want your investment in an EAP to be effective at the highest rate. The best way to do that is to constantly evaluate how the program is functioning and if it is the right fit for the needs of your school. Your staff will appreciate your efforts to provide the best kind of help.

At Education Support we provide a dedicated EAP service for schools. We have a deep understanding of the education sector and the issues that matter to teachers. [You can find our more here.](#)



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