



HOW TO CREATE AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)



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What is an EAP?

An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential workplace service that helps employees deal with personal and professional issues that might affect their job performance, health, or well-being. Services typically include mental health counseling, financial planning, legal support, substance abuse services, and crisis intervention.

Step 1: Define Your Goals

- Improve employee well-being
- Reduce absenteeism and turnover
- Increase productivity
- Address workplace stress and conflict
- Promote a culture of caring through mental health resources and support

Breakout Checklist: Addressing the Organization's Specific Needs

A. Conduct Organizational Needs Assessment

- Review current HR and benefits utilization reports (e.g., sick leave, FMLA, turnover rates)
- Interview or survey employees to understand common personal/work-related stressors
- Analyze exit interview data for patterns related to workplace culture or stress
- Assess frequency and types of manager referrals for support-related issues
- Review claims or trends from health insurance, workers' comp, or wellness programs

B. Identify High-Risk Employee Groups or Job Roles

- Pinpoint roles with high emotional labor or physical risk (e.g., frontline workers, field staff)
- Examine departments with higher absenteeism or burnout complaints
- Review accommodations or leaves related to mental health or stress

C. Evaluate Work Environment Factors

- Assess job demands, workloads, and role clarity across teams
- Identify departments with ongoing conflict, toxic culture, or low morale
- Check availability of peer support or supervisory coaching
- Review DEI, harassment, or bullying reports to identify psychological safety gaps

D. Inventory Current Support Resources

- List existing internal and external mental health and wellness services
- Evaluate participation and awareness levels of those resources
- Identify redundancies or gaps in current offerings
- Check for lack of access among remote, field, or shift workers

E. Benchmark Against Similar Organizations

- Research EAP utilization and structure among industry peers
- Identify common services offered (e.g., financial coaching, legal support)
- Review industry best practices for mental health access and promotion

F. Prioritize Needs Based on Risk and Impact

- Categorize findings into high, medium, and low priority needs
- Rank based on potential impact on employee well-being and business performance
- Select 3-5 top needs to address in your updated or new EAP offering

G. Document and Align with Leadership

- Prepare summary of organizational needs and identified gaps
- Present findings to HR leadership or wellness committee
- Confirm alignment with organizational goals and future strategy
- Secure executive buy-in for resources and communication



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CREATING AN EAP

Step 2: Assess Employee Needs

Conduct anonymous surveys or focus groups - Identify common stressors: work-related, financial, mental health, relationships, family-related, child-care, eldercare, legal, substance use related.

This will help guide the search for a vendor that can meet the needs of workers.

Issue a survey to employees for feedback on what they would like to see provided/how they would like to be supported? What are the areas of highest cost impact for the employer? Is there any overlap in responses? List sample questions for the survey

Review HR data: absenteeism, turnover, performance trends

This information can be used as a benchmark and for evaluation pre and post EAP implementation

SAMPLE SURVEY - SECTION ONE

Section 1: General Perception

Do you believe a well-rounded EAP could be beneficial to you or someone you work with?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

What types of challenges do you think employees at our company face most often? (Select all that apply)

- Stress and burnout
- Work-life balance issues
- Financial concerns
- Family/relationship issues
- Substance misuse
- Grief or loss
- Legal challenges
- Workplace conflict
- Other: _____

SAMPLE SURVEY - SECTION TWO

Section 2: Desired Services

Which of the following services would you personally find most beneficial in an EAP?
(Select your top 5)

- Short-term mental health counseling
- Financial planning and debt management
- Legal consultation (e.g., family law, landlord issues)
- Crisis support (suicidal ideation, trauma response)
- Substance use recovery assistance
- Childcare or eldercare resource referrals
- Career coaching or performance counseling
- Conflict resolution or mediation services
- Stress management and mindfulness training
- Nutrition and wellness coaching
- Support groups (grief, parenting, anxiety, etc.)
- On-demand video/teletherapy access
- Monthly wellness workshops
- 24/7 EAP hotline
- Mobile app for easy access
- Other: _____

Would you prefer to access EAP services via:

- In-person counseling sessions
- Phone calls
- Virtual/video counseling
- Mobile app/text-based chat
- No preference

SAMPLE SURVEY - SECTION THREE

Section 3: Barriers & Support

What would prevent you from using an EAP, if needed? (Select all that apply)

- Concern about confidentiality
- Stigma or fear of judgment
- Lack of awareness
- Time or scheduling conflicts
- Not sure it would be helpful
- Haven't needed it
- Other: _____

What would make you more likely to use an EAP if you needed support?

- Clear communication about services
- Testimonials or stories from coworkers
- Direct outreach from HR or leadership
- Supervisor training on how to refer to EAP
- Easy-to-use website or app
- Monthly wellness topics and EAP tie-ins
- Other: _____

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CREATING AN EAP

Step 3: Decide on the EAP Model

There are three main models:

- **Internal EAP:** Staffed by in-house professionals (ideal for large companies)
- **External EAP:** Outsourced to a third-party provider (most common and cost-effective for small to mid-sized businesses)
- **Blended EAP:** Combination of in-house resources and external vendors

Step 4: Define Scope of Services

Your EAP can include:

- Mental health counseling (in-person, phone, video)
- Substance abuse support
- Financial counseling
- Legal consultation
- Childcare/eldercare referrals
- Critical incident response
- Grief and trauma support
- Work-life balance resources

This will depend on responses to the survey discussed in Step 2.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CREATING AN EAP

Step 5: Select an EAP Provider (if outsourcing) Look for providers with:

- 24-hour/7 days a week toll-free access/hotline staffed by qualified EAP counselor(s)
- Initial intake session(s) by qualified EAP counselor(s)
- Short-term problem/issue resolution - face to face, video, or both
- On-site critical incident stress management and follow-up
- Understanding of and experience with the construction industry
- Based on focus group feedback, it will be important that the vendor can assist with reported needs and issues to be addressed
- Reporting capabilities
- Guaranteed confidential recordkeeping

How to find providers?

Online resource for finding local EAP's.

<https://vendordirectory.shrm.org/category/benefits-health-welfare/employee-assistance-programs-eaps>

Questions to Ask a Provider:

- How are your counselors credentialed?
- What is your average response time?
- Do you offer manager/supervisor training?
- What reporting metrics do you provide?

Step 6: Develop Policies and Procedures - How employees can access the program - Eligibility (full-time, part-time, dependents) - Confidentiality safeguards - Limits on sessions (e.g., 3-6 per issue per year) - Referral process (self-referral or supervisory)

Step 7: Train Managers and Supervisors - Help them understand the purpose of the EAP - Teach them how to spot signs of distress - Guide them on how to make referrals - Reinforce the importance of confidentiality

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CREATING AN EAP

Step 8: Launch the Program - Announce the program company-wide - Share details via email, intranet, posters, orientation materials - Create an FAQ document - Host a kickoff event or webinar. Consider other communication avenues based on the entity launching the program such as a union health and welfare fund.

Step 9: Monitor and Evaluate - Collect deidentified utilization reports from the provider - Get feedback from employees and supervisors - Adjust services based on utilization and needs - Evaluate ROI: reduced absenteeism, improved morale, lower turnover

Best Practices - Keep it **confidential and voluntary** - Ensure 24/7 accessibility (hotline or online portal) - Include **family members** if possible - Promote it **year-round**—not just at launch - Include **EAP info in onboarding**

Sample EAP Policy Language “[Your Company] provides a confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help employees and their families address personal or work-related challenges. Services are free, voluntary, and available 24/7. Whether you’re dealing with stress, anxiety, legal concerns, or financial planning, our EAP offers the support you need to thrive both personally and professionally.”



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