Employee Assistance Programs

And the benefits of integrating it

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America’s workforce is stressed. Between the constant demands of the workplace, family and other outside obligations, it can be difficult for employees to fully focus at work when other issues are demanding their attention. Employees face any number of personal concerns, from depression and family issues to substance abuse, financial debt or caring for an elderly parent. Over time, these issues often escalate and result in lowered productivity and morale, as well as increased absenteeism, turnover, accidents, compensation claims and healthcare costs. According to the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans, presenteeism alone costs nearly $150 billion per year in lost productivity.

Employee Assistance Programs

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) were developed to identify and help employees resolve personal problems that impact their work performance. Since their introduction over 60 years ago, EAPs have helped employers lower medical costs, reduce turnover and absenteeism, increase employee productivity and cultivate a more satisfied workforce. Studies show that EAPs for substance abuse can reduce workers’ compensation claims, employer healthcare costs and absenteeism. In one study involving 50 companies, EAPs reduced absenteeism by 21 percent, decreased workplace injuries by 17 percent and increased productivity by 14 percent.

For employees, EAP counselors evaluate needs and offer short-term counseling to help cope with a number of issues, including marital difficulties, substance abuse, family/parenting issues, stress management, grief and loss, depression or other emotional problems. Through the identification of appropriate services and resolution of issues, EAPs have the ability to improve overall health and productivity, achieve a better work/life balance and avoid escalation of these issues.

The Benefits of Integration

While EAPs alone offer a number of advantages, the integration of an EAP into an overall benefits package for employees can multiply the impact. For example, Health Advocate's EAP+Work/Life program not only provides key EAP services to aid employees in need, but can support this with the company's other solutions through its Empowered Health program, which combines Health Advocacy, Wellness Coaching, Chronic Care Solutions and more. This unique, comprehensive solution ensures employees have access to a number of services to provide personalized help navigating the entire healthcare system.

Oftentimes, employees dealing with personal problems are likely trying to resolve confusing medical or billing issues or find a qualified doctor, adding another layer of stress to an already difficult situation.

“By integrating your EAP with health advocacy and other related services, you offer your employees a single solution to make sure no one falls through the cracks,” said Martin B. Rosen, Chief Marketing Officer, Executive Vice President and Cofounder at Health Advocate. “Offering access to an integrated program can have a tremendous impact on productivity, turnover and cost among your employees.”
For example, when an employee calls requesting EAP support, a HIPAA-trained Personal Health Advocate (PHA) can identify that this individual is also dealing with a chronic condition like diabetes by reviewing the data provided through the confidential Empowered Health program. It’s very likely that this condition is adding to the stress they’re feeling. Because the PHA has a broader understanding of what the employee may be experiencing, they can offer compassion and support across the spectrum, including making sure the employee has required tests scheduled, helping to find a specialist nearby, and ensuring the employee is receiving the most cost-effective prescription for their condition. This assistance, in combination with EAP services, can have a tremendous impact for the employee, reducing their stress and absenteeism/presenteeism while increasing their productivity at work. Additionally, all interactions are kept completely confidential within the confines of the support team, ensuring individuals feel secure in their request.

Utilizing Data to Find Teachable Moments
Integrating EAP with other benefits services can also provide a wider breadth of data for analysis, granting counselors and other trained support staff a comprehensive, confidential snapshot of the member’s benefits package and health and wellness measures from the moment the conversation begins. Having this actionable information at their fingertips enables Health Advocate’s PHAs to spot potential gaps in care, and other “teachable moments,” to engage the member in resources and education specific to their individual needs, all during one call. This integration of services better supports members and truly addresses and close gaps in care across a spectrum of issues, including those addressed by EAPs.

Maximizing Value for Employees
The value of a benefits package can often be maximized when components are combined, and EAP plus health advocacy is no exception. Programs like EAP+Work/Life can complement existing offerings by ensuring that no employee falls through the cracks. By integrating an EAP into your existing program, you can help support management, reduce risks and costs, and improve productivity and employee health, leading to a more positive work environment. B&W

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