

# EAP is Not a Four-Letter Word

EAPs are (still) the best employer-sponsored resource to address employee mental health.

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# The Business Case for EAPs

The landscape of employer-sponsored programs to address employee mental health has become crowded in the last several years. From point solutions that focus on one specific modality or process to niche vendors that specialize in meditation or mindfulness, employers are faced with a dizzying and confusing array of options as they prepare a strategy to meet the mental health needs of their employees.

Fortunately, employee assistance programs, otherwise known as EAPs, have evolved and innovated – and are (still) the best end-to-end mental health solution for employers of every size. While EAPs do offer valuable *organizational* benefits that help employers mitigate risk, this short paper frames four key elements of the EAP *clinical* value proposition – engagement, access, care delivery and results.

-  Over 123 Million Americans Live in a 'Mental Health Professional Shortage Area'
-  1 in 4 Americans Has a Diagnosable Mental Health Disorder
-  Only 43% of Adults with a Mental Health Disorder Seek Treatment
-  The Average Person Waits 8 to 10 Years After the Initial Onset of Mental Health Symptoms Before Seeking Help
-  80% of People with a Mental Health Condition Report that Shame and Stigma Prevent Them from Seeking Treatment



# Engagement

When employee assistance programs are well-utilized, they have a positive and measurable impact on employee health, wellbeing and productivity. To maximize the visibility and awareness of an EAP, many providers build an engagement strategy prior to launch that is tailored to suit the employer's culture and program goals. While the approach to developing this strategy varies from provider to provider, the strategy itself typically includes three key elements.



## Communication

Promote the EAP through a variety of avenues that are aligned with each client's existing employee communication channels. The program should be marketed as both a proactive and reactive resource to address all employee mental health concerns in a stigma-free environment.



## Integration

Position the employee assistance program as a core component of an employer's population health management strategy by facilitating case, data and marketing integration with the client's other programs, benefits and resources. Create opportunities to identify and cross-refer employees with MHSA concerns to the EAP.



## Technology

Leverage technology to engage employees who may not have otherwise been aware of the program. Facilitate single sign-on access to the EAP web platform from the portal(s) of all other vendors; and partner with service providers that can identify employees with mental health concerns who may benefit from using the program.



## Navigation

Some EAP providers offer a navigation tool that uses an evidence-based diagnostic to assess an employee's emotional fitness and facilitate access to the most appropriate avenue for care and support.



## Access

Accessibility is a key to the success of an EAP. While a strategic approach to engagement will maximize the *visibility* of the program, the program will fall flat if employees don't have a variety of avenues to *access care* around the clock.

Most EAPs provide benefit-eligible employees and their immediate family members with access to the program twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year, for in-the-moment clinical support. To address the needs of non-English speaking members, EAPs typically employ counselors who speak a variety of languages – in addition to translation capabilities for more than 140 other languages and a toll-free TDD line for hearing-impaired participants.

When it comes to mental health treatment, the choice is part of the cure. Unlike point solutions that *prescribe* care, employee assistance programs *empower* care by offering a variety of personally relevant access points and treatment modalities – along with guidance, advocacy and support from licensed mental health clinicians throughout the course of treatment.

EAPs offer an integrated system of access channels to ensure that every person with a mental health or substance abuse concern can connect with the program in a meaningful way.



## EAP Access Before, During and ‘After’ COVID

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has changed the way employees access mental health treatment. During the peak of the pandemic, when most of the U.S. was under a ‘shelter in place’ order, employees dealing with depression, anxiety or stress were forced to seek digital or remote access to care. Some of them continued to find these modalities appealing even after most states lifted restrictions on in-person counseling visits. While the percentage of employees seeking face-to-face mental health treatment will climb during the coming months, it will likely never reach 79% again.

	Jan 1 – Mar 10 <sup>1</sup>	Mar 11 – May 31	Jun 1 – Jun 30
Face-to-Face Counseling	79%	7%	30%
Video Counseling	2%	56%	34%
Text Therapy	4%	12%	9%
Telephonic In-the-Moment Support	11%	21%	23%
Assessment and Referral to MHSA	4%	4%	4%

<sup>1</sup> The CDC categorized coronavirus (COVID-19) as a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

Digital Behavioral Health (cCBT) utilization, while not included in this chart, increased by over 300% after March 11, 2020.

# Care Delivery

For employees seeking clinical services, employee assistance programs provide a structured and advocacy-based care path that increases the likelihood of positive health- and productivity-related outcomes, as well as resolution within the program. While the process varies from provider to provider, EAPs offer a variety of care delivery features that optimize treatment and ensure that employees receive the support they need, when they need it.

Around-the-  
Clock  
Immediate  
Clinical  
Support

Choice of Care  
Delivery  
Modalities

Clinical  
Assessment  
from Licensed  
Mental Health  
Counselor

Personalized  
and Optimized  
Treatment Plan

Mental Health  
Advocacy and  
Guidance

Post-Case  
Clinical Follow-  
Up

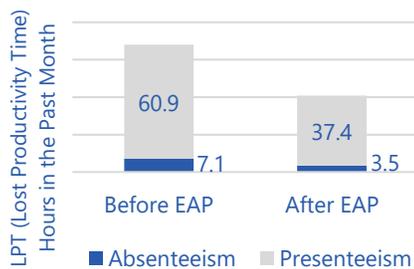


# Outcomes

EAPs have a measurable impact on the health, wellbeing and productivity of employees who use the program.

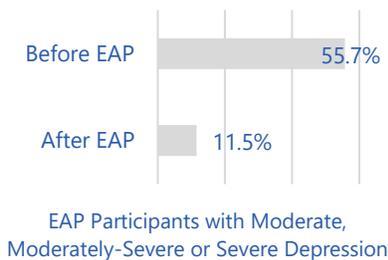
## Productivity<sup>1</sup>

Tool Used: WOS



## Depression<sup>2</sup>

Tool Used: PHQ-9



## Alcohol Use<sup>2</sup>

Tool Used: AUDIT

AUDIT Score	Risk Level	Before EAP	After EAP
0-7	Zone I: Low Risk	22.9%	70.8%
8-15	Zone II: Risky	43.8%	20.8%
16-19	Zone III: Harmful	10.4%	4.2%
20-40	Zone IV: Severe	22.9%	4.2%

Results from EAP Participants Who Present with Alcohol Use or Abuse

<sup>1</sup> 'EAP Counseling is Good for Business', Mark Attridge, PhD, MA (2020); <sup>2</sup> 'Outcomes and Impact' [EAPOutcomes.com], CuraLinc Healthcare (2020)

# Return on Investment

EAPs enhance organizational effectiveness by identifying and removing a participant's obstacles to productivity, as well as by resolving personal and work-related concerns, such as stress, depression or anxiety. The programs also reduce direct medical costs through effective treatment and advocacy-driven guidance for members with a variety of mental health or substance abuse issues.

The EAP ROI Dashboard created by Dr. Mark Attridge emphasizes three pillars of financial return: Health Care Costs; Human Capital Costs and Organizational Costs. To review the Dashboard, visit [www.EAPROI.com](http://www.EAPROI.com).

EAPs deliver an average ROI of \$5.20 for every dollar spent on the program.



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