

Employee Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions

The University of Connecticut Health Center offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP is a confidential assessment, brief counseling, and referral service available to all employees and their family members. It is designed to assist in the identification and resolution of personal problems that may be affecting you, your family, or your job. Here are some frequently asked questions.

If you have additional questions or would like to talk to a counselor about the program please call 679-2877.

1. Is EAP mandatory?

Using the EAP is voluntary. It is your decision. However, when there are severe performance issues and an employee has entered into a "Last Chance Agreement," attending the EAP and following through with EAP recommendations may become a part of that agreement. Use of the EAP is not a substitute for progressive discipline. It can help improve performance by addressing personal issues that may be preventing employees from being their best at work.

2. Why do Managers refer employees to the EAP?

Managers make both informal and formal EAP referrals. An informal referral is when an employee is dealing with a personal issue but it has not affected his/her job performance. The Manager just wants to be sure the employee knows about the program should he/she need support. A formal EAP referral occurs when a Manager refers an employee during the course of a discussion about performance deficiencies. The Manager wants to offer help and hopes that if an employee addresses underlying personal issues then his/her performance will improve.

3. Can you self-refer to the EAP?

Yes!! In fact, most of our referrals are self-referrals. Employees call when they have seen our brochures, posters, newsletters, or other promotional materials. Co-workers also refer clients when they have had a positive experience with the program.

4. Is the EAP confidential?

The fact that you have used the EAP, the nature of your problem and any other information about your EAP contact is strictly confidential. EAP records are separate from any other employee records (i.e. personnel files or medical records). If you have been referred by your Manager as a result of performance issues, we will ask if you would like to sign a release so that we can let your manager know whether you attended EAP sessions and followed through with recommendations.

The only exceptions to confidentiality are those that are required by state law. These are typically situations where the EAP counselor feels the client is a serious and imminent risk to self or others (acutely suicidal, homicidal, child abuse or elder abuse).

5. What kinds of problems does the EAP address?

We are here to help employees with any type of personal concern. The most common are marital/family problems, stress, emotional issues like depression or anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, grief and loss, eldercare issues, health-related problems and financial or legal concerns. We also help with work-related concerns such as conflicts with co-workers or Supervisors and job-related stress. Our role in these situations is to offer support and help the employee sort out his/her options for dealing with the problem.

6. Is the EAP provided free of charge?

EAP services are provided at no cost to the employee or his/her immediate family member. Usually the EAP offers 1-3 sessions for assessment of the problem and referral to community resources. We refer to a wide range of resources including private therapists, treatment programs, support groups and community agencies. If we refer you to a resource where there will be a charge, we will look for something that is covered under your health insurance plan. Clients often find that the EAP sessions are all that they need to get back on track.

7. What kind of "time" do I use to attend EAP sessions?

If an employee has been referred by his/her Manager as a result of a performance problem, generally the employee is allowed to attend EAP appointment on work time. Self-referrals usually need to use their own time. We offer early

Employee Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions

morning and evening appointments and also see clients on their lunch hour. Some clients choose to use personal, sick or vacation time. EAP appointments typically last one hour.

8. What do I tell my Supervisor about where I am during my EAP appointments?

It is up to you to decide what you want to tell your Supervisor. You may simply say you have a medical appointment or an appointment to take care of a personal matter. If you have been referred by your Manager due to performance issues, you may want to tell him/her so that you will be given work time to attend your EAP appointment.

9. What are the qualifications of the EAP Counselors? Are there both male and female counselors? Do you have minority or bilingual counselors available?

EAP Counselors hold a Masters degree in Social Work, Psychology, Counseling or a related field. All counselors are experienced in dealing with general mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as workplace issues. Many are Certified Employee Assistance Professionals. We have both male and female counselors available. Our EAP assistant is bilingual in Spanish and English. At the present time we do not have a minority counselor in our main EAP office; however, we try to accommodate requests for minority counselors either through our EAP affiliates or in making a referral for ongoing treatment.

10. Is the EAP discipline? Can going to the EAP enhance my job situation?

Referring an employee to the EAP is not a disciplinary action. It may be done in conjunction with the use of progressive discipline for job performance problems. However it should not be viewed as a punitive action as it is meant to help an employee deal with any personal problem that may be affecting them at work. Going to the EAP can enhance your job situation if it helps you to function better at work. However going to the EAP does not mean you will not be subject to further discipline. That depends on how well you are performing your job.

11. Who is eligible for EAP services?

All employees and their immediate family members are eligible for EAP services. Immediate family members are those that are eligible for coverage under your health insurance.

12. Does the EAP automatically refer clients for long-term treatment?

The EAP Counselor will conduct a thorough assessment of a client's problem to determine if longer term treatment is necessary. Oftentimes a few sessions with the EAP Counselor is all that is needed for the client to figure out what to do to resolve the personal issue. In other situations it may be clear that a referral is needed for more specialized or longer-term counseling or support. When a referral is made, the EAP Counselor will follow-up with the client to ensure the client found the resource helpful.