

# WHY CHOOSE A MORE PERSONAL EAP?

BY KATHLEEN GREER



*At times it may be difficult to see the qualitative difference between various EAP and Work Life programs. A more personal EAP adheres to very specific standards that distinguish it from a basic EAP model.*

A more proactive and personal EAP includes the following characteristics:



- Greater visibility within the organization, which leads to higher utilization
- Greater accountability to promote the program
- Superior customer service, including active account management
- Integrated counseling and work life services that serve the entire spectrum of personal issues

**The points below offer some good reasons to purchase a more personal EAP:**

**1.** A successful EAP must be a dynamic, interactive workplace program that provides easy accessibility and visibility. There must be a strong partnership between the Human Resources Department and the EAP to ensure continual promotion of the EAP services in the workplace and directly to employees. In order to prevent employee issues from affecting their work, the EAP should be in front of every employee, every day. A more personal EAP is proactive, and assumes responsibility for visibility and utilization.

**2.** Human Resources and Benefits professionals carry the weight of the corporation on their shoulders. They need the best possible resources at their disposal. When an EAP is underutilized, employee problems will become employee relations issues. Additionally, if there are employee complaints about the EAP, the problem, possibly magnified by a customer service breakdown, returns to HR. A premium EAP partners with its HR professionals to ensure customer satisfaction at every level.

Most research on the effectiveness of EAPs has been conducted on companies with on-site EAPs, in which there is most likely to be a strong EAP presence in the organization. The research shows that this type of EAP more than pays for itself:

- \$4.00 returned for each dollar spent (McDonnell Douglas)
- \$17.00 saved for each dollar invested (United Airlines)
- \$20K saved per employee completing rehabilitation (Northrup)
- \$5.5M saved annually based on productivity (Chevron)
- \$19M saved over six years based on reducing mental health costs (Conoco)
- \$37M saved based on lost productivity (General Motors)

In addition, there is a direct decrease in medical claims as a result of the efforts of the more personal EAP. Counselors in 'high-touch' EAPs pave the way for employees to use their mental health benefit effectively. They escort the employee through the referral process by locating appropriate resources, confirming availability, and following up with every client to ensure satisfaction. Employees receive appropriate treatment at the earliest possible point in time. This provides win-win situations because early intervention reduces costs:

- The medical claims of spouses and dependents who accessed the EAP prior to treatment were 35% lower than the claims of those who did not use the EAP. (McDonnell Douglas)
- The average per-case medical claim for EAP clients with alcoholism was \$9898 less than that of employees who entered treatment without using the EAP. (McDonnell Douglas)

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In addition to connecting participants to the most appropriate care, the more personal EAP also targets the area of stress. Stress is the largest hidden cost to any organization. "According to a new study by the federal government's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), more than half the working people in the United States view job stress as a major problem in their lives. That's more than

double the percentage in similar studies a decade ago...In an annual survey released last month by workplace research firm Marlin Co., 29% of respondents put themselves in the highest category of stress—extreme or quite a bit—the highest percentage in the poll's six-year history." (Daniels, Cora, "Time to Come Clean on Stress," The Last Taboo, Fortune Magazine, October 28, 2002). David Lee, an expert in workplace stress, writes that research has implicated stress in more than 60% of medical problems, and health benefit costs are skyrocketing.

The true price tag for stress is far greater than the cost of health care:

**Absenteeism** Highly stressed workers are two times more likely to be absent than others. (American Journal of Health Promotion)

**Workers' Compensation Claims** Workers' Compensation stress claims are up 85% since 1985. (Maine Bureau of Labor Statistics)

**Litigation** Addressing stress-related work problems can reduce litigation. (American Workers Under Pressure Technical Review)

**Grievances** Every grievance translates into 80 hours of lost work time. (Personnel Journal)

**Turnover** Forty percent of employee turnover is based on stress. (Bureau of National Affairs)

**Errors in Judgement** Preoccupation, tunnel vision, and loss of judgement and creativity commonly result from stress overload. (David Lee, John Liner Review)

**Conflict** Interpersonal problems are found to be the most significant cause of burnout. (The St. Paul Companies)

**Violence** Threats of violence are often triggered by stress, and threats of violence in the workplace cause stress for employees. (Northwest National Life)

**Customer Service Issues** Highly stressed employees can alienate customers. (David Lee, John Liner Review)

*A more personal EAP can save time and save lives. It can help people resolve almost any individual concern while giving HR professionals the peace of mind they deserve. A high quality EAP builds community relations and fosters goodwill in the workplace. Help your company select the best possible EAP to assist with these critical issues. Select a program that will partner with you to guarantee visibility and program utilization.*

*Kathleen Greer is founder and president of KGA, Inc. (Kathleen Greer Associates.) For more information about EAP and Work Life Programs, call KGA at 508-879-2093 or visit our enhanced web site at [www.kgreer.com](http://www.kgreer.com).*