

# EAP – Organizational Tool and Workplace Mental Health Experts



“Employee Assistance Plans (EAPs) are gaining importance among forward-thinking employers as more than just an extension of their health plan or mental health benefit – returning to their origins as a **resource to support human and organizational behavior that impacts health, productivity and emotional well-being**. “This was written in the **Journal of Health & Productivity**, November 2012, by **Dr. William Bunn III, MD, JD, MPH**. Dr Bunn goes on to say, “and EAPs can help employers tackle the leading reason for lost performance at work, or presenteeism – and that is depression, soon to become the leading cause of disability in the world as well as the second most significant cause of the total global burden of disease.”

Dr Bunn points to a component of EAP that has been forgotten as programs have become “free” or embedded in ancillary products. It appears that interfacing with management and the organization is no longer a standard role across the board for EAPs. How can the EAP act as a resource to managers and the organization? In speaking with many experienced HR folks, very few are aware of these benefits.

Below are some of the ways an EAP can provide value at the management and organizational level:

- Management consultation to help managers strategize and develop plans for dealing with employees with job performance problems
- Coach managers through difficult conversations with employee with job performance problems
- Consultation with HR regarding a wide variety of employee relations problems
- Resource for employees using FMLA
- Resource for employees taking Workers Comp leave, and Short-Term and Long-Term Disability
- Resource for understanding health benefits
- Resource for systemic issues facing the organization- EAP’s are trained in change management and a systems approach to organizational problem solving
- Training for managers regarding use of the EAP as a management tool
- Coaching employees at all levels to expand their development opportunities
- Provide crisis management and consultation services
- Resource to assist the organization and employee with re-integration following a leave
- Expertise in behavioral health and the impact of mental health issues in the workplace

In the big picture, an EAP is a corporate risk management tool at all levels of the organization. The strength of EAP’s is being able to assist both systems and individuals, the ability to be part of the strategy to maximize performance and potential. To again quote Dr. William Bunn, “the projected workplace burden of depression and other mental health issues will only become larger in our modern, high-stress knowledge-based economy. Using the demonstrated ability of EAP counseling to reduce this workplace burden – on safety, disability, health care costs, absenteeism and presenteeism – should be a priority for all employers.”

**BETH GILLEY | MANAGING PARTNER**  
21351 Gentry Drive, Suite 250, Dulles, VA 20166

703.444.2254 | bagilley@lytleap.com | www.lytleap.com

  
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