Understanding How Assistance Programs Work

An assistance program (also referred to as an employee assistance program or EAP) is a service provided as a benefit to you by your employer (or by a group or organization to its members). Professionally trained staff are available to help with a multitude of issues that may be affecting your personal or work life. An assistance program is a confidential and free benefit, typically available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Below is information on how assistance programs can help and how they work.

An assistance program helps with a wide variety of issues

Assistance programs provide resources and support regarding many issues, and may include:

Health and safety concerns

- stress
- depression
- anxiety
- substance abuse
- concern about another person’s substance abuse
- domestic abuse
- grief and loss
- crisis and trauma

Financial and legal topics

- budgeting, financial worries, and reducing debt
- legal matters
Relationship and family matters

- adoption issues
- relationship issues
- separation and divorce
- childcare and parenting issues
- elder care/caregiving issues
- education issues

Work issues

- work-related problems and job stress
- conflict at work
- job burnout
- workplace change

No problem is too big or too small and you are encouraged to seek help early, before a minor problem becomes more serious. An assistance program is designed to address short-term issues and to identify resources and referrals for emergency and long-term issues.

When in doubt, contact your organization’s assistance program for help or support.

Assistance programs are confidential

Assistance program services are confidential. The assistance program doesn’t let your employer, organization, or anyone else know that you called unless you’ve given your consent—not your manager or supervisor, not even your partner or spouse. The only exception to this rule of confidentiality is if, by law, the consultant may be required to report a situation to the appropriate authorities (such as in the case of learning someone is at risk of self-harm or of harming others).

Assistance programs are designed to be easy to use

Contacting an assistance program is easy:
Simply call the telephone number. If you do not have the number, ask your human resources (HR) representative for it.

When you call the assistance program, be prepared to give your name, address, and the name of your organization. Your name and any other identifying information will be kept confidential. Your organization’s name is important because it allows the assistance program consultant to identify the specific type of service your organization is providing along with other important benefit-related information. Return calls can be arranged at your discretion.

The assistance program consultant will discuss your needs and concerns with you, listen, and assess the situation. Depending on your situation, the consultant may:

- work with you and help you make a plan to resolve your issues or concerns
- refer you to a support group
- guide you to helpful resources in your community or online
- refer you to a specialist or local counselor for ongoing counseling

The assistance program is a company-provided benefit

The assistance program service is provided by your organization as a benefit to you. However, if you accept a referral to services outside the assistance program, you may be responsible for any associated costs. The assistance program consultant will work with you to find the most appropriate and cost-effective help to address your needs.

If you or someone close to you is going through a difficult time, remember that help is only a phone call away. So, do not hesitate to contact your assistance program.

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