



ASK THE EXPERTS

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CAREER

I am dealing with some personal issues that I am concerned may impact my work. I don't feel comfortable talking to HR. A co-worker told me about the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offered through our company. Is it really confidential, or will my employer find out I used the resource and why I used it?

An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is designed to provide free and confidential counseling and support services to employees who are experiencing personal or work-related problems. The EAP counselors are typically licensed professionals who have received training and credentials in their field.

EAP providers do not provide identifying information about individual employees to the employer. This is to ensure that the confidentiality of the employee is protected and to encourage employees to seek help without fear of reprisal. However, the company may receive a report from the EAP showing the number of employees who used the program, the types of services that were used, and overall trends in employee health and well-being. This data can help employers understand the overall health and wellness of their workforce and make decisions about benefits, policies, and other programs that can improve employee well-being.

Here are some tips on how to best use your company's EAP and what to expect regarding confidentiality:

Understand the scope of services offered: EAPs typically offer a range of services including counseling for personal and work-related issues, legal and financial advice, and referrals to outside resources. It's important to understand what services are available so you can make the most of the program's offerings.

Don't wait to contact the EAP: If you're experiencing a personal or work-related problem, it's best to contact the EAP as soon as possible. This can help you address the issue before it becomes more serious and may help you avoid related problems down the line.

Schedule an appointment: The EAP usually will schedule an appointment with a counselor who can provide you with the support you need. This appointment will be confidential, and the counselor will not share any information about your visit with anyone else. In many EAP plans, the first 3 sessions are free, but check your employer's EAP program benefits.

Understand confidentiality: The EAP is designed to be confidential, meaning that the information you share with your counselor will be kept private. It's important to ask your counselor about their confidentiality policies so that you have a clear understanding of what to expect. There are certain situations where the EAP is required to break confidentiality, such as a need for coordination with the employer for services such as return-to-work programs. However, this information is typically provided with the employee's consent and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Follow through on recommendations: Your counselor may provide you with recommendations for next steps or referrals to outside resources. It's important to follow through on these recommendations to get the most out of the EAP.

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