



# Best Practice Approaches to Staff and Physician Support

A TOOL FOR THE  
**ORGANIZATION**



## Best practice approaches to staff and physician support

Health care organizations have both a responsibility and a vested interest to support all staff, physicians and other health care workers.

In addition to demonstrating their care and concern for individual health care workers, organizations should recognize that individuals' wellbeing is critical to the morale of teams, quality of care and outcomes for patients. This tip sheet for organizations is intended to guide the selection and quality assurance of employee assistance programs (EAPs) purchased by the organization.

# Considerations for organizations when selecting an employee assistance program (EAP) provider

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Good EAPs can have a positive impact on the wellbeing and productivity of workers and therefore it is important that you have engaged an EAP with the right capabilities and capacity for your workforce and your organization.

There is no single perfect EAP. You need to consider the different characteristics they have and map those against the needs of and benefits for your workforce.

This tool is intended to help you consider some of the critical characteristics of EAPs that you should keep in mind when choosing or improving upon your EAP.



## Workers' needs

- Consider the population size of your workforce to ensure the EAP has the capacity to manage the workforce in times of high demand.
- Consider the needs of both staff and physicians.
- Consider conducting a survey to learn more about the needs and wants of your workforce.



## Who it services

- Which services does the EAP offer:
  - Individual
  - Manager
  - Organization
  - Administrative
- The most common are services delivered to individuals (and family members), however some EAPs will also provide services for management, organizational health and performance and administrative services. Consider the services that your organization needs most.



## Delivery model

- There are typically three delivery models for EAPs:
  - Internal (provided by professionals within the organization)
  - External (provided by professionals outside the organization)
  - Blended (a combination of internal and external)
- Consider which delivery model is feasible for your hospital, and which would be preferred by your workforce.

**Internal EAPs:** high on-site presence, facilitates walk-ins, high visibility and promotion

**External EAPs:** delivered off-site, flexible delivery models (phone, online, face to face), limited visibility and potentially greater confidentiality



## **BREADTH OF SERVICES OFFERED**

A comprehensive EAP should be able to provide you with a customized package that meets the needs of your workforce, their families, management and the organization as a whole. Some of the key services you should expect to receive from your EAP include crisis support, assessment and counselling services, flexible delivery of services (telephone, online, face to face), EAP orientation services that provide clear and transparent information for those accessing services, management communication and consultation, utilization reports, program evaluation and client satisfaction evaluation.

Understanding the needs of your workforce and organization will allow you to consider what should be prioritized.

## **QUALITY OF SERVICES**

You should engage in routine monitoring and evaluation of your EAP, ensuring that it is meeting the core functions of EAPs:

- Competent and qualified EAP personnel
  - Does the EAP provider employ personnel with relevant tertiary qualifications and appropriate professional registration, relevant experience and cultural competence to work with health care providers?
- Professionalism of the EAP
  - Is your EAP transparent about the personnel providing services to your workforce?
  - Are the decision makers at your EAP available for consultation when needed?
  - Is the EAP meeting its own benchmarks and metrics in terms of response to clients?
  - Are they flexible in allowing clients to engage with them in the manner they choose (phone, online, face to face)?
- Work-performance focus
  - Have there been changes in individuals' work performance?
- Manager awareness
  - Do managers know how to access the EAP?
  - Does the EAP understand what issues are important to leadership at the hospital?
- Internal and external resources
  - Is the EAP aware of resources within the organization? What resources is the EAP referring the workforce to?
  - What external resources is the EAP referring the workforce to?
  - Do workers who engage with the EAP know where to go and what to do?
  - Is the database of resources that the EAP has up to date?
- Customer satisfaction
  - Does your EAP routinely provide up-to-date data on measurable client and organization satisfaction ratings?
- Utilization
  - Does the EAP report on utilisation and success rates?



A photograph of a woman with dark skin and her hair in a large afro, wearing a white knit sweater. She is sitting on a white hospital bed, looking down with a distressed expression, her right hand resting on her forehead. In the foreground, the back of another person's head and shoulder is visible, suggesting a conversation or consultation. The background shows a window with blinds and a hospital room setting.

## Offering alternative options

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Some staff and physicians may prefer to seek mental health support independently of the support offered through their health care organization.

People often find it hard to know how to arrange this and the organization can help by offering guidance. The information that follows should be made available to staff and physicians in a confidential way, such as a downloadable PDF.



# Considerations for individuals seeking mental health support

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There may be times when you feel that you would benefit from some additional support for your mental health. Support is available through our employee assistance provider (EAP) but you may also choose to seek support independently. Your family doctor is a good place to start but if they suggest referral to a mental health practitioner, knowing how to choose the right practitioner for your needs can be tricky. This tool provides you with some important things to consider and questions you may want to ask your practitioner.

**Step 1: Find out a bit about the practitioner's credentials. What are their qualifications, licensing and registrations?**

**Step 2: Once you know that the practitioner is qualified and licensed, then the best way to determine if the practitioner is right for you is to have a list of questions to ask.**

Review the questions below and choose a few that are the most important to you.

You may want to ask some of them in an initial phone call and others during your first appointment.

1. For how many years have you been seeing clients?
2. Have you previously worked with people who are experiencing similar concerns to me?
3. How have you been able to help clients in the past?
4. How often do you think you would see me? And for how long?
5. What is your approach to therapy and is it evidence-based?
6. Do you have any areas of expertise/specialization?
7. What are your strengths and limitations as a mental health practitioner?
8. What is your general philosophy and approach to helping?
9. Do you tend to see people for long-term therapy or for shorter-term therapy?
10. What usually happens during a session?
11. How long are the sessions?
12. How much do you charge?
13. Do you have sliding scale options?
14. How do you know if the treatment is working, and what will happen next if it doesn't work?



**Step 3: During your first appointment, the practitioner will want to understand a bit about you and what you'd like to get out of therapy. This is the time when you can ask any questions that you have brought along.**

You can also expect that the practitioner will introduce themselves, and explain a bit about who they are, their background and what your sessions might look like going forward.

Once you have had the opportunity to connect with the mental health practitioner, do you feel listened to and understood? If not, you might want to think about trying someone else who might be a better fit.

Remember, finding the right practitioner can take time. Don't be discouraged if you don't connect with the first practitioner you meet. Persevere until you find someone you feel understands you and who you feel comfortable with.

The Canadian Psychological Association has useful information on how to find a psychologist, registration and the licensing requirements you can expect from a psychologist:

<https://cpa.ca/public/findingapsychologist/>



# About this Toolkit

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## Who is responsible for doing what?



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## When and why use it?

This tool is intended to provide guidance to staff and physicians within the organization who are responsible for the establishment and ongoing quality assurance of staff support services.

## How do I know if it helped?

Staff and physician attraction, satisfaction, wellbeing, retention and uptake of support resources will improve.

## What are potential individual or systemic barriers that need to be considered?

### Physicians and other contracted service providers

Support services should be made available to all staff, physicians and other health care workers within the organization.

### Individuals facing systemic barriers to equity, inclusion and social justice based on racial, ethnic, gender or sexual identity

The diversity in staff and physicians should be reflected in the diversity of those providing EAP services to ensure that those with equity, inclusion and social justice concerns based on their identity/ies feel safe in seeking support.

### Resourcing

Extending support services to physicians and other health care workers within the organization represents an additional cost to the organization, but the benefits in wellbeing, morale, attraction and retention, as well as quality of care provided to patients makes it a worthwhile investment.