

Options for EAPs in the 21st Century

A Training Module for Employee Assistance Professionals

GOAL:

The goal of the training is to help EAP professionals consider the importance of providing support to help workers with mental health conditions maintain work and how to take an active role in providing support effectively.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

§ Review of the vocational potential and needs of workers with mental health conditions

§ Understand the importance of an EAP in providing support to workers with mental health conditions

§ Identify current levels of support for workers with mental health conditions within the work organization

§ Develop the use of an advocacy model to promote strategies that support workers with mental health conditions and partner with mental health providers.

Target Audience: The target audience for this training is Employee Assistance Program professionals.

Facilitator: The facilitator for this training is either a community mental health care provider or an EAP professional. The facilitator must be familiar with both the world of work (including how to communicate in the language of the workplace, EAPs and organizational structure) *and* workplace intervention strategies (including issues of disclosure and negotiation of ADA accommodations) to help people with mental health conditions gain and retain integrated competitive employment.

This is an interactive training! Encourage participation throughout by asking for comments and questions. Keep the comment/question periods brief, 2-3 minutes, then move on.

Training Group Size: The group should not exceed 12-15 participants.

Needed materials: Copies of training handouts for all participants and a dry erase board or flip chart. There are 5 handouts.

Leader notes: **Your directions are in bold type. The material to share with training participants is in regular type or italics.**

Estimated time: 2 hours 40 minutes with allowance for a 10 minute break.

Introduction (10 minutes)

Welcome participants. Introduce yourself and indicate your connection (expertise) with today=s content.

Introduce purpose of the session.

§ Welcome. Today we are going to talk about the potential of EAPs in support of workers with mental health conditions. We will talk about:

§ why the EAP should be involved in this activity

§ how to assess whether or not the employing organization supports you in this activity

§ how to use an advocacy approach to help promote strategies that best support workers with mental health conditions at work, and

§ how to work with a community mental health provider.

§ Before we get started, let=s make sure we all know one another.

§ Leader: Have participants introduce themselves, the organization they represent, their role and what they hope to gain out of today=s session.

Prevalence of Workplace Mental Health Conditions and Current Support from Vocational Rehabilitation and Medical Fields (10 minutes)

Let=s start with some background information so that we can begin this discussion on the same page.

§ I am going to read some questions and ask you to respond to multiple choice answers out loud. *What do you think?*

§ Leader: Read each question and the possible responses and ask participants which answers they think are correct. Offer the correct responses which are marked with an asterisk (*).

§ Of the 3 million people with serious persistent mental health conditions in the United States, it is estimated that the number who are employed is

- * 1. More than 1 million
- 2. More than 2 million
- 3. More than 2 million

§ What accounts for the most lost days of work?

- 1. Child care problems
- 2. Cancer
- 3. Heart disease
- * 4. Depression

§ Are mental health conditions covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act?

- 1. No
- * 2. Yes

§ How much do employers lose annually due to lost productivity from depression?

- * 1. 12 billion
- 2. 5 billion
- 3. 3 million
- 4. 1 million

§ Which is the most common medical condition for which people seek treatment?

- 1. Cancer
- 2. Diabetes
- * 3. Mental health conditions
- 4. Heart disease

§ The answers to these questions help illustrate that:

§ People with mental health conditions are working. As you are aware, there are people in the workforce who are dealing with a broad spectrum of mental health issues ranging from serious long term conditions such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia to episodes of depression and anxiety that can result from situational crises.

§ The advances in medication have resulted in significantly better symptom control, making work possible.

§ Community mental health care providers are better at preparing people with

mental health conditions to enter the world of work. Most workers struggling with mental health issues have access to a network of providers through some form of managed care.

§ Many entering the workplace for the first time or following a prolonged gap in employment are under the care of a mental health provider.

§ Many of you may be aware of the variety of vocational services available to people with mental health conditions that support them, e.g.,

§ supported employment - the state provides funds to provide services to someone who is competitively employed

§ performance based contracting - a provider of services is held to outcomes of competitive employment for people with mental health conditions to whom they provide services

§ VESID NY state=s federal vocational rehabilitation program - pays the cost of training for anyone with a disability

§ career or job clubs - people with mental health conditions receive advice and encouragement to solve work related problems and prepare for the work environment

§ other skills training

§ People with mental health conditions want to work and are able to work productively in the competitive work setting.

§ Current social policy requires work as an outcome.

§ Welfare benefits are not available to support people with mental health conditions indefinitely.

§ Supplemental Security Income benefits are harder to obtain but this is counterbalanced by Social Security Administration Work Incentive Programs that protect people with mental health conditions as they try out work.

§ Those people with disabilities working with a Ticket to Work are protected from Continuing Disability Reviews during the time that they are using their Ticket.

§ Work Incentives have increased the salary and income limits for

Medicaid so that people with disabilities can try out full-time and part-time work with less fear of losing their benefits.

§ Work incentives such as the Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS Plan) and allowance for Impairment Related Work Expenses allow people with disabilities to put money aside for a work related goal or to pay for work related expenses without affecting their benefits.

§ Legislation promotes employment outcomes for people with mental health conditions (i.e., the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Ticket to Work Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1996).

Importance of the EAP in Providing Support to Workers with Mental Health Conditions (20 minutes)

What these questions haven't mentioned, but research findings and program implementation indicate, is that to work productively many workers with mental health conditions will need support - accommodation - at the workplace. That's where you come in.

§ We know that an internal advocate (you) can encourage the system (the workplace) to establish diversity goals including encouraging the employment of people with mental health conditions.

§ We know from research and experience about the types of assistance people with mental health conditions often need to maintain work. They may need help:

§ Being accepted as a person with a condition that exists, but does not stigmatize the individual.

§ Deciding about and planning for disclosure of the mental health condition to the workplace in order to request accommodation.

§ Negotiating needed accommodations with employers and Unions.

§ Gaining support from supervisors and co-workers to maintain work.

§ Coordinating among the different systems e.g., work and healthcare systems.

§ Staying connected to the service provider for medication and other support.

§ The EAP can play a major role in providing this help.

§ **Leader: Ask, *Why do you think this is so?***

§ **Leader: Give participants cues (underlined below) as to how EAP involvement can have an impact and ask the participants for input regarding what each EAP attribute or skill involves, and how they think it can help people with mental health conditions at the workplace. Use the material below to add to responses from participants. Spend about 7-8 minutes on this discussion.**

§ EAP staff have counseling and advocacy skills and expertise that are the basis for helping in the employment of persons with mental health conditions.

§ EAPs are the benefit available to all employees to obtain help with problems that interfere with work. People with mental health conditions will utilize this resource just like anyone else and, in this use, should be regarded by the EAP as a Atypical@ client.

§ EAPs subscribe to a strengths perspective - EAP professionals can use their clinical knowledge and skills to show the value of a diverse workforce. They can help supervisors to assess workers according to their abilities, not their disabilities.

§ EAPs use a systems approach - EAP professionals can use their ability to advocate for workers and to implement and monitor interventions. This applies to internal organizational units such as Human Resources, Legal and Medical, as well as relationships with community providers and family systems.

§ EAPs are familiar with both the community and workplace - EAP professionals provide insight into the needs of the workplace, have knowledge of community facilitates and their continuum of care, and are sensitive when making referrals.

§ EAPs offer services for people with substance abuse problems - The model for providing services around substance abuse, which often includes case management, referral to outside providers and coordination around return to work issues, has many parallels to workers with mental health conditions. In fact many people dealing with substance abuse issues are dually diagnosed.

§ EAP staff bridge the community resources and the workplace - EAP professionals often act as liaisons. They coordinate with outside providers, refer to outside providers and relate the needs of the workplace to outside providers. Workers need to have a support system, and EAP

professionals, grounded in the workplace and familiar with community resources, can help workers establish, maintain and be an ongoing part of this support system.

§ EAP staff are in the position to coordinate resources within the workplace - EAP staff usually coordinate with HR, Supervisors, Medical and many other departments.

§ *Which units in an organization do you think might be important in helping the new worker?*

§ Leader: Have participants call out units (help them get started if necessary) and write the list of units on a flip chart or blackboard. Be sure to ask why each unit is important. Add to the list any units not mentioned by the group and use the content below to help emphasize their importance. (Spend 5-8 minutes on this discussion.)

§ Benefits -

§ Can explain insurance to consumers.

§ Are there other work life or health insurance benefits that can help workers maintain their jobs?

§ Strategic Planning -

§ Think about hiring initiatives to target special needs populations.

§ Is there an aspect of production that could be addressed by a stable, entry level workforce?

§ Does the organization have a high turnover rate which causes unnecessary expense?

§ Risk Management -

§ Lower risk by having a community agency carry out a careful assessment and be available as back-up for ongoing support - or provide legal testimony and/or assist with removal if an employee does not work out.

§ Address return to work issues around cases of disability.

§ Lower disability costs by including careful planning around adjusted job requirements.

§ Medical/Health Services -

§ How is Medical or Health Services Department involved in issues of disability or risk management?

§ Does Medical approve return to work?

§ Does Medical approve accommodations?

§ Legal -

§ How is Legal related to other departments? Do other departments feel limited acting without Legal=s sanction?

§ Does Legal have influence on compliance with ADA, FMLA or implementation of other HR policies?

§ Safety -

§ How does Safety influence changes in job descriptions?

§ What is the process for having changes passed by Safety?

§ Personnel/HR -

§ What are hiring processes that could facilitate entry of workers with mental health conditions into workforce?

§ Can the EAP partner with Personnel/HR to support new hires of qualified candidates with mental health conditions?

§ Finance -

§ Can finance be enlisted to support the idea that a policy that encourages the employment of people with mental health conditions will maintain workers rather than expend dollars on leave, replacement or early retirement?

§ Union -

§ How can the EAP partner with the Union in negotiating accommodations?

§ Can the Union provide insight into how to establish accommodations within the confines of the collective bargaining agreement?

§ EEO Office -

§ Are hiring procedures fair to workers with mental health conditions?

§ Are there programs through the EEO to support hiring and maintaining workers with mental health conditions?

§ Supervisory Representatives -

§ Supervisors often need education and training to learn how to work with workers with mental health conditions.

§ Are there supervisors with experience who could be encouraged to mentor others?

§ Training -

§ Could the Training Department partner with the EAP to offer information around the ADA, implementation of accommodations or more generalized information around mental health and working with a co-worker/supervisor with a mental health condition?

§ Work Family Services -

§ What services are offered by Work/Family Services that can augment supportive services to workers with mental health conditions?

§ How can the EAP partner with Work/Family?

§ Management Information Systems -

§ Can a tracking system be created to evaluate outcome of disability related initiatives?

§ What factors would be important to look at? Cost of accommodations? Level of productivity? Job retention rates?

How Ready Are You to Help? (40 minutes)

The remainder of this training will help you to assess your personal readiness and the readiness of your EAP to provide support to people with mental health conditions and suggest a strategy for increasing support.

§ The help falls into two major categories:

§ helping providers establish relationships with employers as part of their effort to educate employers about the strengths and concerns of workers with mental health conditions and how to be responsive to their needs. The process of building partnerships with providers might be under the purview of the Accounts Manager in a contracted EAP or the Director of an internal EAP.

§ providing assistance to a specific consumer with a problem that is interfering with work.

§ In either instance, it is important to assess how ready the EAP is to work with providers. This assessment has several steps:

§ Inventory activities already in place that can provide support to employees with mental health conditions and the extent to which they are in place.

§ For example, if your EAP helps to negotiate accommodation, does this happen routinely or rarely?

§ Determine the coordination with other units and with the provider community needed to gain the assistance and the extent to which it is available.

§ For example, senior HR management might be needed to approve an accommodation and Medical might review readiness for return to work from a disability leave including a leave for a mental health condition. Do you, or do you not, have a respected relationship with the necessary unit(s) to facilitate this

coordination?

§ Identify the factors that help (promoting factors) or hinder (barriers) coordination of the delivery of service.

§ Make a plan to decrease barriers and increase promoting factors.

§ Let=s think out loud/brainstorm for a few moments.

§ **Ask:** *What kinds of activities does your EAP currently provide that help promote disability policy or support people with disabilities directly?*

§ **Leader:** Use approximately 5 minutes to write activities on a flip chart or black board. Add to the list activities that are important but not mentioned. These might include:

§ coordinate with client=s mental health care provider

§ help clients around disclosure

§ provide education for the work group

§ follow up with the supervisor after an EAP intervention

§ identify the need for accommodation

§ participate in the accommodation process

§ participate in diversity initiatives

§ coordinate with the Union to negotiate accommodation

§ train supervisors on disability related issues

§ consult with HR or EEO on policy

§ coordinate with community agencies around recruitment of consumers

§ help with hiring decisions

§ help manage hiring initiative aimed at special needs populations

§ manage cases of disability

§ facilitate return to work in cases of disability leave

§ We can see that many activities on this list require coordination among various units. Let's explore the extent to which your EAP coordinates with other units.

§ Leader: Distribute Handout 1, Workplace Coordination Map, to participants and ask them to complete it by drawing lines between the EAP (their role or unit) and other units with which they coordinate. Participants can use arrows to indicate which way support and information flow, i.e., from the EAP to the other unit, from the other unit to the EAP, or both ways. After 4-5 minutes, debrief (10 minutes) and include the following points:

§ Information and assistance need to go both ways - There needs to be communication and feedback.

§ For example, Medical might provide information on gaps in functional capacity and in return, the EAP might receive feedback on suggested accommodations given these gaps.

§ Sometimes the relationship with other units is weak or not clearly defined.

§ Turf issues may exist.

§ Determine who takes responsibility for disability related services.

§ If HR, Legal or Medical manage aspects of the accommodation process, for example, how can the EAP assume a clearly defined role without posing a threat to other units?

§ Leader: Cue group with the following ideas.

§ EAP professionals bring a different set of skills to disability related services such as (these were discussed earlier in training):

§ clinical skills

§ ability to coordinate among units

§ ability to facilitate ongoing support

§ ability to provide education and training to the supervisors and workgroups

§ The EAP, for various reasons, lacks the authority or a clear sense of its responsibility in relation to disability related activities.

§ The EAP should seek to define its role more clearly in relation to disability related services.

§ In areas in which the EAP does not feel it has the authority to act, the EAP should identify barriers or turf issues and seek to resolve them.

§ To best provide help, the EAP needs to develop closer ties with other units - e.g., with Legal around ADA or benefits.

§ **Leader: Ask, *How could you do this? Can EAPs offer seminars or workshops to showcase their expertise or share information?***

§ Often the workplace is without a formal disability management program. As a consequence, the coordination of issues faced by a new worker with a mental health condition does not take place. The EAP can build relationships with each unit for that coordination.

§ Some questions to ask yourself when thinking about these changes are:

§ Does the employer have a clearly defined policy on disability? Is it generally available? Known? Supported?

§ What factors stand in the way of providing help to workers with mental health conditions?

§ What kind of help do employees need?

§ Has it been done before? Look at past programs and services.

§ What factors make your job easier?

§ Assess the organizational culture. Run focus groups at different levels of the organization to see how people's values support or don't support the work that you are interested in doing.

§ **Leader: Distribute Handout 2, Facilitators and Barriers Exercise, and complete with the participants. After 4-5 minutes, debrief (10 minutes) and make the following points:**

§ Factors that are important to consider:

§ Contract relationship with employing organization (are you an internal vs. external EAP provider?).

§ Is the service negotiated in the contract?

§ How well does the EAP know the issues of the workplace?

§ Are there staff and resources available to take on the responsibility?

§ To whom the EAP reports.

§ Does the EAP report to HR and have limited autonomy to make decisions, or is the EAP its own unit? Is the EAP part of Medical, and if so, is Medical seen as the expert on mental health?

§ Are there turf issues between units?

§ Workplace culture.

§ Is the company committed to diversity? Has the connection been made between the employers= diversity goal and the employment of people with disabilities? How can workers with mental health conditions be included in the definition of diversity?

§ Authority given to the EAP.

§ If activity is handled elsewhere, where is the overlap in interests and how can the EAP become involved?

Leader: This is a good point for a 10 minute break.

What EAPs Can Do to Increase Their Disability Related Activities (55 minutes)

Before we talk about what you can do to increase involvement in disability-related activities, it is important to think about why you would bother. It takes a lot to change. Although you are meeting employees= needs, the EAP needs to consider why your employer would care.

§ *Why would the employer care that the EAP expand or provide these services?*

§ Leader: Get suggestions from the group. Sum up. (5 minutes)

§ Value added to organization.

§ Cost containment:

§ Direct costs related to absenteeism, replacement workers, short term disability benefits, long term disability benefits and medical care costs.

§ Indirect costs in supervisor and co-worker time training and assisting replacement workers.

§ Productivity - An experienced worker is likely to know and perform the job.

§ Employee morale - Seeing that everything is done for a co-worker needing help motivates employees. They feel safe should they require help.

§ Avoid legal issue - EAP responsiveness handles claims/discrimination

§ We see that there are many powerful reasons why employers would want their EAP to respond to the needs of people with mental health conditions.

§ How can you expand these activities in your EAP? We see a ten step process.

§ Leader distribute Handouts 3 and 4, Expanding Disability Related Activities and Expanding Disability Related Activities Worksheet.

§ Handout 3 gives the steps and Handout 4 helps you ready yourself to work within your own system.

§ Leader review steps with participants by reading through them out loud and promoting discussion with the additional points provided below. Ask for questions/comments. Move on quickly if there are none. Do not spend more than 2 minutes on each point (20 minutes total).

§ Step 1: Define the activity that is needed. For example, are you going to:

§ Introduce one new service option for employees such as a vocational support group?

§ Try to establish new lines of communication with other units?

§ Become involved in decision making within the organization with respect to

disability policy?
\$ What are other possibilities?

\$ Step 2: Define the objective.

\$ What is the hoped for outcome of your efforts?
\$ New services?
\$ Additional resources?
\$ Policy changes?
\$ Others?
\$ All of the above?

\$ Can you prioritize?

\$ Step 3: Determine who is the target of your efforts.

\$ Who has the authority to sanction the changes that you seek?
\$ Whose support is needed to make or sustain the changes?
\$ Are these individuals internal or external to the system?
\$ Identify all the key actors.

\$ Step 4: Clarify your role.

\$ What is the stated organizational function of the EAP? What sanction is there to initiate the change? Legal mandate?
\$ Has professional assessment of client need been done? What are needs (organizational and individual) that have been identified?
\$ What sanction do you have to take on this role? Authority of knowledge? Previous experience, cases you've resolved? Literature in the field?
\$ Benchmark - Which are the organizations this employer compares itself with that have done this work?

\$ Step 5: Inventory available resources.

\$ What resources are available to you to help the change occur? Who cares within the organization? What is their status and political power? Are they on the Board? Can you enlist them as advocates? Give them incentive for innovation/credit for a job well done. Show cost savings potential.
\$ You need to know the systems. What community resources are available? For example, what services can community mental health care providers offer the employer?
\$ What expertise is available within the EAP? Within other units? For example, is there an individual who is an expert on ADA? One who is expert on disability benefits?

§ How are substance abuse cases handled? Is this a model that can be replicated?

§ Step 6: Anticipate how the target of your efforts might respond.

§ Are they supportive, neutral or opposed to the changes you propose?

§ Will they view you as legitimate in making your proposal?

§ How can you reduce opposition and/or increase support? Can you talk before and line up support?

§ Step 7: Determine at what level you should focus your efforts.

§ Should you go right to top executive management or should you work with middle managers?

§ To whom do you usually report? How supportive will that person be?

§ Have you helped some higher executive with a similar issue? Any supervisor=s family? Or self?

§ Step 8: Determine the specific individuals to whom you should appeal.

§ Will you present your plan to the CEO? The VP of Human Resources? The Director of Employee Relations? The Medical Director? Risk Management?

§ Step 9: Prepare your presentation.

§ How will you present your proposal?

§ What will it accomplish?

§ Are you in a position to negotiate, persuade, press forcefully?

§ Step 10: Learn from the past.

§ Do not reinvent the wheel. Each organization has an evolution that has brought it to its current form. How have these issues moved forward in the past?

§ Who has been helpful in this or related issues within the organization? For example, is there someone who has been successful promoting other diversity issues in the organization? How were those achieved?

§ Does all this sound familiar? It might to many of you - it is an advocacy model often activated by practitioners on behalf of their clients.

§ Leader: Set up activity:

§ To practice what it might feel like to present a proposal for expanded EAP services that better serve people with mental health conditions we are going to do

an activity called The Golden Opportunity.

§ Imagine that you have just received a call from the VP of HR. She is extremely busy, but you have convinced her that you have something important to share. She agrees to meet with you to hear about your proposal for enhancing support for workers with mental health conditions through the EAP. The constraint is that she can only give you 5 minutes of her time.

§ We are going to break into groups of 3 or 4 people. Each group will work together to prepare a script for your presentation. Select one member of your group to be the scribe. To help get you started, use the prompts on this handout to think through:

§ your objective

§ six reasons why your proposal is a good idea

§ three questions that the VP of HR might ask you and how you would answer her questions

§ Leader: Distribute Handout 5, The Golden Opportunity Exercise. Break participants into smaller groups of 3 to 4 people. Give the groups about 15 minutes to work on their presentations and let them know that they will be presenting them to the larger group.

§ After 15 minutes, reconvene the participants and ask them to share their experience or their actual presentations (15 minutes).

§ Debrief with the following points:

§ The message should be communicated clearly and quickly.

§ Work from the strengths perspective.

§ Know your target - speak *their* language including cost-containment, efficiency and productivity.

Summing Up (15 minutes)

§ We have covered a lot of ground. *What do you think? Could you imagine yourself doing this? How does it feel?*

§ Work for people with mental health conditions is a right - not a privilege. As workers, they are productive and have qualities to offer that enhance a workplace. Employers benefit too. Your EAP can be the bridge between the two with great reward - by enriching the quality of life for workers with mental health conditions you will be enriching the work life for all.

§ EAPs face an opportunity and a dilemma. They can perform as activists, leading the way to workplace reform, and find that they have ruffled others in the organization and face those campaigning for their termination (but have a track record to prove their contribution) or they can be passive, performing safe and usual roles and find themselves easily dispensed with because they contribute so little to the employing organization.