

EAP Provider Tips for Understanding and Managing Dual Relationships

EAP counsellors and providers find themselves in a unique position where they are expected to provide benefit to both the client organization and its employees. This is a dual role situation, unlike the singular, client-advocate role with which many providers are most familiar. The following tips are designed to be helpful in understanding and managing your dual role as an EAP provider:

- EAP clients find out about EAP services through their workplace – either from a colleague or supervisor, a flyer included with their payment advice, or a poster in their Human Resources Department . This connection between the workplace and the EAP can increase the employee's concerns about confidentiality. Be aware, and reassure.
- A Supervisor Referral, even when not mandatory, may create concern for an employee regarding job security, promotion opportunities and confidentiality.
- The employer and the EAP client, while both having the employee's health and wellness as a primary concern, can also have differences in their priorities.

The employer's primary concerns can include:

- Worker productivity
- Worker morale
- Individual and team performance
- Retention of valued employees
- Risk management
- Profit as the bottom line

The employee's concerns include:

- Depression and/or anxiety
- Marital or family issues
- Substance Abuse
- Work-related stress
- Work/life balance

Whatever the "presenting problem" is, it is important to ask EAP clients about their job and evaluate for any work-related issues, for many and at times obvious reasons. If the employee is dealing with issues that are impacting work performance, the goals for counselling really do need to include returning the employee to maximum functioning in the workplace. This is as important as whatever personal problems are present. It is essential that you keep in mind that the employee is part of a workplace environment.

We believe that it is important as an EAP counsellor that you educate yourself about both generic workplace culture as well as the specific culture of the client organization your EAP client is working for. AccessEAP can provide you with the opportunity to speak with the Clinical Associate Lead, Kate McPhee, should you have any questions about the unique workplace issues that arise from the dual relationships inherent in EAP work. Kate can be emailed on kate.mcphee@accesseap.com.au or on 1800 818 728.