

What is EAP? What is it about? "I have never heard of EAP before, is it a new concept in the business sector?" "Is it a medical insurance?" These are some of the common questions that could be raised when talking about EAP.

After an explanation is given, people sometimes respond with statements like; "Well, it sounds good, but does it really work?", "That'll be really nice if my company offers one" and "It is such a new product and I'm not sure if people would use it." In Hong Kong, EAP is a new concept to a lot of people.

EAP (Employee Assistance Program) first started to provide services in North America since 1917. With a history of providing services for almost a century, EAP is available for people in private and public sectors. Besides counseling, EAP also organizes wellness seminars and workshops to prevent and promote mental health. EAP is not only providing counseling services to improve work performance, but also most importantly the mental well-being of the employees. People seek EAP services should not think that seeking counseling is a sign of weakness or worrying that their problems will become known by their employers. The truth is EAP helps people in different arrays, and confidentiality is the backbone of EAP.

At certain points in our lives we can be overcome by life situations such as the death of a loved one, stress, depression, serious illnesses, financial problems or marital and family related difficulties. Usually we can handle things on our own. However, sometimes these problems can reach a level which could impair home-life, work or our general sense of well-being. When you are not sure where all the pieces of the puzzle go, or it seems like the problem or pain will never subside, EAP counselors can offer support in problem solving and assist you to plan for a healthier and more productive life.

It is important to note that contacts and the conversation between employees and an EAP counselors are considered CONFIDENTIAL. Information will not be disclosed to employers unless a signed consent has been given by the employee for the release of information. However, confidentiality can be exempted in instances during which the employee has been determined to be a danger to himself or herself, and when a court subpoena is issued.

We hope that this introduction should help you become more familiar with EAP services. So next time, when you are with friends or colleagues who does not know anything about EAP, you can provide them with a more educated response.