



How to choose an EAP provider for a diverse workplace

In today's diverse world, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) can be instrumental in assisting HR professionals navigate a more complex and dynamic workplace to ensure that both employees' well-being and employers' bottom lines align.

For both employees and employers alike, it makes sense to use EAPs that have demonstrated cultural competence. To be effective, EAPs need to take into account not only the type of service being provided, but also the people who are accessing that service. Employee characteristics such as age, gender, race, religion, culture, and sexual orientation create unique support needs that, when addressed, can maximize the benefit of the services received.

The following criteria are a guidepost to help HR professionals make the right EAP choice for their organization.

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- Look for an EAP with a culturally diverse provider network. If your workforce has specific cultural needs, find out whether the network can meet those special needs.
- Look for a provider network that allows for the ability to match counselor with client. A large affiliate provider network tends to allow for greater selection in counselors, resulting in a better fit and more successful counseling outcomes.
- Look for flexibility and nimbleness in your EAP. Today, EAPs are being asked to evolve in new ways, some of which cannot be anticipated ahead of time. An EAP that embraces change and innovation will be well-poised for the future.
- Be aware that EAP services need to be offered in multiple formats with many entry points. Face-to-face, telephonic, and web-based services may attract different individuals at various stages of need.
- Know that cultural competency in an EAP provider does not simply translate into looking, speaking, or believing the same as your workforce. It does mean that your providers are informed and sensitive to the cultural, religious, and demographic issues of your diverse workers.
- Provide promotional materials that reflect the cultural diversity of your workforce to ensure that all benefits and educational materials — including wellness and disease management information — are distributed in multiple languages and reflect a range of cross-cultural images.

