



October 13, 2009

To Members of Congress:

Thank you for your diligent and tireless efforts to solve the very complex problem of providing affordable and quality health care coverage for all Americans. This is an important issue to the members of the Employee Assistance Society of North America (EASNA), of which I am the president. I write to urge you to recognize the value of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) in any legislation because they can both help improve the quality of health care in this country and reduce the cost for providing it.

EAPs are employer pre-paid programs that help businesses attract and retain talented employees and successfully compete in the global marketplace by proactively addressing employee stress, family issues, lifestyle habits, substance abuse, and other productivity-relevant issues. EAPs are a cost-effective adjunct, not a replacement for a robust mental health and substance use disorder benefit. EAPs consistently demonstrate a positive return on investment—a major reason why so many Fortune 500 companies offer EAPs to keep their workforce healthy and productive.

EAPs have demonstrated consistent value in the following ways:

- **Prevention** of emotional and stress-related problems through early identification and resolution of these issues BEFORE these problems worsen and require utilization of the mental health or substance abuse health care benefits.
- **Creating** a positive workplace to prevent and/or shorten mental health and substance abuse related disabilities and work absences.

Complimenting lower-cost health insurance designs such as Consumer Directed Health Plans (CDHPs) and High Deductible Health Plans (HDHPs) where EAPs can exist in the preventative portion of these plans designs. When individuals or families face the decision to spend monies from their Health Reimbursement Account, Health Savings Account, or out of their pocket to meet their deductible, it is vital to address stress, mental health, and substance abuse issues as early as possible, before problems worsen and require higher and more costly levels of health care. By involving an EAP in these designs, consumers won't feel the need to sacrifice necessary MH/SA assessment and referral to hoard their funds for other future medical issues. Too often consumers postpone or forego getting necessary care and try to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" when it comes to mental health and substance abuse issues. A robust preventative EAP program, with its prepaid face-to-face counseling sessions, can help address that problem. In the near future lower cost, catastrophic HDHP designs may become more prevalent if a health insurance mandate becomes law, making the EAP all the more important.

Employee Assistance Society of North America

2001 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1004 • Arlington, VA 22202-3617
Ph: 703-416-0010 • Fx: 703-416-0014 • www.easna.org • info@easna.org

You can help encourage the role of EAPs in our Nation by providing employer incentives to add, retain, or expand EAP programs. A specific example would be to provide tax credits to employers who offer wellness programs for their employees. Specifically indicating in the legislation that EAP programs meet one of the requirements of a “qualified wellness program” would help ensure the future continuation and relevance of EAP—and reduce health care costs in this country.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your staff on this issue to further explain the value of EAPs. Please contact EASNA Executive Director Bob McLean, who is in our headquarters in the Washington, DC, area (703-416-0060), to schedule a meeting or to ask for additional information.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Philip H. Evans
President