

How to Use Your EAP: Counseling

By Amy Tiffany

Your EAP is a resource to help you and your family handle whatever comes your way, and one of the main components of your EAP is counseling. Some people may feel timid around the idea of counseling, however there are many benefits and reasons to participate in counseling.



What Is Counseling?

VITAL WorkLife Consultant, Adam Frei, MS, LPC, says counseling is often referred to as “talk therapy” where an individual, family, or group works with a licensed mental health provider to address psychological, social and physical concerns.

Counseling can differ based on the counselor’s training and counseling perspective. A counselor can help you identify goals and potential solutions to problems which are causing you emotional turmoil; seek to help improve communication and coping skills; strengthen self-esteem; and promote behavior change and optimal mental health¹. There are many types of counseling²:

- Individual counseling
- Couples counseling
- Family counseling
- Addiction counseling
- Child/adolescent counseling
- Gerontological counseling
- LGBTQ Counseling
- Military Counseling

Now that you know a little bit more about counseling, let’s review how to use your counseling benefit as part of your VITAL WorkLife EAP.

What is EAP Counseling?

EAP counseling is a free benefit available to eligible employees and their family members. EAP counseling is short-term and solution-focused. EAP counseling sessions focus on addressing current work/life distress. As part of your VITAL WorkLife EAP, you and your family members have access to two different types of counseling:

- **In-the-moment behavioral health support.** This is a fancy way to say phone counseling that is available at any time (24/7). If it’s the middle of the night, or after you put your kids to bed, you can call us at 800.383.1908 and talk with a licensed mental health provider about what you are going through.
- **Face-to-face or virtual counseling sessions.** These are counseling sessions you set up ahead of time—see more information about this process below.

How do I take advantage of counseling through your VITAL WorkLife EAP?

- Call VITAL WorkLife at **800.383.1908, press “2”** and tell us what’s going on.
- We then will find a counselor who has experience in the area of the concern you are having.

- Once a counselor option(s) has been identified, we send this information to you to set up your counseling appointments. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, appointments can be conducted virtually or face-to-face as available as dictated by state rules, counselor availability or your preference.
- After your appointment, the counselor coordinates the process directly with VITAL WorkLife. You do not need to contact us for each appointment.
- By law this process is completely confidential. Your employer will not know you participated in counseling.

How long can I go to counseling through my VITAL WorkLife EAP?

The number of counseling sessions you or your family members can access is based on your company's benefit. For information on the number of sessions you or a family member has available, contact your Human Resources department or call VITAL WorkLife at **800.383.1908**. If you or a family member would like to continue attending counseling after your maximum number of sessions has been met, you can discuss accessing your medical insurance or private pay options with your counselor.

Your EAP counseling benefit does not have a yearly or lifelong limit. You can use your counseling benefit for a variety of concerns. For example, you can access counseling for a marital/partner issue now, and at a later time you can access it again for job-related stress. The most common reasons we see for EAP counseling are:

- Partner/marital concerns
- Relationship issues (family, friends, colleagues)
- Stress—feeling stress, not knowing what to do with stress
- Communication issues
- Anxiety/depression, mental health concerns
- Substance abuse

How do my family members use counseling through my VITAL WorkLife EAP?

The process is basically the same as for you. When they call, family members simply need to state their relationship to you and what company you work for. If you or your family member is over the age of 18 you must call for yourself to access your benefit. A parent cannot call on behalf of a child if over the age of 18 to request counseling.

Counseling During the COVID-19 Pandemic: What are others experiencing?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, we have seen an increase in calls for counseling around parenting challenges, seeking counseling for their children, spouse/partner issues, increased stress and anxiety and overall pandemic fatigue. These are all very normal issues and our counselors are well versed in supporting clients with these and other pandemic-related issues.

We Can Help

Your VITAL WorkLife EAP and counseling resources are available to help you and your family handle whatever comes your way. Contact us at **800.383.1908** or through the **VITAL WorkLife App** to access your resources today.

Sources:

¹ <https://www.counseling.org/aca-community/learn-about-counseling/what-is-counseling>

² <https://www.counseling.org/aca-community/learn-about-counseling/what-is-counseling>