



Nationwide® Associate Assistance Program *A study in EAP excellence*

“Nationwide® is on your side” is the lyrical and universally recognized tag line to the insurance and financial services company’s advertisements. It’s also the message Nationwide sends daily to its 35,000 associates through its vigorous and far-reaching employee assistance program.

Nationwide, with its employee assistance program (EAP) partner Optum, operates a distinctively comprehensive and highly visible “Associate Assistance Program” that engages and assists a higher percentage of employees each year than many of its peers.

Nationwide and Optum officials believe the program is, in large measure, responsible for the company’s lower-than-the-norm utilization of behavioral health benefits due to early intervention and extensive support, both in and outside the workplace.

“At Nationwide, our brand promise is that we’re on the side of our members and we protect what matters most to them,” says Kathleen Herath, the company’s associate vice president, health and productivity. “Our Associate Assistance Program is a resource that demonstrates how, as a company, we’re helping protect what matters most to our associates. It’s a physical demonstration of bringing our values to life.”

What makes the program work

The success of the Associate Assistance Program is the result of a powerful combination of on-site assistance professionals, generous counseling benefits, leadership’s embrace of prevention as the best medicine and intensive internal communications, including associate-to-associate encouragement and support.

Nationwide has 11 assistance professionals each working between four and 20 hours a week at 10 locations, with two professionals at its corporate headquarters. These professionals, managed by Optum, are available for associates to meet with

and support other health-and-well-being initiatives. Associates and their family members can have up to eight face-to-face counseling sessions per issue every year.

Several years ago, Nationwide significantly revised its health risk assessment and added questions about mental health and social issues such as depression, anxiety, domestic violence and substance use. Associates can check a box on the health assessment asking for an outreach call from an on-site assistance professional. And it’s working — assistance professionals make hundreds of such calls a month.

Persistent promotion

The Associate Assistance Program is woven into the company’s broad web of internal communications and benefits education. For example, the company operates an internal social media site, known as Yammer. A posting of photos for a baby shower for an expectant associate prompted Herath to remind other associates about resources for new mothers through the assistance program’s work/life services. Communications at the start of the school year urged parents who may be struggling with transitions in their lives, such as sending children off to college, to contact the assistance program.

Nationwide’s Associate Health Services department frequently reminds managers of ways Optum management consultants can help them in a variety of situations — from an associate going through a divorce to addressing under-performing associates.

Program of distinction

Nationwide has been recognized for its distinguished work on behalf of its associates through its Associate Assistance Program. The company was honored in 2014 with the “Quality Award” by the Employee Assistance Professionals Association.



Impressive results

In six years (2009–2014) Nationwide’s EAP utilization rate increased from **8.8%** to **11.7%**.

In one year (2012–2013), the number of all EAP services increased nearly **10%**.

79% of counseling needs were resolved within the EAP in 2014.

Associates used in-network clinicians and facilities for **94%** of claims in 2014.

Source: Optum analysis of EAP and behavioral health claims for Nationwide 2009-2014.

Close collaboration

Nationwide frequently contacts Optum for advice on how to connect associates who may require assistance to the program. Optum and Nationwide also help executives be more successful through a confidential program of personal and career support and coaching. Nationwide takes care to alert Optum if an incident — an employee death or accident, for example — could prompt more calls, and the company taps the Optum critical incident response services whenever needed.

One word of advice

Herath says she thinks organizations that treat their EAPs as a resource of last resort are making a grave mistake and failing to realize the value of their investment. “My number one advice for organizations is to not wait to use your employee assistance program: have an overriding strategy to use it in all areas of life for your employees,” she says.

Nationwide’s holistic approach to associate health and well-being recognizes that when people with medical conditions are screened and treated for behavioral health issues, outcomes are better and costs are lower.

“The research is clear: when there are comorbid mental health conditions — such as depression — with medical conditions, compliance with treatment isn’t as good. You need to build mental health into wellness,” Herath says. “It will alter the success of your programs.”

Make your EAP a standout, too

We’d be pleased to talk to you about how we can help support your EAP and behavioral health programs. Ask your Optum representative for more information, email us at info@optum.com, or call us at 1-866-386-3404.

Hallmarks of the Nationwide Associate Assistance Program

- Eleven on-site assistance professionals in 10 locations
- Eight face-to-face sessions per issue per year
- Comprehensive WorkLife Services
- Active internal promotion, including social media
- Health assessment lets associates ask for outreach
- Broad focus on all associates, from those in call centers to executive suites

About Nationwide

Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company, a Fortune 100 company based in Columbus, Ohio, is one of the largest and strongest diversified insurance and financial services organizations in the United States. The company provides a full range of insurance and financial services, including auto, commercial, homeowners and life insurance; public and private sector retirement plans, annuities and mutual funds; banking and mortgages; specialty health; pet, motorcycle, boat and farm insurance.

About Optum

Optum is a leading information and technology-enabled health services business dedicated to helping make the health system work better for everyone. With more than 80,000 people worldwide, Optum delivers intelligent, integrated solutions that help to modernize the health system and improve overall population health. Optum is part of the UnitedHealth Group (NYSE:UNH).



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