

BC BUSINESS

JULY 2011

PPC Canada's senior leadership team:
Left to right: Mike Miller, VP, program development; Debra Wolinsky, senior director, clinical operations; Lisa Gardner, financial controller; Cynthia Kinsella, vice-president and general manager.

THEY ARE PROBABLY THE BEST-kept secrets in the workplace but for many people, employee and family assistance programs (EFAPs/EAPs) are the crucial difference between staying well and being productive at work, versus struggling to cope with life's challenges. EFAPs are typically employer-paid, highly confidential counselling and wellness services for those in crisis or those simply needing help dealing with the everyday stresses of life.

"We all have to deal with stressful events," says Mike Miller, vice-president of program development at PPC Canada, an industry pioneer, providing responsive and individualized services to more than 350 organizations across Canada. "Our services are provided to organizations, to support employees and their families with a wide range of issues impacting work performance, family life, and personal health and wellness. We have individual and family counselling, nutritional and health coaching, legal and financial support, smoking cessation, child and elder care, and parental support."

PPC Canada also provides a wide range of organizational services such as manager consultations, leadership training, health clinics, workshops and critical incident support.



personal
performance
consultants



It's estimated that 7.5 million Canadians suffer from depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other mental illnesses every year, which translates into 35 million lost workdays and \$35 billion in lost productivity, says Cynthia Kinsella, vice-president and general manager of PPC Canada.

"It has been shown in studies that for every dollar invested, the return on investment is three-to-ten dollars in increased productivity, higher engagement and attendance, and reduced health-care and benefit costs," Kinsella says, adding that EFAPs also help retain and attract employees.

When Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) needs help with its critical incident support, it turns to PPC Canada, its EFAP provider. VIHA is the major provider of health-related services across the continuum of care on Vancouver Island, and also has its own

17,000 employees to worry about.

"All our employees have unique contributions to the care of patients and we appreciate that everyone has a story and needs to be supported in their work, at home and in their lives," says Lesley Moss, executive director of wellness and safety at VIHA. "PPC Canada helps us to do this, and fills a need that we can't meet for our employees." Critical incident support is such a need. Health care is a stressful environment to work in and critical incidents can be difficult to process.

"PPC Canada helps individuals pull the coping ability they need into their daily lives. You never know until you're in a situation what skills you will need, and how you will cope with the issue. PPC Canada provides initial and ongoing triage and assessment, ensuring that those involved have coping mechanisms that work for each of them," says Moss.



PPC Canada counsellor Deljeet Parmar (left) and client care team member Karen Ross.

Not every problem is a crisis. EFAPs help with daily stressors and can prevent a small challenge from becoming a big problem.

“EFAPs are an integral part of an organization’s health and safety strategy,” says Miller. “It isn’t a static, off-the-shelf program. It’s a customized program that is constantly reviewed and measured, with ongoing analysis and recommendations provided to management. We report on trends without jeopardizing the cornerstone of all EFAPs – complete confidentiality and privacy.”

PPC Canada is open 24/7 because crises happen around the clock. As part of PPC Worldwide, the leading global provider of EAP and wellbeing services, there are no geographic boundaries to finding the best solutions. Lisa Gardner, PPC Canada’s financial controller, says the strong leadership team is always looking to develop new products and remain on the leading edge.

“We don’t miss a thing. We communicate with the global executive team from PPC Worldwide and talk about best practices in our own organizations. Each country has its own culture and uniqueness and there are things we can learn from others that allow us to better serve our customers here at home,” she says. “There’s a sharing of knowledge; we draw from different countries’ resources.”

Historically, EFAPs existed to provide substance abuse counselling to help people keep their jobs. PPC Canada, previously Interlock, was born right here in B.C., in 1977 in Prince George. Interlock’s reputation as a responsive EFAP provider with the highest level of customer service is still the foundation of this B.C.-bred company.

Thirty-four years of B.C. heritage; province-wide offices; responsive, high-quality service; and an ability to deliver

custom-fit solutions are what set PPC Canada apart, says Miller. “We are the best-of-breed for customers needing solution-based responses, available 24/7. This ranges from organizational support, to individual crisis counselling and wellness programs. We’re there when you need us.”

Services are delivered by highly experienced, credentialed counsellors, says Debra Wolinsky, senior director of clinical operations. On average, the counsellors have more than ten years of experience.

“All our clinicians have a minimum of a master’s degree in a helping profession such as social work, psychology or counselling psychology, and all are affiliated with a professional body. Our clients are assured we are well-qualified and operate within a code of ethics,” says Wolinsky. As an accredited EFAP provider through the Council on Accreditation, organizations are assured of a gold standard in quality of processes, systems and services.

From the first contact, which is typically a phone call to a client care team member, until the individual has adequately addressed the reason for contact, he or she is fully supported with confidential and appropriate help. This could be immediate crisis intervention or a scheduled telephonic, electronic or in-person appointment.

“We assess risk, identify the concern, and recommend an appropriate service to each individual,” says Wolinsky. Because EFAPs offer short-term solutions, individuals can expect treatment to start immediately and include homework, activities and instruction on coping strategies, such as progressive relaxation.

“We teach people how to recognize distorted thinking, and replace it with healthy thinking styles. We help them to identify goals and work quickly to benefit from solution-focused treatment that deals

with here-and-now matters,” she says.

Part of keeping up with best practices, says Wolinsky, means taking part in leading-edge research. Since 2004, PPC Canada has collaborated in the study and research of depression in EFAP client populations with Dr. Ray Lam at UBC’s Faculty of Medicine.

“The benefits of our depression initiatives for our clients and customers include robust assessment and treatment protocols, and a specialized telephonic Cognitive Behavioural Therapy program to treat depression. This differentiates us from our competitors,” says Wolinsky.

Helping people is just what we do, says Kinsella. As part of a global team, helping people at home and internationally runs through PPC’s corporate blood.

“We’re there in international disasters; we were on the ground in Japan following the earthquakes and tsunami, providing individual and group support to the organizations we work with,” she says. “This type of critical incident support is important for our customers in Canada to know about. No matter what the situation, we’re there on the ground supporting people.”

It reflects, she says, the attitude and motivation of PPC Canada’s own team – an attitude that is echoed in the very personal level of service provided.

“We have tailored our services to our customers and we make a difference to them, and our staff are the kind of people who go home at night knowing they made a difference in someone’s life today.” ■

This promotional feature was prepared for PPC Canada by BCBusiness magazine’s Special Advertising Features Dept. Writer: Corey Van’t Haaff. For information, contact VP of corporate features John Cochran at 604-299-7311. Email: jcochrane@canadawide.com