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ISSN 1198-1547
ISBN 1-894552-34-2
TES-MS-24 TG-28B 2024 01

TEACHER GUIDE

Employee and Family Assistance Programs



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

Employee and Family Assistance Programs (EFAP)

What Is an Employee and Family Assistance Program?

An employee and family assistance program (EFAP) is a service designed to assist employees and their families who are experiencing personal and job-related problems that affect work performance, general health and well-being. An EAP should provide problem identification and assessment, consultative advice and referral to appropriate agencies, and the promotion of wellness through various programs and activities. Employee participation is voluntary, and access to the program must be universal. Programs need to be open-ended and comprehensive and should emphasize individual welfare.

Why Have an EFAP?

Each of us faces a variety of challenges and problems in our daily lives. While most difficulties can be resolved personally, some problems persist over a period of time, either constantly or intermittently. When these problems become too much to handle, they can affect personal happiness, family relations, performance at work and general health. Help in dealing with these problems can result in higher job satisfaction and performance, increased self-esteem, improved personal and interpersonal relationships, better coping skills and reduced sick leave.

What kinds of Problems Will an EFAP Deal With?

Problems for which an employee assistance program can be effective include

- physical and emotional illness,
- marital and family difficulties,
- drug and alcohol abuse,
- financial problems,
- grief and bereavement,
- career concerns and job dissatisfaction,
- distress and
- harassment.

Early identification is the key for an effective EFAP. Serious problems do not go away by themselves. Without help, problems usually get worse.

What about Family Members?

Since an employee's personal well-being and job performance can be affected by problems of a spouse or a dependent, this program is available to all members of the immediate family. Family problems can usually be corrected before they affect the employee's personal health or job performance.

What about Confidentiality?

Without assurances of confidentiality from all participating groups, an EFAP would be ineffectual. The most effective EFAPs are those that provide counsellors from outside consulting agencies. The identity of an employee, referrals and records all require the strictest confidence. No information or file items can be released without an employee's written consent. Employees participate in the program without fear of disciplinary action. It is inappropriate for counselling personnel to play any part in arranging employee resignations or to be instrumental in any punitive measures against an employee involved in the program.

How Is an EFAP Monitored?

For school boards who do not provide benefits through the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP), a program is endorsed by the participating groups, a joint advisory committee oversees its organization, implementation and monitoring. Appropriate awareness and public-relations programs related to the EAP should be ongoing.

Who Pays for EFAP Services?

For school boards who provide benefits through ASEBP, all costs are covered under ASEBP's benefit services. There is no cost to the employee or family member. Other boards may share the cost of EFAP services with the employee. The employee would then access their insurance benefit package to cover their share of the cost.

Who Can Be Contacted for Further Information?

For further information about your EFAP, please contact your benefit provider directly.