BALDWIN-WHITEHALL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SECTION: PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES

TITLE: EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

ADOPTED: APRIL 12, 2006
EFFECTIVE: JULY 1, 2006
REVISED:

453. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

1. Purpose

The district is interested in the health and well-being of employees and is also concerned about the potential impact nonwork-related problems may have on an employee's job performance, as well as on the cost of health care claims.

The district shall establish guidelines for the administration and utilization of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a full-service employee assistance program that exists to promote individual and organizational development. The EAP provides confidential, professional counseling for staff members who have personal problems that may or could affect their job performance through a wide range of services including assessment, short-term counseling, referral, monitoring, and follow-up.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is designed to:

1. Provide professional, clinical assessment for personal problems such as marital or relationship difficulties, family/child concerns or emotional/behavioral problems in order to form a tentative treatment or Action Plan, and to guide the employee or family towards the right level of care.

2. Provide brief counseling, consultation and motivation for the employee or family to take steps to resolve the personal problems as early as possible.

3. Refer the employee, when needed, to appropriate outside resources for further assistance, including HMO networks, community or public providers.

4. Reduce the costs (medical claims and productivity) of personal problems to the district through objective, initial assessments, appropriate treatment planning, and use of the right provider expertise at the appropriate level of care.

5. Provide direct support, guidance and consultation to supervisors when they are confronted with difficult employee situations, patterns of poor performance or unusual behavior of any employee at any level of the organization.

2. Guidelines	<u>Overview</u> The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential assessment, consultation, brief counseling, and referral service for employees and their immediate family/ household members. Use of the EAP is voluntary. The district recognizes that its employees do not work in isolation from concerns about their personal lives and therefore offers assistance to household members as well. Should job performance of an employee be impaired, sound business practice requires that the performance problems be resolved. Supervisors are encouraged to offer the EAP to employees to extend a tool to employees to help prevent or resolve the impact of any personal difficulty upon performance. Employees are encouraged to seek assistance on their own initiative before personal problems begin to affect their work. Early resolution of personal problems is in the best interest of the individual and the district. Employees who utilize the services of the EAP on their own are guaranteed full confidentiality within the limits of the law. Informational records created in the EAP will not be divulged outside the EAP without the written permission of the employee, unless required by law. EAP records are separate from the employee's personnel and medical files. Only EAP staff has access to EAP records. The program provides consultation to supervisors when employees with persistent performance/attendance or conduct problems do not respond to the usual ways of intervening. Employees will be granted mental/psychiatric disability leave by management for treatment and rehabilitation on the same basis as other health problems. The EAP does not assume the role of declaring employees disabled. Using the EAP does not jeopardize an employee's job or promotional opportunities, but work performance/attendance or conduct will be the criteria used in making employment decisions. Employees are subject to the usual disciplinary actions, even if they are using the EAP. The EAP is not to be used as a "crutch" for poor performance. Supervisors are responsible for detecting and attempting to correct deteriorating or unsatisfactory job performance. The establishment of an employee assistance program does not eliminate this responsibility. Supervisors should not attempt to determine the existence or nature of any personal problem that may be involved in a performance issue. Mentioning the availability of the EAP to employees is one means of improving performance.

The presence of a personal problem is not necessarily justification for lowering performance expectations. If the employee is able to be at work, s/he should be held to the same performance criteria as other employees in similar positions. If the employee is unable to perform his/her duties because of a stated personal problem, the use of short-term disability and medical certification may be considered.

Administration

Employees may obtain assistance through the Employee Assistance Program in various ways.

Self-Referral –

Employees or immediate family/household members may seek assistance on their own behalf by calling the EAP directly. In these cases, all communication between the Employee Assistance Program staff and the employee will be held in the strictest confidence, unless the employee requests that others be notified or if disclosure is required by law. Most EAP clients (85-90%) will self-refer.

Supervisory Recommendation (Voluntary Use) –

In those cases when an employee shows evidence of personal difficulties and performance has not yet been affected, the supervisor may encourage self-referral to the EAP. In most cases, the employee should call the EAP for an appointment. The supervisor will not hear from the EAP since self-referrals are confidential.

To make a recommendation to the EAP, the supervisor may:

1. Encourage staff members to seek counseling on their own, inform them about the services provided by the EAP and its location, provide the staff member with an EAP brochure, and tell them how to schedule an appointment.

2. Assist a staff member in visiting the EAP by obtaining the staff member's permission to call the EAP to schedule an appointment.

3. Facilitate initial appointments with the EAP by permitting the staff member to schedule appointments during scheduled work hours.

Formal Supervisory Referral (Voluntary Use) –

The use of the Formal Supervisory Referral is driven by a pattern of performance decline by the employee and after the supervisor's usual informal ways of intervening have been unsuccessful. Supervisors are encouraged to make a Formal Supervisory Referral to the EAP before or at the beginning of the Corrective Action process. The EAP staff person taking the call will ask the supervisor about the performance difficulty, the consequences that have been discussed and the expected time line for improvement. If the employee agrees to accept assistance, the employee should call the EAP to arrange an appointment for himself/herself. If the employee refuses the offer of assistance, the supervisor should remind the employee that they (the supervisor and the employer) will focus on the work performance with the goal of meeting performance expectations. During the first EAP session, the EAP counselor will reinforce the supervisor's observations concerning the work performance problem. For Formal Supervisory Referrals only, the EAP counselor will provide the following feedback if able to obtain a Release of Information:

1. Whether the employee attended the EAP appointment.

2. Whether the employee is working on a plan to resolve his/her personal problem or does not wish to further participate.

3. Whether the recommended plan of action requires time off the job.

The only way for a supervisor to obtain general feedback from the EAP is to make a Formal Supervisory Referral.

Mandatory Referral –

Under very specific and serious circumstances, supervisors may require the employee to undergo EAP assessment and treatment planning. These circumstances include threats to the safety of the employee, threats to other employees or threats to the safety of the workplace related to the employee's behavior, conduct, actions, verbal threats or bizarre behavior. In addition, Mandatory Referral to the EAP is required when an employee admits to a supervisor of having a chemical dependency problem, even if there is no evidence of use, diversion, or theft at work of controlled substances. Lastly, a Mandatory Referral to the EAP is used as part of the Drug and Substance Abuse procedure of the district.

When Mandatory Referrals are made, supervisors are to contact the Human Resource representative to discuss his/her observations and plan. Upon meeting with the EAP counselor, the employee will be informed that all content of the sessions will be kept confidential. However, the employee will be informed that the counselor will call the supervisor and provide the following information:

1. Whether the employee has or has not attended the EAP sessions.

2. Whether the employee is following the recommended plan of action.

3. Whether or not the staff member will need to be absent from work, and if so, when and approximately how long.

No information regarding the nature of the problem or the plan of action will be revealed. The employee may choose to accept or reject an offer or recommendation for treatment services with the understanding that the decision concerning such recommendations will be reported to the referring supervisor. A refusal to attend required EAP sessions will result in Corrective Action up to and including suspension or termination.

For Additional Information

Contact the Employee Assistance Program with questions on how to deal with a work problem that may be caused by personal problems.

Contact the Director of Human Resources with questions about the EAP or continuing performance problems.

Refer to the EAP Employee brochure.