

U.S. Office of Personnel Management Fact Sheet



Information for Employees About the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary, work-based program that provides confidential assessment, short-term counseling, referral, and follow-up services at no cost to employees who have personal and/or work-related problems that affect attendance, work performance, and/or conduct.
- Every agency EAP has the goal of restoring valuable employees to full productivity. Following are examples of issues for which an employee may wish to contact an Employee Assistant Program Counselor:
 - Alcoholism
 - Drug abuse
 - Divorce
 - Death of a loved one
 - Bankruptcy
 - Other family or workplace crisis
- There is no cost to employees who receive counseling and other services provided by the agency's EAP. Costs for outside treatment and professional services, which can result in personal expense, may be covered by your Federal Employee Health Benefits plan or private insurance. The EAP counselor will work with the employee to identify the best available outside treatment program and services in line with your individual finances.
- Services provided by an EAP include the following:
 - Confidential, free, short-term counseling to identify and assess problem(s) and help employees in problem solving
 - Referral, where appropriate, to a community service or professional resource that provides treatment and/or rehabilitation.
 - Follow up services to help an employee readjust to his or her job during and after treatment, e.g., back-to-work conferences.
 - Training sessions for managers and supervisors on handling work-related problems that may be related to substance abuse or other personal, and/or health-related problems.
 - Briefings to educate management and union officials on the role of EAPs
- Appointments are made easily with a telephone call to the EAP. EAP operating hours are usually flexible so the employees can make appointments before, during, and after the workday. For specific information on hours of operation and procedures for making appointments, employees should check the agency's bulletin board, intranet, telephone directory, or call the agency's EAP office.
- EAPs can be important in—
 - Preventing and intervening in workplace violence incidents
 - Delivering critical incident stress debriefings
 - Providing assistance to management and employees during agency restructuring or other major organizational transitions or developments.

- Agencies may grant periods of excused absence to an employee for participation in the agency's EAP for problem identification and referral to an outside resource and for general employee orientation or education activities.
- The following provisions apply to employee records and confidentiality:
 - The Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a) covers all EAP records. The EAP staff should provide an employee with a written notice concerning the confidential nature of EAP records along with the conditions where information discussed in counseling may be disclosed.
 - There are three types of disclosure:
 - **Disclosure with consent**- employee's written consent is obtained before any information is released, except where disclosure without the consent of the client is allowed.
 - **Disclosure without consent**- only permissible in a few instances, such as the following:
 - to medical personnel in a medical emergency
 - in response to an order of a court of competent jurisdiction
 - to comply with Executive Order 12564, "*Drug Free Federal Workplace*"
 - an EAP is required by law to report incidents of suspected child abuse and neglect (in some States, elder and spouse abuse) to the appropriate State and local authorities
 - an EAP may make a disclosure to appropriate individuals, such as law enforcement authorities and persons being threatened, if the client has committed, or threatens to commit, a crime that would physically harm someone. This can be done only if the disclosure does not identify the EAP client as an alcoholic or drug abuser
 - **Secondary disclosure**- any information disclosed with the employee's consent must be accompanied by a statement that prohibits further disclosure unless the consent expressly permits further disclosures.
 - Clients of the EAP have the right to access their own EAP records.

All EAP records are the property of the Federal department or agency sponsoring the program.