EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

ADVISORY COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

Sponsored by:
The EAP National Joint Committee

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Employee Assistance Program (EAP) National Joint Committee (NJC)

The EAP NJC was established under Article 35 of the APWU and NALC National Agreements. The EAP NJC is comprised of officer representatives from the APWU and NALC, and the USPS EAP Manager. The EAP Administrator is an ad hoc member. Representatives from the General Counsel’s Office and Labor Relations serve in an advisory capacity. The NJC meets on a regular basis for the purpose of discussing program related issues.

Current Members:

Susan M. Carney, Human Relations Director
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Ad Hoc Member:

Deborah J. Atkins, EAP Administrator

Advisors:

Labor Relations
General Counsel
Article 35

Article 35 of the APWU and NALC National Agreements establish a National EAP Committee that provides oversight of the EAP for the Postal Service (see Appendix B). The Committee will have responsibility for jointly:

1. Assessing the effectiveness of EAPs operating inside and outside the USPS, and
2. Developing on an on-going basis the general guidelines with respect to the level of services and the mechanisms by which services will be provided.

The Committee is not responsible for day-to-day administration of the program.
EAP Contract between the USPS and Vendor

The original interagency agreement between the USPS and Federal Occupational Health (FOH) was signed in 1992 when the Program for Alcoholic Recovery (PAR) program was expanded to become the EAP.

Because of the experience that FOH already had in 1992 in procuring, developing, evaluating, and administering EAP services for other government agencies, the Postal Service turned to it to assist in the same activities for the USPS program. Since December 2001, all EAP counselors and affiliates, as well as, the national service center and crisis response have been provided by Magellan Behavioral Health under its contract with FOH. The FOH contract was terminated on December 31, 2006.

In January 2007, the USPS moved to a six month sole source contract with Magellan Health, Inc. (MH) effective July 1, 2007, the USPS signed a contract with MH. The current EAP agreement is between the Postal Service and MH.

Vendor Responsibilities and Obligations

The vendor’s role is to provide EAP services including:

- assessment
- short term counseling
- training and education
- consultation to management and union leaders
- referral and follow-up
- crisis intervention
- assisting the USPS in defining its EAP service needs, desired outcomes and service options
- selecting consultants and staff who provide high quality, best value services that meet the USPS EAP needs
- managing the contract and ensuring that services are being appropriately delivered and desired outcomes are reached
- overseeing continuous quality improvement efforts to ensure that professional standards and confidentiality and privacy rules required by Federal regulations and laws are maintained
- ensuring the database which contains all of the records remains confidential
- preparing management reports for the EAP manager, the districts, the areas, the NJC and the Advisory Committees (AC)
- providing web-based resources and reports
- maintaining currency in new developments in the EAP field, technology, and related fields and incorporating that knowledge in its consultation with the USPS, NJC, and other parties dealing with the EAP
• providing guidance, consultation, and support to USPS management, the NJC, and ACs to ensure EAP standards and expectations are being met and value is being provided to the USPS

The vendor, as the provider of services, must comply with the USPS design requirements and professional standards as described in the statement of work (SOW). Compliance must be carefully monitored to satisfy USPS procurement requirements. The vendor must be professionally prepared to create, evaluate, and maintain legally and professionally compliant policies and procedures. For example, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) required additional protections, e.g., written authorization for counselors to confirm on-the-clock attendance at EAP, which was properly implemented in 2003. The vendor is also better equipped than USPS to manage the very complex elements of the contract and is also able to provide updates and guidance regarding the EAP field which will allow the NJC to shape the program most appropriately.

Finally, maintenance of confidential records and development of management reports using confidential records must be managed by the vendor, not the USPS.
Employee Assistance Program AC

The USPS EAP
The USPS EAP represents the best efforts of Postal Service management, the APWU, and the NALC to provide a comprehensive work-life resource for all employees and their immediate family members. A family member is defined as any legal dependent of the employee, or anyone living in the employee’s household, with the exception of tenants or employees of the postal employee who live in the household. Article 35 of the APWU and NALC National Agreements provide for joint commitments to support the EAP.

Purpose
Experience at the national level demonstrates that everyone benefits when the unions and management work together to promote the EAP and assist in resolving local issues.

Composition
An AC refers to both the Joint Committee EAPs (JCEAP) and the EAP District Advisory Committees (DAC). Therefore, these guidelines make reference for both the JCEAPs and the DACs as ACs. However, if a type of AC needs to be singled out, the appropriate acronym will be used.

The composition of an AC (AC) includes local representatives of the APWU, NALC, and USPS senior management, (i.e., Human Resources (HR) Manager or equivalent, at the district level).

AC members are appointed by their respective national union representative serving on the NJC. Management members are appointed by the District HR Manager.

Each organization will be entitled to two voting members and two alternates. Both voting and alternate committee members will attend the meetings. The position of chairperson should rotate among the three represented organizations.

The District EAP Consultant is an ad hoc member of the committee. They are not expected to run the meeting, nor should they be the committee’s messenger. The EAP consultant’s role is to offer ideas, provide information, and support the committee. The JCEAP counselor’s role will align with information set out in the section titled, Joint Committee Employee Assistance Program (JCEAP).

Purpose of the Committee
The Committee will have four major functions, not all of which are equally important at any given time. While the national EAP contract sets forth the parameters for program delivery and evaluation, the Committee assists by assuming local responsibility for each of the following:

- Program promotion
- Assessing program effectiveness and providing feedback
- Organizational issues
- Program content and delivery issues unique to the district
The NJC views the AC as the eyes and ears of the program from the local perspective. Experience tells us that poor communication and lack of information lead to misunderstandings and other problems. The NJC will depend on the ACs to surface and resolve local issues. The ACs will use consensus to resolve all conflicts. In the event conflicts arise regarding delivery of services including personnel issues that cannot or should not be resolved at the local level, the AC and the NJC will work together for resolution.

**EAP AC Role in Program Promotion**

The AC is an extremely valuable resource for program promotion. Program promotion activities the ACs should perform include:

- Providing time for EAP information sessions in functional and union meetings
- Generating opportunities for publicity
- Supporting an EAP booth at health fairs and similar events
- Designing and distributing promotional materials and giveaways
- Promoting EAP in new employee orientations and other employee information sessions
- Initiating special events around mental health emphasis months

ACs may decide to create videos as part of their promotional initiatives. The script and video should be forwarded to the NJC before final production and distribution to ensure it is close-captioned and provides a message consistent with the national program.

Most importantly, AC members serve as ambassadors for the program by promoting use, explaining how the program works, emphasizing confidentiality, and stressing the breadth of services that EAP offers to employees and their families. ACs and the program benefit when they share successful promotional initiatives among themselves. This sharing can occur through informal discussions, inclusion of the initiatives and materials in the AC minutes posted on the EAP website (AC webpage).

**EAP AC Role in Assessing Program Effectiveness**

On a regular basis, the AC is an important source of informal feedback on how the program is working. The AC seeks feedback on ease of access to services, office locations, feelings of trust and confidence in the program, feelings of satisfaction with service delivery, and problem resolution. It also seeks opportunities to dispel misunderstanding and correct misperceptions about the program.

In turn, the AC members can communicate with each other and with other members of the district community regarding any specific concerns about EAP related workplace issues that may require attention.

Some ACs may choose to initiate local surveys about awareness of, and satisfaction with, EAP services. The results of the surveys can be used to inform the AC about promotional opportunities and information gaps that should be addressed. In addition, the information can be used to inform the NJC about service and delivery issues that should be addressed through the national EAP contract.
The NJC views the AC as the group to resolve local issues that have been referred to the NJC members. The NJC will also look to the ACs to provide local perspectives and feedback on national design and delivery issues as they arise.

The AC will be a part of any site visit conducted by the vendor for the purposes of evaluating the program at the local level.

**EAP AC Role in Organizational Issues**

- The AC should perform intangible functions such as keeping EAP out of the labor/management issues within the organization.
- Members of the AC should assist in safeguarding the neutral role of the EAP.
- AC members will avoid conflict by monitoring themselves and others when involving EAP in consulting situations.
- The AC can help the program become more effective in the organization by explaining EAP to “constituents” and identifying areas requiring attention before problems occur.

**EAP AC Role in Program Content and Delivery Issues**

ACs are most helpful to the district when engaged in:

- Identifying presentation topics that can be addressed by the local counselor or other mental health professionals.
- Improving access to the program.
- Making the EAP an integral part of the efforts to provide a supportive environment for employees.

In addition to attending to local EAP issues, the AC should make suggestions to the NJC about design changes that would benefit the program nationwide. Selected ACs will be called upon to review proposed changes in protocols or program structure as needed by the NJC.

should be involved with program implementation such as the location and proper furnishing of office space, addressing access issues for employees and family members, and using EAP data regarding program usage to determine local needs for program promotion, etc. Although final selection of counselors and affiliates are the primary responsibility of the vendor, the AC will have the right to meet and interview the final counselor candidate before hiring. In addition, the AC should always be alert to concerns among employees regarding satisfaction with services provided by the counselor and affiliates and provide both positive and negative feedback when solicited by the vendor.

**What an EAP AC Cannot Do**

AC members must have a very professional understanding of the limitations of their role. First, the AC role is advisory only. The AC can make recommendations but does not have the authority to make changes in the EAP program design, delivery, or staff. The NJC will welcome all recommendations for consideration. However, the NJC must always consider the national EAP contract and the benefits to the program as a whole as its first priority.

The AC must avoid any appearance of breaching confidentiality by actions or words. Members of
the AC must seek to understand and protect the confidentiality guidelines at all times and in all situations.

Therefore, the AC cannot:

- Know the names of people using the EAP unless a person self-discloses or written permission from the individual is obtained. The AC should never request a written release of information and access to EAP records for DAC purposes.
- Become involved in specific cases.
- Ask to review case records.
- Attempt to solve problems if to do so would require access to confidential information.
- Gossip or speak in a way that implies to others that the EAP may not be confidential.
- Engage in any other behavior which would suggest even the appearance of a breach of confidentiality.
- Present themselves as “the EAP” as it may cause people to expect confidentiality or a counseling relationship with an AC member.

Other Attendees

Representatives from other unions and organizations, including outside visitors, may be invited to attend the meetings of the AC. While they will not have a voting voice, their comments and suggestions relative to the purpose of the DAC would be welcomed.

How the EAP AC Will Organize and Conduct Business

Meetings

At a minimum the AC will meet once a quarter and more frequently as needed. Individual members of the AC may request a meeting at any time to address emerging issues. Requests should be in writing, except in unusual circumstances. Requests should not be unreasonably denied. Alternate appointees may only vote in the absence of a voting appointee.

Minutes should be approved and maintained by the AC. Once approved, a copy of the minutes of each meeting must be entered into the www.eap4you.com website under the AC information page. It is recommended that the minutes be approved prior to the next scheduled AC meeting to avoid an extended delay in posting the minutes on the website.

Leadership

The AC will determine how it will assign leadership in the form of a chairperson and it is recommended that the chairperson be rotated periodically. The AC will designate someone to be responsible for recording minutes of the meeting and posting them on the EAP website (AC webpage).
**Consensus**

While there is provision for two voting members from the APWU, NALC, and USPS, the desire of the NJC is that the AC conducts business by consensus rather than formal vote. The work of the AC is to benefit the employees in the District; therefore, the AC should be looking for best-fit solutions for issues the addresses.

The NJC should be consulted if the AC needs further information or insight into the intended work of the AC. The NJC will be available to participate in conference calls with the local AC as needed.

**Problem Resolution Process**

The AC is encouraged to consult the NJC when problems or concerns arise beyond the scope of the work of the AC to promote the program.

**Confidentiality**

Preservation of confidentiality is the responsibility of everyone who represents the EAP. The AC must take care to avoid any appearance of inserting itself into individual cases. If the AC learns of concerns about a breach of confidentiality, the District EAP Consultant should be notified immediately. The District EAP Consultant will manage the investigative process while maintaining the integrity of the EAP. If the potential breach involves the District EAP Consultant, both the District EAP Consultant’s Clinical Supervisor and the respective EAP National Consultant should be informed immediately. In this case, the District EAP Consultant’s Clinical Supervisor and the EAP National Consultant would direct the investigation. If the breach of confidentiality occurs in a JCEAP, the EAP Administrator and the NJC should be notified immediately. The NJC will oversee the investigatory needs with the EAP Administrator, who would use an independent agent to bring things to a resolution.

**Budget**

**Local**

Districts are responsible for maintaining appropriate office space, furniture, supplies, and telephone connections for the District EAP Consultant and clinician(s). The vendor will provide all computer equipment and related computer services needed to perform under the contract. Promotional materials are available on the EAP website for downloading and printing. Any additional promotional costs are the responsibility of the District HR Office as deemed appropriate. Districts who have an internal JCEAP are responsible for the aforementioned and also all computer equipment and related services.

**National**

The national budget is devoted to providing EAP services through the contract with the vendor. There are no discretionary funds to be distributed to the ACs.

**Counselor Selection**

Counselor selection and employment are the responsibility of the vendor. They are responsible for ensuring that counselors have appropriate experience and maintain proper credentials. The AC will
be given the opportunity to interview a candidate before the hiring process is complete. The AC will be given an opportunity to provide feedback on the performance of the District EAP Consultant and/or Clinician. The AC cannot dismiss the District EAP Consultant or Clinician. The AC can register concerns about counselor performance to the NJC or to the vendor to investigate and resolve. JCEAPs are responsible for the counselor selection information contained in the Jointly Operated Postal Employee Assistance Program Memorandum of Understanding signed January 3, 1994.

**Website resources**

The EAP website which directly supports the ACs is www.EAP4You.com. This website contains a broad range of information and resources that can be used by the AC for promotion and education. There are informational posters, as well as, other promotional material representing monthly mental health emphases and employee support related to EAP. In addition, “Best Practices” by the ACs; minutes of the AC and NJC meetings; aggregate EAP reports and a variety of other helpful resources are posted on this website.

**Joint Committee Employee Assistance Program (JCEAP)**

There are 4 JCEAPs. They are located in Detroit, Michigan; Los Angeles, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and St. Louis, Missouri. Each JCEAP’s composition is similar to the District ACs. The primary difference between the two types of committees is the administrative responsibility for EAP and contracts for local services. The JCEAPs are required to adhere to these Guidelines except as specified otherwise in the Jointly Operated Postal Employee Assistance Program Memorandum of Understanding signed January 3, 1994. Counselors in Los Angeles and Philadelphia are USPS employees. Counselors in St. Louis and Detroit are contract personnel.

**EAP Database**

**Reports**

The EAP database is maintained by the vendor. The Postal Service has no access to the database. The database is used to maintain consultant and clinician records and other information related to the USPS EAP. The vendor provides quarterly reports to the USPS to assist in determining the use of the program and needs for promotion. Each district AC and each has access to information regarding the use of the program in the district. National information is also available.

**Reading EAP reports**

The District EAP Consultant or JCEAP Counselor will be responsible for assisting the AC in interpreting the EAP report. The AC should review the data and compare it to former quarters and years to develop a picture of EAP use in the district. The reports can be very useful in planning promotion and information materials.

**EAPA Standards**

The EAPA provides standards to be maintained by all programs. The USPS program voluntarily complies with those standards. Information regarding the standards is provided in the ‘EAPA Standards and Professional Guidelines for Employee Assistance Programs’ maintained and published by EAPA.
Evaluation

Consultants
The District EAP Consultants’ evaluations are the responsibility of the vendor. The AC may be asked to provide input into the evaluation. As discussed earlier, concerns about performance should be discussed with the NJC or to the vendor for resolution.

Client Satisfaction
A client satisfaction survey form is given to each employee at the final session with a consultant, clinician, or counselor. Similarly, feedback forms are to be provided to service users after consultations, trainings, and critical incidents. The AC should encourage employees to use the surveys to provide feedback about the program. The District AC survey is sent to the vendor for entry into the database and the JCEAP survey is returned to the counselor. Results are only shared with USPS in aggregate form.
Section 1. Programs

The Employer and the Union express strong support for programs of self-help. The Employer shall provide and maintain a program which shall encompass the education, identification, referral, guidance and follow-up of those employees afflicted by the disease of alcoholism and/or drug abuse. When an employee is referred to the EAP by the Employer, the EAP staff will have a reasonable period of time to evaluate the employee’s progress in the program. This program of labor-management cooperation shall support the continuation of the EAP for alcohol, drug abuse, and other family and/or personal problems at the current level.

An employee’s voluntary participation in the EAP for assistance with alcohol and/or drug abuse will be considered favorably in disciplinary action proceedings.
Section 2. Joint Committee

For the term of the 2011 National Agreement, the Employer and the Union agree to establish at the national level a National EAP Committee. The Committee will have responsibility for jointly assessing the effectiveness of EAPs operating inside and outside the USPS, and for developing on an ongoing basis the general guidelines with respect to the level of services and the mechanisms by which the services will be provided.

The Committee is not responsible for day-to-day administration of the program.

The Committee shall convene at such times and places as it deems appropriate during the term of the 2011 National Agreement. No action or recommendations may be taken by the Committee except by consensus of its members. In the event that the members of the Committee are unable to agree within a reasonable time on an appropriate course of action with respect to any aspect of its responsibility, the Vice President, Labor Relations, and the National Union President shall meet to resolve such issues.

The Committee is authorized to obtain expert advice and assistance to aid its pursuit of its objectives. The apportionment of any fees and expenses for any such experts shall be by consensus of the Committee.

The Employer and the Union agree that they will cooperate fully at all levels towards achieving the objectives of the EAP. This joint effort will continue for the term of the 2011 National Agreement.
Appendix A – American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) Article 35 Agreements
ARTICLE 35
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Section 1. Programs

The Employer and the Union express strong support for programs of self-help. The Employer shall provide and maintain a program which shall encompass the education, identification, referral, guidance and follow-up of those employees afflicted by the disease of alcoholism and/or drug abuse. When an employee is referred to the EAP by the Employer, the EAP staff will have a reasonable period of time to evaluate the employee’s progress in the program.

This program of labor-management cooperation shall support the continuation of the EAP for alcohol and/or drug abuse at the current level. In addition to the current EAP, the EAP will be expanded, as provided in Section 2 hereof, to encompass the education, identification, referral and guidance of:
1. employees’ family members afflicted with alcoholism and/or drug abuse which could or does have a negative impact on the employee’s work performance, and

2. those employees and their families experiencing other family and/or personal problems which could or do have a negative impact on the employee’s work performance.

An employee’s voluntary participation in the EAP for assistance with alcohol and/or drug abuse will be considered favorably in disciplinary action proceedings.

Section 2. Joint Committee

For the term of the 2010 National Agreement, the Employer and the Union agree to work jointly in the development of the expanded EAP and in improvements in the existing EAP. The parties agree to establish at the national level a National EAP Committee. The Committee will have responsibility for jointly:

1. assessing the effectiveness of EAPs operating inside and outside the USPS, and

2. developing on an ongoing basis the general guidelines with respect to the level of services and the mechanisms by which the services will be provided.

The Committee is not responsible for day-to-day administration of the program.

The Committee shall convene at such times and places as it deems appropriate during the term of the 2010 National Agreement. No action or recommendations may be taken by the Committee except by consensus of its members. In the event that the members of the Committee are unable to agree within a reasonable time on an appropriate course of action with respect to any aspect of its responsibility, the Vice-President, Labor Relations, and the National Union President shall meet to resolve such issues.

The Committee will submit to the Vice-President, Labor Relations, and the President of the Union, a comprehensive report on the general guidelines for changes, if any, in the level of EAP services and the mechanism by which the services will be provided.

The Committee is authorized to obtain expert advice and assistance to aid its pursuit of its objectives. The apportionment of any fees and expenses for any such experts shall be by consensus of the Committee.

The Employer and the Union agree that they will cooperate fully at all levels towards achieving the objectives of the EAP.

This joint effort will continue for the term of the 2010 National Agreement.
Appendix B – Definitions
Definitions

a. Alcoholism – a complex disease characterized by the uncontrolled use of alcohol.

b. Drug Abuse – an improper or illegal use of or dependency on drugs.

c. EAP District AC – a committee located in a district that acts as the eyes and ears of the EAP program from a local perspective. The committee has responsibility for assisting with program promotion, program evaluation and feedback, organizational issues, and program content and delivery issues unique to the district.

d. External EAP Service Provider – an individual or group external to the Postal Service providing EAP services on a contractual basis.

e. Family Member – any legal dependent of the employee or anyone living in the employee’s household, with the exception of tenants or employees of the postal employee who live in the household.

f. Internal EAP – employee assistance services provided by employees of the Postal Service.

g. Other Problems – include, but are not limited to, gambling, stress, and emotional, family, marital financial, and legal problems.

h. Self-initiated Referral – an employee’s voluntary referral of him- or herself for assistance from the EAP, made by directly contacting an EAP consultant or clinician. An employee’s first visit to the EAP may be on the clock, provided the manager receives advance notice and concurs. Subsequent consultations are on the employee’s own time. If a reasonable period of time has elapsed since a previously disclosed self-referral, the manager or supervisor may, at his or her discretion, approve an additional on-the-clock session.