

**Department of Health & Human Services
Public Health Service
Health and Human Services Administration
Bemidji Area Indian Health Service
Bemidji, Minnesota**

Bemidji Area Indian Health Service Circular NO. 01-08

Employee Assistance Program

SEC.

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1. PURPOSE

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) was established to assist employees and employers in resolving job performance issues, problems related to alcohol and/or drug abuse, personal issues, and certain related family issues. The overall goal is one of maximizing and restoring productivity of Bemidji Area employees through early intervention. The EAP is staffed by experienced counselors who are available to discuss problems in a confidential, helpful manner.

Effective use of EAP services can bring reduction of the economic and personal costs associated with delayed action or from relying solely on standard disciplinary methods. EAP services include assessment, brief counseling, referral, consultation to employee's supervisors, training of supervisors and managers, orientation and education for employees.

2. POLICY

A. The Bemidji Area IHS Employee Assistance Program encompasses federal employees at the following locations:

- ◆ Bemidji Area Office
- ◆ Rhinelander Field Office
- ◆ White Earth Health Center
- ◆ Red Lake Service Unit
- ◆ Leech Lake Service Unit.

The EAP provides information or assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. EAP can be reached by calling (800) 222-0364.

B. The Bemidji Area Employee Assistance Program policy will be guided by the following policy precepts:

- (1) Bemidji Area Indian Health Service recognizes that mental health, emotional disorders, and alcohol or drug abuse are treatable health problems.
- (2) Employees have a primary responsibility for meeting expected job performance and personal conduct requirements. Employees, therefore, must initiate personal action to become aware of danger signs associated with alcohol or drug abuse, mental illness, and family conflicts

which can have adverse effects on conduct and job performance and must voluntarily seek assistance in resolving such issues.

- (3) The Bemidji Area Employee Assistance Program policy is established for the primary purpose of maintaining a healthy and productive work force. It is not intended to replace supervisory responsibilities for addressing job performance issues arising from factors other than alcohol or drug abuse, emotional/mental disorders, or family problems.
- (4) Employees who suffer from mental or physical problems as a result of the abuse of alcohol or other drugs are entitled to the same consideration and assistance that is extended to employees having any other illness or health problems.
- (5) Supervisors carry a heavy responsibility for attaining knowledge and understanding of factors which can contribute to reduced job performance and personal conduct as these relate to alcohol/drug abuse, emotional and mental disorders, and certain family conflicts. Supervisors are expected to apply such knowledge in appraising employees when job performance or conduct issues develop. Supervisors are expected to follow the following protocol:
 - a. Offer referral to Employee Assistance Program as a first step when indicators as outlined previously appear to be present.
 - b. Invoke regular disciplinary/adverse action procedures when appropriate.
 - c. Employees referred to Employee Assistance personnel for initial screening/assessment will be granted administrative leave for their appointments under the EAP program (limit 5 sessions per event). All subsequent visits must be charged to the employee as sick leave, annual leave or leave without pay.
- (6) The use of EAP services will in no way jeopardize an employee's job security or promotional opportunities. Formal referrals and other EAP related materials will not be put in the employee's official personnel folder.
- (7) All Records established and maintained by the Employee Assistance Program will be held in strict confidence and preserved in accordance with the Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1974, Public Law 93-282, the Privacy Act of 1974, and Public Law 93-579. As an external EAP, specific records of employee contact and use remain the property of Federal Occupational Health and are not owned or maintained by IHS.

3. PROCEDURES

- A. Employees can access Employee Assistance Services through two methods: 1) referral by a supervisor or 2) self-referral.
 - (1) Supervisory Referral
 - a. Supervisors, through the regular monitoring of employee productivity and conduct, initiates normal personnel procedures when a case of deteriorating performance is evident. This is accomplished by supervisor-employee conferences and appropriate performance counseling. This is considered an *informal referral*. Anyone in the agency is able to give an *informal referral*.
 - b. If the process outlined above fail to correct the problem, and/or there is evidence of personal health issues involved in the deteriorating performance, the supervisor should inform the employee of the availability of Employee Assistance services and that a referral is in order. (If supervisors have doubt regarding the basis for such a referral, they are advised to contact an Employee Assistance Counselor.) This process may result in a written recommendation to seek EAP services. Such a written referral is considered a *formal referral*. Documentation of such a referral remains in the supervisor's desk file and is purged as with other information. Formal referral is voluntary and does not go in the personnel file.

(2) Self-Referral

- a. Employees can request assistance from the EAP whenever they believe a situation of deteriorating job performance is developing or a personal issue exists which could have an impact on a job performance.
- b. Employees can access the program directly and obtain a referral to a local counselor by calling (800) 222-0364.
- c. Utilizing EAP during non-working hours - Unless the employee chooses to inform his/her supervisor or signs a Release of Information (RIO), EAP counseling will remain confidential.

B. Eligibility and Cost

- (1) Eligibility - EAP is available to all IHS federal employees, regardless of the nature of their personal problems. Supervisors and managers who need assistance in dealing with the performance and/or conduct of troubled employees, or in dealing with interpersonal relationships in a work group, are eligible for EAP. On an emergency basis, EAP is available to contract employees, and under the employee's benefit, a family member (spouse or dependent) may also be seen.

** A family member is defined as an employee's spouse and parents thereof; children, including adopted children, and spouses thereof; parents; brothers and sisters, and spouses thereof; and any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

- (2) Cost - There is no cost to employees, eligible family members or supervisors for EAP services. However, if an employee accepts a referral to an outside community resource, the employee is responsible for the cost of that treatment, as with any other medical treatment. The Employee Assistance counselor will work with the employee to try to identify the best available outside treatment program and services in line with the employee's individual finances. The employee will be required to use sick or other available leave to cover attendance to services referred by the EAP, out of the EAP.

Costs for outside treatment and professional services, which can result in personal expense, may be covered by your Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan or other private insurance.

4. Methods of Provisions

- A. The counselor completes an intake for each referral, obtaining a history related to the problem and determines whether the problem fits within the scope of the program. Referrals out of the EAP program may be made for physical exams, psychological testing, or other more intensive assessment as needed. Such referrals may be submitted to the employee's medical insurance company as stated above.

5. Confidentiality

- A. The EAP is limited by confidentiality laws in providing information and feedback to the supervisor. The purpose of the EAP is to give employees the opportunity to help themselves cope with problems which are adversely affecting job performance and/or conduct. The details of the employee's discussion with the counselor may not be released to anyone without the employee's written consent.

Kathleen Annette, M.D. _____ Date
Director
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