

DONNA'S STORY: "I've had it . . . this is just too much," Donna thinks as she makes her way down the interstate to her father's house. She got off work only an hour ago. But in that time, she picked up the kids from band practice, dropped them off at home, threw dinner in the oven and got back on the road for the 50-mile trek to her dad's house.

Her father had a stroke last spring, which limited what he can do for himself. Donna's been visiting him three nights a week ever since, but the task has taken its toll — she's used up her vacation and sick time and arrived late a few mornings, all because of exhaustion. Next week, she's got a big deadline. She'll have to ask for an extension and put it on hold. "I hope my boss will go for it," she thinks.

SOLUTION: Contact the EAP for information on an agency that can help with her father's care.

JIM'S STORY: Jim wasn't feeling like his usual self. The energy just wasn't there, and he'd been late for work several times in the past month. "I get to thinking about everything that needs to be done, and it just makes me so tired," he told a friend over lunch. "Some days, just getting out of bed is a struggle."

He remembers feeling this way when he was in college. After a therapist diagnosed him with depression, he sought treatment and felt fine. Could it be depression again?

SOLUTION: Contact the EAP to assess whether he is experiencing depression.

JANET'S STORY: "You don't run this house! Come home, NOW!" shouts Janet. The click on the other end of the line meant only one thing: Jill had hung up the phone on her mother — again. Another conversation, another shouting match, more hurt feelings.

Jill seemed to think her senior year came with

a license to do as she pleased — staying out late, not calling home. Janet was constantly angry and worried. And now her feelings about Jill's behavior were spilling over and drowning her best efforts at work. She botched a big mailing two weeks ago after Jill was suspended for skipping school. Last week, she snapped irritably at both a co-worker and her boss. And yesterday, she spent more than an hour altogether on her office phone arguing with her daughter.

SOLUTION: Contact the EAP for parenting skills information and possible referral to a family therapist.

EAPs can help

Many employers are aware that personal problems can and do interfere with an employee's ability to perform on the job.

Emotional problems and mental illnesses, family or marital stress, physical ailments, abuse of alcohol or other drugs, the death of a loved one and many other problems can make work difficult.

To help employees perform at their best, many employers offer what's known as an employee assistance program (EAP) for employees. An EAP provides confidential assessment, referral and help solving problems at no cost to employees whose personal problems interfere with their job performance.

Defining an EAP

The most widely accepted definition of an EAP was developed by the Employee Assistance Professionals Association. That definition reads:

An EAP is a worksite-based program designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems associated with employees impaired by personal concerns, including, but not limited to: health, marital, family, financial,

alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal concerns that may adversely affect employee job performance.

The definition goes on to include the elements of an EAP, which include confidential, appropriate and timely problem-assessment services and referral and follow-up services to health care providers when appropriate.

Help for a variety of problems

EAP professionals are trained to assist employees with almost any issue or problem that may arise. Some of the more common concerns brought to an EAP include:

- Emotional problems
- Family or marital difficulties
- An alcohol or other drug problem
- Legal or financial difficulties
- Issues surrounding work relationships
- Difficulties managing stress
- Problems related to depression, grief or loss

Accessing the EAP

Employees can come to the EAP in one of three ways: by peer referral, self-referral or referral by a supervisor.

Peer referral

When an employee or friend of the employee contacts the EAP on behalf of the employee or at the request of a friend, co-worker or family member, it's called a peer referral.

Self-referral

When an employee contacts the EAP directly, it's called a self-referral. Self-referrals are protected by the same rights to confidentiality as any other type of referral.

Supervisory referral

When an employee's productivity drops below expectations, his or her supervisor may recommend that the employee contact the EAP for assistance. However, following through with a supervisory referral does not exempt

an employee from disciplinary action related to poor job performance. It is an employee's responsibility to meet the job performance expectations of his or her position.

About costs

It costs you nothing to contact the EAP. Whether you call the EAP phone number or meet with an EAP staff member in person, you will not be charged.

If the EAP staff member decides you might benefit from the services of an outside provider, such as a treatment agency that provides family counseling, the cost related to these services may be covered by your health insurance plan. The cost of services not included in your plan will be your responsibility, in which case the EAP staff person will work with you to select quality, affordable services.

About confidentiality

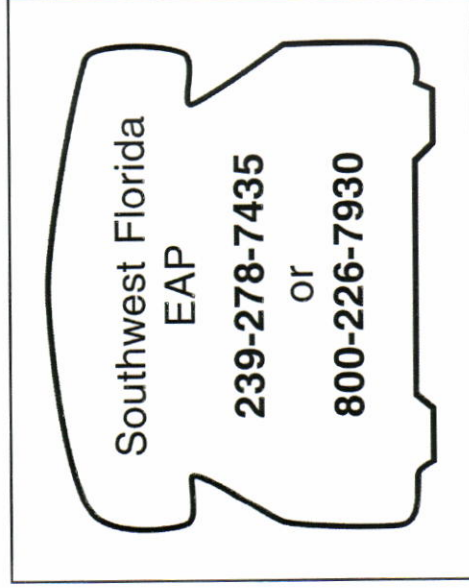
The services you receive from the EAP are protected by both state and federal laws concerning confidentiality. Your request for assistance and any information that may be shared is between you and the EAP staff person. In general, information from the EAP may be released only with your written permission.

Participation

In most cases participation in the EAP will not jeopardize your job. In fact, any assistance you receive in correcting a job performance problem may be looked upon as favorable. However, your participation in the EAP will not protect you from disciplinary action if you are referred to the program because of substandard job performance.

Help is available

Just talking about your problems sometimes leads to new solutions. If you or someone you know needs information, guidance or help, contact the resource and number listed below or look online for local professionals who can help.



YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM