

Number 19.3 - EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

Effective Date: March 1, 1996

Revised Date: July 1, 1999

Applicable To: All classified employees, as well as exempt and appointed with the Executive Branch of the State of Vermont

Issued By: Department of Personnel

Approved By: Kathleen C. Hoyt, Secretary of Administration

PURPOSE AND POLICY STATEMENT

The State of Vermont believes it is in the best interest of its' employees, employees' families, and the State to provide an employee service that deals with personal or family problems. The EAP is a practical, confidential and constructive mechanism for dealing with employees' personal problems that may affect the work situation, or as an aid to those employees and their family members who wish to use the program as a means of resolving a personal problem.

It is recognized that a wide range of problems not directly associated with an employee's job function can have an effect on job performance. In most instances, the employee will overcome such personal problems independently, and the effect on job performance will be negligible. In some instances, normal supervisory assistance will serve either as motivation or as guidance by which such problems can be resolved, so that the employee's job performance will return to an acceptable level. In other cases, however, neither the effort of the employee nor an effort by both supervisor and employee have the desired effect of resolving the employee's problems and unsatisfactory job performance may persist over a period of time.

The program is being offered to all permanent State employees and their family members who reside with them, including bona fide domestic partners. It is our policy to handle such problems within the framework of an established policy and associated EAP procedures.

EAP PROCEDURES

1. The purpose of the Employee Assistance Program is to ensure that any employee having a personal problem will receive careful consideration and an offer of confidential professional assistance. Almost any personal or family problem can be successfully treated provided it is identified in its early stages and referral is made to an appropriate professional. This applies whether the problem is one of physical, mental or emotional

illness, finances, marital or family discord, alcoholism, drug abuse, legal or other concerns.

2. Employees who have a problems which they feel may affect work performance are encouraged to seek voluntary counseling and information from our EAP on a confidential basis by contacting the dedicated telephone number shown on the EAP brochure. Brochures are included in new employee orientation materials and were provided to all current employees in June, 1999. The program provides up to five sessions of counseling to attempt to reach some resolution of the presenting problems. If the counselor determines that the situation requires more extensive ongoing help, a referral will be made to a resource outside of the EAP that is best suited to meet the individual's specific needs. In making this referral, the counselor will work with the individual to attempt to find a resource that is covered by the employee's health insurance plan.
3. When an employee's job performance or attendance is unsatisfactory and the employee is unable or unwilling to correct the situation, either alone or with supervisory assistance, there is an indication that there may be some problematic cause outside of the realm of his/her job responsibilities. In these cases, the employee may be encouraged by the supervisor to contact the EAP program. If assistance is accepted, it will be the employee's responsibility to comply with referrals for diagnosis of the problems and to cooperate and follow the recommendations of the diagnostician or counseling agency. However, the decision to accept assistance through the Employee Assistance Program is the personal choice of the individual and any cost incurred beyond the EAP benefit will be the employees' responsibility. Should an employee's work performance continue to be unsatisfactory, their job performance problems will be handled through the appropriate channels as defined by the State's personnel policies and the labor contract with the bargaining unit.
4. Employees referred to and/or participating in the Employee Assistance Program are expected to meet existing job performance standards and established work rules. Participation in the EAP does not alter any expectations regarding job performance unless it is determined in consultation with the EAP that the employee may be unable to perform their job at the present time. If this is found to be the case, then alternatives may be explored.
5. All records pertaining to the EAP will be treated with the same high degree of confidentiality accorded to medical records. EAP records will not be disclosed to anyone other than the participating individual, except under a court order compelling disclosure or with a duly signed Release of Information from the individual.
6. Employees or family members seeking assistance will be able to do so with complete confidentiality. No information is released about an individual's involvement without the signed permission of the individual. The individual may, at his or her discretion, sign a release indicating the

- nature of the information to be released and the reasons for this disclosure.
7. Implementation of the policy will not require or result in any special regulations, privileges, or exemptions from the standard administrative practices. This program is not intended to supplant the normal disciplinary process or any contractual agreements negotiated with the Vermont State Employee' Association.

Signed By Kathleen C. Hoyt, August 6, 1999

Approved, Secretary of Administration