

Appendix E: Employee Assistance

A. Introduction

The Employee Assistance Office (EAO) provides a variety of services including problem consultation/assessment with individuals and groups, information about community resources, educational programs, and appropriate referrals of individuals in need of help. It also assists Deans, Department Chairs, Directors, managers, supervisors, and/or union representatives to respond more appropriately to employees who evidence deteriorating or unacceptable job performance or employment problems caused by personal, work-related, behavioral or medical reasons.

B. Policy

It is the policy of the University of Wisconsin-Madison (U.W.-Madison) to maintain an Employee Assistance Office (EAO) to help employees and their immediate family members or significant others deal with personal, work-related, behavioral or medical problems and to promote the utilization of its services at all organizational levels and location.

C. Guidelines

The Employee Assistance Office (EAO) assists employees and/or their immediate family members or significant others to access the care, treatment or other services that match their needs. It utilizes the professional staff of the EAO to accomplish this effort.

In supporting the Employee Assistance Office, the U.W.-Madison acknowledges that:

- Problems are a part of everyone's life.
- The impact of difficult personal, work-related, behavioral or medical problems can be lessened or remedied by timely and appropriate assistance/treatment.
- Early identification of such problems is crucial and use of appropriate community service providers to deal with them is to be encouraged.
- Involvement with the EAO will not jeopardize an individual's job security and/or promotional opportunities.
- Contact with the EAO is always voluntary and lack of contact can NOT be a cause for disciplinary action.
- No record of services provided by the EAO is entered in an individual's Personnel File (whether kept centrally or departmentally).

D. Confidentiality

All contacts by employees or their immediate family members or significant others with EAO staff are confidential within limits as governed by Federal and State regulations.

EAO staff do not, however, have "privileged communication" as, for example, do lawyers, doctors, and ministers. Therefore, they cannot offer absolute confidentiality to persons contacting them.

Information related to the following concerns may be released, on a need to know basis, to appropriate persons, e.g., a supervisor, a crisis intervention worker or a law enforcement officer:

- An unexplained, unusual or suspicious death,
- An abused or neglected child or elder,
- A threat to one's own life or threat to cause harm to an other,
- Whether or not a formal referral appointment with EA staff was kept.

(Note: No other information would be released without the employee's written permission.)

In addition to these four areas, information may also be released pursuant to a court order or, under most circumstances, in response to a subpoena in a legal proceeding. Aside from these special circumstances, however, the EAO staff would keep employee information confidential. This means that information could not be shared with anyone without the employee's prior written authorization.