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ANNUAL REPORT

Employee Assistance Program



Canada

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Employee Assistance Program is to provide for the early identification, intervention and rehabilitation of employees when personal, behavioural or health-related problems threaten or interfere with their ability to function effectively in the workplace.

Prior to July, 1982, the Program was conducted by Staff Relations Officers in conjunction with their regular duties. The decision was made to separate this responsibility from the Staff Relations Section in order to provide a high profile and continuing commitment to the Program. A new Co-ordinator was appointed effective June 28, 1982 and the Program now operates out of the Personnel Policy and Planning Division in the National Capital Region. The Personnel Advisors are responsible for implementing the Program in the regions.

The Employee Assistance Program was developed with the support and co-operation of representatives from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada and the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

The Program is designed to provide for:

- (a) counselling services for employees with personal, behavioural or health-related problems which are threatening their ability to function effectively in the workplace;
- (b) consultation and training for managers and supervisors in how to deal with work performance problems;
- (c) liaison with Treasury Board, National Health and Welfare, and with treatment resources in the community;
- (d) publicity and promotion to keep employees aware of the helping services available through the Program;
- (e) liaison with Labour representatives, primarily through the Employee Assistance Committee on which the national representatives of the I.B.E.W., P.I.P.S. and P.S.A.C. sit.

This report outlines program activity for the period from April 1, 1982 until March 31, 1983.

COUNSELLING:

During the past year, 32 employees personally contacted the Co-ordinator in the National Capital Region for assistance in coping with problems. Of this number, 25% were directly referred by supervisors for whom consultation was also provided.

The following summary shows percentages of employees using E.A.P. according to sex, age, first official language, and type of problem. No attempt should be made to attribute any significance to these findings in view of the fact that they apply only to the first year of independent program operation and should not be considered representative of trends in general.

Equal percentages of males and females contacted E.A.P. for help in dealing with problems.

There was a higher tendency for employees 40 years of age or younger to make use of E.A.P. services compared to those who were older.

As far as first official language was concerned, the percentages of Francophone and Anglophone employees closely paralleled the population distributions found in the Department.

Although a wide range of problems brought both employees and supervisors to E.A.P. for assistance, 72% of employees came to discuss problems of an emotional or psychological nature, including difficulties in family or interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, it was noted that 28% of employees interviewed perceived stress directly related to the job (in the form of unsatisfactory working relationships, unclear work directions or job expectations, work overload) as being a significant factor in their distress. In actual fact, many problems or problem-situations are complex or multi-dimensional and are not clearly definable as belonging to one or another specific category.

In the other regions, E.A.P. advice and assistance was provided by the Regional Personnel Advisors for 13 employees. However, this number should not be considered representative of regional activity in view of the fact that a standardized statistical reporting mechanism was not utilized.

In summary, a total of 45 employees received help directly through E.A.P. intervention in the Department.

CONSULTATIONS

In the National Capital Region, there were 8 consultations with managers or supervisors regarding referrals where the employee was subsequently seen for counselling. However, there were another 12 consultations where the employee concerned was not later in contact with E.A.P. (Employees who may be experiencing problems do not always desire E.A.P. help for various reasons. For example, they may already be receiving help elsewhere; they may prefer to use other resources or cope on their own; the problem may subside).

Assistance, advice and information about the Program was also provided in an additional 17 instances to concerned persons who contacted E.A.P. on behalf of troubled co-workers or other employees.

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS SESSIONS

Information sessions on E.A.P. were given for managers and supervisors, Regional Personnel Advisors along with Directors and Chiefs of Personnel, staff of the Personnel Policy and Planning Division, Labour Management Relations Committees and a group of other interested employees.

In general, these sessions provided an overview of E.A.P. and guidelines for managers and supervisors in how to identify, confront and refer employees with problems negatively affecting work performance. In some cases, the training film "We Can Help" was shown as well. All presentations were followed by a general discussion period.

In the National Capital Region, 13 information sessions attended by 114 managers, supervisors and other personnel were held to acquaint staff with the nature of the Employee Assistance Program and the services available to assist in the resolution of work performance problems. In order to establish links with other departmental functions, training sessions given to supervisors regarding the Performance Review and Employee Appraisal Program were also attended by the Co-ordinator to promote in particular a greater awareness of how to deal effectively with problem cases.

Although E.A.P. training had previously been provided in the regions by the Staff Relations Section while the Program was under its jurisdiction, training was renewed in two regions during this past year. In the Atlantic Region, an information session for managers was conducted by the Regional Personnel Advisor. In the Central Region, managers and supervisors were sent to National Health and Welfare for E.A.P. training courses.

RESOURCES AND LIAISON

It is necessary to maintain an up-to-date knowledge of and liaison with resources in other departments and in the community at large to ensure that employees receive appropriate and high-quality help. Visits were accordingly made to other departments including the Medical Services Branch of National Health & Welfare and to community-based treatment facilities.

Interdepartmental meetings for E.A.P. Co-ordinators were regularly attended at Treasury Board and the Canadian Public Personnel Management Association to keep abreast of current developments and resources.

Liaison with other departments and with local resources was also undertaken by Regional Personnel Advisors.

Another equally important facet of the Employee Assistance Program entails the role of the bargaining agents. The Employee Assistance Committee on which the national representatives of the I.B.E.W., P.I.P.S., and P.S.A.C. sit was originally established to play a monitoring role in the administration of the Program. This Committee was re-convened and will continue to meet on a quarterly basis. Main areas of interest pertain to developments and plans with respect to training, publicity and policy in addition to program evaluation and effectiveness in meeting the needs of employees for counselling services. E.A.P. awareness sessions for shop stewards and other union representatives are intended for the next fiscal year.

Meetings of the Labour-Management Relations Committees have also been attended by the E.A.P. Co-ordinator to provide information and answer questions about the Program. Union representatives have been encouraged to contact and have, in fact, contacted E.A.P. on matters of concern.

PUBLICITY

A Communigram announcing the appointment of the Coordinator and briefly explaining the Program was sent to all employees.

Information about lectures being held in the community by the Canadian Mental Health Association was forwarded to Directors-General to be circulated to members of their staff at their discretion.

An E.A.P. training film, We Can Help, was ordered for use in managerial and supervisory training sessions after three test screenings to various elements in the Department indicated a positive response.

A series of pamphlets pertaining to E.A.P. concerns was identified and an E.A.P. poster was developed for distribution in departmental offices across Canada at a later date.

A brief description followed by a more comprehensive article on E.A.P. are to appear in upcoming issues of the internal publication entitled Communications Express.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. In order to meet the need for employees at the Communications Research Centre to have ready access to program services, an arrangement was made for the Co-ordinator to be on site one day per week. A memo was sent to all employees at C.R.C. to this effect.

2. The Employee Assistance Program was instrumental in resolving problems which arose in connection with the responsibility for payment of medical examinations conducted at departmental request by National Health & Welfare in the Regions. This issue was of concern not only to the Program itself but also to the Department as a whole in view of the occasional need for medical assessment in determining fitness for work.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically, Employee Assistance Programs were set up to deal with work performance problems primarily related to alcoholism. However, the fact that 72% of employees requested help in coping with problems of a psychological or emotional nature (including interpersonal relationships) or with family difficulties would tend to confirm the need for a broad-brush approach in the delivery of program services. Another consideration to be taken into account is that although many problems are complex and may indeed involve covert substance abuse as a factor, people may more readily come forth to ask for help with problems perceived as being more socially acceptable than alcoholism.

Stress in the workplace appeared as a recurrent theme not only among employees interviewed but also among managers and supervisors during information sessions. Consideration should perhaps be given to incorporating stress management workshops into departmental managerial and supervisory training programs.

ACTION PLANS FOR 1983-84

Major action plans proposed for the upcoming year are as follows:

1. to provide prompt and effective counselling and referral services for employees who voluntarily contact the Program or who are referred by their supervisors;
2. to provide timely and helpful consultation and advice to managers and supervisors and other concerned personnel on request in regard to problematic situations regarding employees who are experiencing personal, behavioural or health-related difficulties;
3. to provide E.A.P. information or training sessions to:
 - a) managers and supervisors in the N.C.R. at least every second month;
 - b) staff in the regional offices in collaboration with the Regional Personnel Advisors and in conjunction with other training programs;
 - c) shop stewards and other Labour representatives;
 - d) other groups of interested personnel, to be determined at a later date;
4. to provide E.A.P. liaison with the Regional Personnel Advisors, Treasury board, other departments and with community treatment resources;
5. to meet at least on a quarterly basis with the Employee Assistance Committee for the monitoring of program administration;
6. to promote and publicize the Program by means of:
 - a) an E.A.P. permanent poster to be placed on all D.O.C. bulletin boards;
 - b) a pamphlet describing departmental E.A.P. services to be distributed to all employees;
 - c) a series of other pamphlets clarifying the nature and scope of the Program to be distributed to all employees at regular intervals;
7. to revise and update the existing policy in line with current developments;

8. to explore the feasibility of utilizing E.A.P. resources in other government departments, possibly on a reciprocal basis, to extend and facilitate delivery of referral and counselling services for employees;
9. to develop a standardized reporting mechanism for use in the Department as a whole to identify E.A.P. cases.

E.A.P. PERSONNEL

Officers involved in the administration of the program across Canada are as follows:

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