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Government of Canada
Department of Communications

Gouvernement du Canada
Ministère des Communications

1983-84
ANNUAL REPORT

Employee Assistance Program



Canada

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is to provide for early identification, intervention and rehabilitation with respect to employees when personal, health-related or behavioural problems threaten or interfere with the effective performance of their work. Under this policy, confidential assistance or advice is provided for employees who may seek such help on their own initiative or who may be referred by their supervisors, union representatives or other concerned persons when work performance is adversely affected.

At the Department of Communications, the program was developed with the help and support of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPS).

The national program currently operates out of the Personnel Policy and Planning Division in the Human Resources Branch. The EAP Co-ordinator is responsible for directing and co-ordinating the overall program operations as well as for providing, in the National Capital Region, individualized assistance for troubled employees as required. On a Department-wide basis, these functions are carried out by the five Personnel Advisors for their respective regions.

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

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

Lorraine Croskery
Employee Assistance Program Co-ordinator
Dept. of Communications
15th Floor
Journal Tower North
300 Slater Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0C8
Tel: 992-4544

ATLANTIC REGION

Yvon Gautreau
Regional Personnel Advisor
Dept. of Communications
7th Floor
Terminal Plaza Bldg.
P.O. Box 1290
1222 Main Street
Moncton, N.B.
E1C 8P9
Tel: 165-388-6550

QUÉBEC REGION

Paola Fini
Conseiller régional en personnel
Ministère des Communications
295, rue St-Paul
Montréal, P.Q.
H2Y 2H1 Tel: 183-3-7367

ONTARIO REGION

Carolyn Rankin
Regional Personnel Advisor
Dept. of Communications
9th Floor
55 St. Clair Avenue E.
Toronto, Ontario
M4T 1M2 Tel: 186-6135

CENTRAL REGION

Alden Slawson
Regional Personnel Advisor
Dept. of Communications
200-386 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 3Y9 Tel: 161-2801

PACIFIC REGION

Carol McGrath
Regional Personnel Advisor
Dept. of Communications
1700-800 Burrard
Vancouver, B. C.
V6Z 2J7 Tel: 175-9-666-5684

The Employee Assistance Program is designed to provide for:

- a) counselling services for employees who are experiencing personal, behavioural or health-related problems which threaten or adversely affect their ability to function effectively in the work-place;
- b) consultation and training for managers and supervisors in dealing with work performance problems;
- c) liaison with Treasury Board, National Health and Welfare, and with helping resources in the community;
- d) liaison with Labour representatives primarily through the Employee Assistance Committee on which the national representatives of the three major unions sit;

- e) publicity and promotion to keep employees aware of the helping services available through the Program.

This report outlines program activity for the period from April 1, 1983 until March 31, 1984.

COUNSELLING

During the past year a total of 52 employees were referred to the Employee Assistance Program.

The number of referrals represents a population penetration rate of 2.21%. The 2% figure is generally regarded in the literature as the expected referral rate for a successful program two years after the program has been fully implemented.

DATA ANALYSIS

In regard to sex, age and language, the percentages for EAP appear to correlate with the population distributions for these factors in the Department itself. More women than men this year were referred to EAP as compared to last year when both sexes were equally represented. Nonetheless, this finding is consistent with the foregoing statement in view of the fact that more than half of the EAP referrals (52%) concerned employees in the Administrative Support category which is predominantly female in population.

There was a higher tendency for employees younger than 40 years of age to make use of EAP services (62% compared to 38% in the older group). This trend was also observed last year. Similarly, the representation of Francophone and Anglophone employees was approximately the same as their representation in the Department at large.

As far as Category was concerned, there was a change from the pattern evident in last year's statistics. Percentages of referrals from the Management/Scientific and Professional, the Administrative and Foreign Service and the Technical categories increased in 1983-84, whereas referrals from the Administrative Support and the Operational Category decreased.

Although a wide range of problems brought both employees and their supervisors to EAP for assistance and advice, the highest proportion again this year came to discuss problems related to emotional well-being. In fact, if family difficulties and work-related stress are included as having a high emotional component, the conclusion can be drawn that 85% of employees were motivated to seek EAP help as a result of emotional distress.

Clearly most problem-situations are complex or multi-dimensional and cannot be readily defined as belonging exclusively to one or another type. For example, the low number of employees seen for help in overcoming addictions may not reflect the real incidence of this kind of problem within the Department. It may reflect merely that people come forth with less trepidation to ask for help in dealing with problems perceived as being more socially acceptable than alcoholism.

The wide range of problems for which employees requested help confirmed once again the importance of maintaining a broad-brush approach in the delivery of EAP services.

CONSULTATIONS

In the Department as a whole, there were 30 voluntary or self referrals and 22 supervisory referrals. Three union representatives and four concerned co-workers also contacted EAP regarding troubled employees.

The average number of interviews held with each referring supervisor was estimated as 3 for a total number of 66 consultations with supervisors. There were approximately 2 consultations held with each referring union representative or co-worker, for an additional 14 sessions.

In summary an estimated minimum of 80 EAP consultations were held with supervisors, union representatives and concerned co-workers during 1983-84.

Assistance, advice and information of a more general nature was also provided to additional persons who contacted EAP on a non-referral basis.

Consultations were held on an ongoing basis with the Medical Services staff of National Health and Welfare (NHW). This was done on a routine basis when referrals were made and when specific follow-up was required. No attempt will here be made to estimate the number of consultations held of this kind. It is important to note that in the past year 15 employees or 29% were referred to National Health and Welfare for in-depth assessment and counselling. However, not all employees who were experiencing difficulties desired further help from NHW, for various reasons. Some were already in the process of receiving counselling elsewhere. Some chose to consult either their own doctor or another community resource. For some, the problem subsided in intensity, while other employees preferred to handle their difficulties by themselves without outside help.

OTHER METHODS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

A study was undertaken to assess the impact of EAP intervention on attendance and performance. It was found that the majority of EAP referrals did not show clear documentary evidence of poor attendance or performance.

Nevertheless, with regard to attendance, 57% of the 14 records reviewed showed either an immediate improvement or no change from an already satisfactory record in the short-term period (four months) following referral to EAP. With regard to performance, 56% of the 9 appraisal reports reviewed indicated an improvement in work performance (while 44% showed no apparent change) following referral.

TRAINING AND AWARENESS SESSIONS

The development and implementation of the Public Service Supervisory Orientation Training Course to be given to all supervisors at a rate of 10% per year altered to some extent previous plans to provide individual EAP sessions to supervisors and managers in various sectors of the organization including the Regions. EAP training will henceforth be provided as part of this course in supervisory skills. Informal EAP information sessions will continue to be held whenever possible on request.

EAP training was provided via the Supervisory Orientation Training Course to 24 English-speaking and 18 French-speaking supervisors from across the country.

Prior to the launching of this course, an EAP session was held in Toronto as part of a Personnel training course. Twenty-two supervisors and Labour representatives from the Ontario regional and district offices learned about the program and their important role.

An EAP information session, which included a discussion of the program and a showing of the film "We Can Help", was provided to 10 members of the ADMSM Labour-Management Relations Committee.

Presentations were made on three occasions to the 16 members of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

Impromptu sessions were attended by 22 employees in the Human Resources Branch.

These EAP sessions provided an overview of the program and guidelines for managers and supervisors in how to identify, confront and refer troubled employees. The training films "We Can Help" and "Le Dossier Dorion" were shown. Each presentation was followed by a questions-and-answers period. An approximate total of 112 participants included supervisors, managers, Labour representatives and other interested employees.

An awareness session of a different nature was provided to employees at the Communications Research Centre. This was done as a joint effort in collaboration with the CRC Health Unit. The session focussed on the social and health implications of alcoholism and drug addiction. Approximately 70 employees expressed interest in this subject by stopping to pick up the educational literature available and to view the displays and videotapes being shown.

In addition to the Ontario Region, EAP awareness and training sessions were held in the Atlantic and Central Regions during the past year. The Central Region continued to encourage managerial staff to attend the EAP training sessions offered there by NHW.

PARTICIPATION OF THE UNIONS

The Employee Assistance Program represents a joint Labour-Management endeavour. As such, a vital component of this program is the role played by the three major bargaining agents.

The Employee Assistance Committee is a sub-committee of the National Labour-Management Relations Committee. It is composed of the national representatives of the IBEW, PSAC and PIPS. The EAP Co-ordinator acts as chair-person. This committee was established to play a monitoring role in the administration of the program. It meets regularly on a quarterly basis, although special meetings are held as the need arises. The primary areas of interest for the committee during the past year pertained to developments and plans with respect to training, publicity and policy.

Along with supervisors, Union representatives are encouraged to make, and did in actuality make, referrals to EAP.

Labour representatives also attended EAP training and information sessions, either as supervisors or as special participants.

RESOURCES

It is important to maintain an up-to-date knowledge of and liaison with resources in other government departments and in the community at large in order to ensure that employees received appropriate and high-quality care. In keeping with this goal, close contact was established particularly with the Medical Services Division of NHW in regard to referrals and follow-up activities. Discussions were also held from time to time with private practitioners and consultants in the community who wished to make their services known to EAP.

In a more general context, there were contacts with EAP personnel in other departments on several occasions regarding matters of mutual interest and concern. Interdepartmental meetings for EAP Co-ordinators were regularly attended at Treasury Board, the Canadian Public Personnel Management Association and elsewhere to keep abreast of current developments, issues and resources.

Similarly, the Personal Advisors continued to liaise with other departments, notably NHW, and with resources in their own regions. Problems continued to arise in two regions in connection with the acceptance of EAP referrals by NHW. Personnel Advisors were being discouraged by local NHW staff from referring employees presumably because of NHW's limited resources. However, the issue was addressed with NHW at the national level, and the matter appears to have been resolved.

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

EAP enhanced its visibility by placing a brightly coloured poster on all DOC bulletin boards across Canada. The poster is intended to keep employees aware of the availability of EAP services.

An article describing program highlights under the title of "EAP Means Help for Employees" was included in the June, 1983 issue of Communications Express.

A two-page EAP pamphlet, outlining the purpose and nature of the program and the kinds of services offered, was written, produced and distributed to employees in every region across the Country.

A pamphlet from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) was also sent to all employees. Entitled "Coping with Your Job", this brochure contained practical information concerning how to recognize and deal with symptoms of stress in the work environment.

Notices announcing local lectures being offered by the CMHA on the subject of mental illness were posted on bulletin boards for the information of employees in the NCR.

The Department's first EAP Annual Report was published and distributed to all Assistant Deputy Ministers, Directors-General, Regional Directors and Directors. The report briefed them on the program's nature, scope, concerns, practices and results.

Two training films, We Can Help and Le Dossier Dorion, were obtained to assist in sensitizing managers and supervisors concerning their role in the program.

ACTIONS PLANS FOR 1984-85

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

1. provide prompt and effective referral services for employees who voluntarily contact EAP or who are referred by their supervisors or union representatives;
2. provide timely and helpful advice to managers, supervisors and other concerned personnel on request in regard to problematic situations concerning employees who are experiencing personal, behavioural or health-related difficulties;
3. provide EAP training and awareness sessions to:
 - a) 10% of supervisors through their participation in the departmental Supervisory Orientation Training Course;
 - b) other groups of interested personnel on a quarterly basis;
4. provide EAP liaison with the Regional Personnel Advisors, Treasury Board, other departments and with community treatment resources;
5. meet at least once every three months with the Employee Assistance Committee for the monitoring of program administration;
6. promote and publicize EAP by means of:
 - a) pamphlets and other literature related to EAP concerns to be distributed to all employees at a minimum interval of every six months;
 - b) EAP reminder notices or articles in the departmental publication, Communications Express;
7. develop a department-wide system of referral agents;
8. review and publish the departmental EAP policy.