

## April is EAP Awareness Month

It seems as though many of us think about the Employee Assistance Program as being for someone else, perhaps with a serious problem, someone who needs counseling or help with an alcohol or drug problem. While it is true that the EAP is there to provide those critically needed services, the other things that the EAP does often go unnoticed.

This phenomenon arises from two sources: First, the history of the EAP in USPS includes its name and focus as the Postal Alcohol Recovery program or PAR. Employees with lots of service knew the EAP as the PAR, which led many to believe that only people with a drinking problem used it. The old program was also staffed by USPS employees, which made at least the appearance of loss of confidentiality possible. Now, EAP services are provided under contract by Magellan Health Services, which assures privacy and confidentiality in accordance with HIPAA as well as state law and regulation. Second, one of the effects of having health care coverage is that we are conditioned to think of professional services being somehow related to having a diagnosis. So we are trained to think we had to have a “problem” in order to get a “solution.”

Your Employee Assistance Program is a negotiated benefit. It is paid for by the Postal Service, and the services by the EAP are provided at no cost to the user. Try thinking of it as a part of the paycheck that is there but cannot be seen, which makes it like a “use-it-or-lose-it” benefit.

Much of the focus of the USPS EAP is on preventing potential problems from getting worse. Some examples of the more preventive and proactive services are:

- Reducing the everyday stress in busy lives of USPS employees and their household members,
- Coping with the normal (yet distressing) reactions people have to change,
- Adopting a more healthy lifestyle,
- Gaining better control over finances,
- Making career decisions,
- Preparing for retirement,
- Communicating more effectively,
- Resolving the everyday conflicts in ways that work.

Another important function that the EAP serves is to provide helpful information. Our website has a data base of child and elder care providers, a searchable library of articles on a vast number of subjects, self-assessment quizzes, tools and calculators. A recent addition to the site is the “Ask the EAP” button, which allows visitors to contact the EAP by e-mail with questions. Using the website requires no login, no password, PIN or EIN. You do not have to have cookies enabled on your internet browser to enter. Using the site is anonymous, except when you use the “Ask the EAP” function.

The EAP provides services on site at postal facilities, union functions and management association meetings. These are often educational in nature, and can range from consultations to brief stand up talks about EAP topics to in-person and web-based training sessions to providing needed services after accidents, catastrophes or deaths.

And finally, the EAP does provide problem assessment, brief problem solving counseling and referral to needed resources. In this District alone, there are approximately 250 different affiliate EAP counselors, each of them prescreened and qualified, licensed by the state offering a wealth of experience and knowledge to this important part of the EAP.

Your EAP is dedicated to making things better. Each person who uses face-to-face EAP services is given an opportunity to offer feedback. This helps the EAP continue to adapt to the needs of the customers and to ensure the highest quality of service. It cannot help, however until you

**Make the Call!**

**USPS Employee Assistance Program**  
**1-800-327-4968**  
(1-800-EAP-4-YOU) TTY: 1-877-492-7341  
[www.EAP4YOU.com](http://www.EAP4YOU.com)