

I. Program Description:

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP), described herein applies to all regular full-time and part-time City employees except employees of the Gainesville Police Department which has a separate arrangement. The EAP offers professional services free to City employees and family members. Services provided will be information, problem assessment and general counseling including, but not limited to the following areas: marital/family, drug and alcohol dependency, emotional, financial, and occupational problems. Although primarily a referral service, counseling services free of charge up to three visits may be provided for short-term therapy. Long-term or recurrent treatment is not provided free of charge. However, a portion of the cost of all such therapy may be covered under the City's group benefit plan.

II. Purpose:

The intent is to provide an easily accessible, confidential* program providing early intervention for a wide range of problems which may adversely impact employee health, safety and productivity.

III. Policy:

Each of us, regardless of our position in the organization, faces a variety of problems in our daily lives. Usually we work them out. Sometimes our problems become too much for us to handle and they affect our personal happiness or family relations, our performance at work and even our health. The Employee Assistance Program is intended as a helping hand - not an attempt to pry or punish. Employee evaluations are not to be affected by the employee's participation or non-participation in the EAP. Employee evaluations will be affected by the employee's work performance.

IV. Eligibility:

Those eligible include all regular full-time and part-time employees and their spouses, registered or certified domestic partner, own children, legally adopted children, step children, children of current registered or certified domestic partner for whom they are financially responsible and any other children for whom they have established legal guardianship in accordance with Chapter 744, Florida Statutes, and can furnish a court document as proof of such guardianship. The employee's significant other not included in the latter may be involved if important to the goals of problem assessment or short-term therapy.

V. Referral:

Self-referrals are preferred. Early intervention, should problems arise is encouraged.

A. Self-referral:

Employees or family members may refer or be referred by others aware of the program; such referrals are maintained in strict confidentiality*.

B. Supervisory referrals - can be informal or formal:

1. Informal referrals may be made by a supervisor who has an employee who requests assistance or who observes overt signs of distress or a decline in the work performance of an employee.
2. Formal referrals may be made for deteriorating work performance in addition to other documented corrective procedures.

The employee is offered, in writing, a referral. The appointment with the EAP provider is made by the supervisor.

The supervisor is notified:

- a. Whether the employee kept the appointment;
- b. Whether a treatment plan has been recommended and if so, whether the employee is following the treatment plan;
- c. Approximate length of treatment;
- d. Prognosis;
- e. Whether the employee is fit to return to work; and
- f. Whether the employee should be referred for a full fitness-for-duty examination.

The supervisor will not be given any information about the nature of the problem unless the employee consents or such is related to necessary restrictions on the work or other duties of an employee and/or necessary accommodations.

VI. Employees are not excused from any of their work responsibilities or from compliance with any personnel policies or procedures because they are undergoing treatment for behavioral or substance abuse problems.

VII. Only the **initial formal** supervisory referral appointment will be considered a work assignment and will not require the employee to take any of his/her personal leave for that appointment.

In instances where it is necessary for follow-up visits to the initial formal supervisory referral appointment, or for an informal supervisory referral or self-referral, leave may be granted for time spent to obtain help or treatment on the same basis as it is for ordinary personal business or health problems. (Consideration could be given for the use of sick, vacation, and PTO leave or medical leave without pay, as appropriate.)

VIII. Confidentiality Waivers*:

*According to law, confidentiality may be waived only under the following conditions:

- A. When the person licensed or certified under Florida Statute, Chapter 490, specifically 490.0147, is a party defendant to a civil, criminal or disciplinary action arising from a complaint filed by the patient or client, in which case the waiver shall be limited to that action.
- B. When the patient or client agrees to the waiver, in writing, or, when more than one person in a family is receiving therapy, when each family member agrees to the waiver, in writing.
- C. When there is a clear and immediate probability of physical harm to the patient or client, to other individuals, or to society and the person licensed or certified under Florida Statute Chapter 490, communicates the information only to the potential victim, appropriate family member, or law enforcement or other appropriate authorities.

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