



HEALTH AND SAFETY **FACT SHEET**

Healthier workplaces, healthier workers

Work and the pressures of society often lead to overwhelming stress on workers. How that stress is or is not dealt with contributes greatly to our families' wellbeing.

Poor working conditions, unsafe and unhealthy jobs, excessive noise, gases, chemicals, unrealistic work quotas, poor work organization, poor shift scheduling, insufficient or overbearing supervision. All of these can and should be issues that the union can improve upon.

By eliminating these workplace stressors, we help reduce the number of factors that affect workers' wellbeing.

Many employers have recognized the need to provide assistance for workers who are in distress. Employee assistance programs are present at many worksites.

Too often these programs do not achieve the goal of assisting and counseling distressed workers.

Instead, they are used to ensure that work performance does not deteriorate. Refusal or failure to use the EAP program can lead to discipline or dismissal.

Often the threat of EAP programs is used to improve work performance. Such programs do not help workers deal with the problems but only increase their anxiety and stress levels.

Elements of a good EAP

To be truly effective, an employee assistance program should include the following elements:

- Be jointly administered by union and management;
- Ensure complete confidentiality;
- Be fully funded by employer;
- Recognize the right to paid leave whenever treatment is required;
- Ensure that professional services are independent of the employer (i.e., community-based services);
- Use fellow employees as referral agents;
- Provide training for referral agents;

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- Be completely voluntary;
- Be governed by policy and procedures jointly developed by union and management;
- Be available for whole family;
- Not be used as a disciplinary tool;
- Offer general information about health and well being.

Conclusion

Good EAPs can and do help employees cope with problems that are causing distress to them and their families. Many unions have negotiated or have participated in such programs. Without union participation, the effectiveness of such programs may be poor.

Jointly administered EAPs are more likely to provide assistance and to help CUPE members deal with the increasing pressures of modern life

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