

PALM BEACH GARDENS POLICE DEPARTMENT

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

POLICY AND PROCEDURE 3.3.4

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CONTENTS:

- 1. Program Services**
- 2. Purpose of Program**
- 3. Objective of Program**
- 4. Confidentiality of Program**
- 5. Department EAP Coordinator**
- 6. Supervisor and Employee Responsibilities**
- 7. Glossary**

PURPOSE: To establish guidelines for the City's employee assistance program (EAP) for police department members.

SCOPE: This policy and procedure applies to all members.

REVIEW RESPONSIBILITY: Bureau Supervisors

POLICY: It is the policy of the Palm Beach Gardens Police Department, through the City Employee Assistance Program Provider, to provide professional consultation and referral services for all full-time employees who are experiencing personal problems of such significance that satisfactory performance is or may be impaired.

1. PROGRAM SERVICES

- a. The resources of the EAP are available to any eligible employee and their family members to address personal and work-related issues. Up to six (6) confidential counseling sessions are provided at no charge for all full time employees and their eligible family members.
- b. Visits are not cumulative from contract year to contract year. Payment for any treatment beyond the sixth visit per contract year shall be the responsibility of the employee and/or the appropriate insurance carrier.
- c. All records of this program shall be maintained by the EAP provider in strict confidence and separate from the employee's personnel records.
- d. The final decision to request or accept assistance through the employee assistance program is the personal and final choice of the employee.
- e. Participation in the employee assistance program is voluntary and shall not in itself jeopardize an employee's employment status or advancement opportunities.
- f. All immediate supervisors shall be responsible for identifying and documenting performance deficiencies and offering referral to the EAP for assistance. Supervisors do not have the professional qualifications to make any judgment as to whether or not an employee is addicted to alcohol or drugs nor are they qualified to diagnose any other personal problems. Referrals to the employee assistance program must be based strictly on job performance.
- g. Employees are encouraged to seek assistance on their own initiative before problems affect their work. Early resolution of personal problems is in the best interest of the individual and the police department.

2. PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

- a. The employee assistance program is designed to help employees and their family members with a variety of work-life challenges which affect job performance and/or attendance; such as emotional well being, family matters, work issues and addiction and recovery.
- b. The police department participates in the City's employee assistance program as a joint program contracted with and administered by a licensed and insured EAP provider.
- c. Conditions such as alcoholism, chemical dependency and emotional disturbances that affect job performance shall be recognized and dealt with as illnesses that can be successfully treated. Employees who require assistance in these areas will be given the same consideration as those with any other illness.
- d. Self-referred employees or family members seeking assistance through the program will be able to do so with complete anonymity.

3. OBJECTIVE OF PROGRAM

- a. Objectives of the City of Palm Beach Gardens employee assistance program are:
 - i. To provide a wide range of program services that address the gamut of work-life challenges affecting employees and their dependents.
 - ii. To provide a program that is perceived as beneficial to employees and their dependents.
 - iii. To increase productivity in the work place, i.e., a decrease in absenteeism, tardiness, reduction in use of health benefits, etc.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY OF PROGRAM

- a. Federal law mandates confidentiality in all contacts between EAP counselors and employees seeking assistance. This requirement assures employees that their discussions with the EAP representatives are confidential and private. No information about the use of EAP services will be provided to anyone unless the employee provides written permission to do so as required by all state and federal confidentiality laws.
- b. Regardless of departmental concerns, supervisors are not to intrude into these contacts or attempt to discuss such contacts with the employee or the counselor without the existence of a voluntary release from the employee.
- c. Employers are also to ensure that employees understand that a release of information is voluntary and that providing such a release cannot be compelled under any circumstances.
- d. Provisions have been instituted to address disclosure of information, without employee consent, during exigent circumstances such as medical emergencies, imminent threat to life, etc.
- e. In such cases supervisors are bound by the confidentiality regulations and may not further disseminate information received from the appropriate EAP representative without additional authorization from the employee.
- f. The EAP is not bound to extend assistance to an individual who persists in conduct that is contrary to law, openly discusses illegal activities, or plans or exhibits behavior that would threaten either their own life or the lives of others.

5. EAP COORDINATOR

- a. The EAP is coordinated by a City Human Resources representative who may be consulted by supervisors and management officials for guidance regarding performance problems.

6. SUPERVISORS AND EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The City recognizes alcoholism as an illness in which an employee's consumption of an alcoholic beverage interferes with the employee's health, job performance or the image of the City. The concern of the City is strictly limited to the effects of this illness upon the health of the employee, the employee's job performance and the community's image of the City.
- b. Employees, who suspect that they may have an alcohol problem, are encouraged to seek diagnosis and treatment through the EAP.

- c. With regard to drug abuse, the City recognizes that this is a treatable health problem and employees with this problem will receive the same assistance as extended to employees having any other illness or health problem. However, the City cannot condone employee drug activity which is contrary to law. When illegal drug use is involved, an individual's participation in the EAP will not preclude the City from taking appropriate disciplinary/administrative action against the employee for his/her use of illegal drugs, except as provided herein for voluntary referrals. Disciplinary action can be initiated and could include the full range of disciplinary/administrative actions up to and including dismissal.
- d. Supervisor's responsibilities: Supervisors observing unsatisfactory job performance, on the part of an employee under their command which the supervisor believes to be the result of issues appropriate for referral to the EAP shall direct the employee to the employee assistance program. .
- e. When supervisors have good reason to believe that an employee's problem also involves criminal conduct directed toward or potentially harmful to the person or property of others, this information should be reported to the appropriate authority.
- f. Employee's responsibilities: It shall be the responsibility of the employee to comply with the referral request and cooperate with prescribed therapy. An employee shall not be disciplined *solely* for refusing to accept diagnosis and treatment, however, an employee unable or unwilling to respond to treatment may be disciplined according to City policy if his/her job performance remains unsatisfactory.
- g. An employee's decision to participate in the EAP when he/she has been referred under these circumstances will be taken into consideration by management officials and disciplinary/administrative action will be decided on a case-by-case basis depending on all mitigating factors and the totality of the circumstances. Such considerations will include, but are not limited to the sensitivity of the employee's position and whether the employee's conduct has undermined the City's confidence in his/her trustworthiness.
- h. Employees will not have their employment status, advancement opportunities or retirement eligibility jeopardized due solely to their participation in the EAP.

7. GLOSSARY

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) -The EAP is a completely confidential service that allows employees and their family members to receive counseling for problems not usually covered under group health plans.

Family members: Includes employee, spouse, employee's registered domestic partner, and child(ren) of the employee or their registered domestic partner.

INDEX AS:

- EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

RESPONSIBILITY INDEX

- CHIEF OF POLICE
- SUPERVISORS

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APPROVED:



Stephen J. Stepp
Chief of Police

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Date