



Division 08

Health and Safety

Chapter 06 – Employee & Volunteer Assistance Programs

January 2009

POLICY

This General Order shall communicate the policies and procedures for operation and utilization of the Employee and Volunteer Assistance Programs.

The Prince George's County Fire Department recognizes that unresolved personal problems have a negative impact on the individual, as well as create potential for decline in work attendance, job performance, and safety.

Because our employees and volunteers are entrusted with the responsibility to protect the lives and property of the citizens of Prince George's County, it is of paramount importance that personnel obtain assistance for any problem that has the potential to interfere with our fire department services.

Furthermore, the Fire Department acknowledges that alcoholism, like drug addiction, is a disease that can respond well to early intervention and treatment. In an effort to strive toward the goal of a drug free work force, personnel are encouraged to seek help to remedy substance use and abuse.

Therefore, the Prince George's County Fire Department has established the Employee and Volunteer Assistance Programs (EAP and VAP) to provide confidential help in the following problem areas:

- Substance abuse/Alcoholism & Alcohol Abuse/DWI/DUI
- Co-Dependency and Adult Children of Alcoholic Issues
- Marital Problems

- Domestic Violence
- Family Problems
- Emotional and/or Psychological Problems
- Weight control
- Life & Work Stress
- Critical Incident Stress
- Legal Problems
- Financial Difficulties
- Sleep Disorders

DEFINITIONS

N/A

PROCEDURES

1. General Provisions

The EAP is available to all employees, both uniform and civilian, as well as their immediate family members. Also eligible for the EAP are retirees of the Prince George's County Fire Department. In addition, VAP is available to all volunteer members, as well as their immediate family members. Both career and volunteer personnel may utilize the assistance programs without fear of reprisal and without jeopardizing job/membership security or promotional opportunities.

Confidentiality

The Prince George's County Fire Department, as well as Local 1619 of International Association of Fire fighters and the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association, recognize that strict confidentiality policies for both the EAP and VAP will enhance



program utilization. Furthermore, all records of the EAP and VAP shall be kept in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal laws. All clients entering the EAP and VAP shall receive written and verbal appraisal of the confidentiality policy and will sign documentation that all policies have been explained by the counselor and understood by the client. All information revealed by the client will remain completely confidential within the EAP and/or VAP, with the exception of any of the following:

- The client reveals information about child abuse or neglect that is required by law to be released to appropriate child protective services.
- The client gives **WRITTEN** authorization for release of information.
- The EAP/VAP receive Judicial Orders to release specific information for a court proceeding.
- The client is unfit for duty and the client must be removed from service in a confidential manner in order to protect the client from working while he/she is a clear and present danger to himself/herself or others.
- The client is in the state of a bona fide medical emergency and needs medical attention.
- The client commits or threatens to commit a crime on the property of the program or against program employees.

2. Program Leadership/Evaluation

Since its inception, the EAP has been the result of a combined effort between the Prince George's County Fire Department and the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association. A VAP Advisory Board consisting of representatives of the Department, the volunteers, and the VAP staff, work to

improve programming and outreach to the volunteer population; however, individual cases are never discussed.

In addition to Advisory Board guidance, the EAP/VAP receives feedback from clients participating in the programs. Clients will be requested to fill out an anonymous evaluation form for the purpose of measuring client satisfaction and encouraging participants to give suggestions to improve operations and services.

3. Program Operation Components

Confidential clinical services provided by the EAP and VAP shall include:

- Crisis intervention
- Problem assessment
- Assistance with accessing insurance benefits
- Short-term counseling
- Referral to long-term therapy or residential treatment as needed
- Follow-up after treatment
- Back to work conferences after long-term sick leave utilization
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefings
- Workplace stress/anger management
- Mental health assessments.

Educational Services by the EAP and VAP shall include:

- Written and/or instructional outreach to all new employees/volunteer members
- Annual in-service training for supervisors on the utilization of the EAP and VAP
- Individual supervisor consultation concerning utilization of the EAP and VAP
- Drug Prevention and Awareness Seminars, as requested



- Critical Incident Stress Prevention and Awareness Seminars, as requested
- Stress Management, Positive Mental Health, and Wellness Awareness Seminars, as requested

4. Accessing the Programs

Phone Access

Both the EAP and VAP shall maintain 24-hour phone availability personnel, in case the need arises for crises care.

The EAP phone number is 301-883-6270. The VAP phone number is 301-883-6270. Employees/volunteer members can also reach EAP/VAP by call the Operations Center at 301-583-2200.

In an emergency, personnel may also reach the EAP or VAP via pager by following this process:

- Call the Public Safety Communications at 301-499-8400.
- Ask Public Safety Communications to page the EAP or VAP.
- Leave a number where an EAP/VAP Coordinator can call you back within 20 minutes.
- DO NOT leave your name.

All career/civilian employees also have the option to utilize the County Employee Assistance Program. You can reach the county EAP program by calling 1-877-334-0530.

Office Space

Both the EAP and VAP shall be housed at a location away from other Fire Department work sites. Every precaution will be taken to schedule client appointments to avoid clients

meeting each other in the waiting room of the EAP and VAP.

5. Types of Referrals

Self-referral

Prince George's County Fire Department personnel and their family member may choose to seek help through the EAO and VAP before problems accelerate to the point of impacting on job performance, attendance, and behavior.

Early problem recognition and intervention is always preferable; therefore, the Fire Department encourages personnel to voluntarily-utilize the programs to resolve personal problems. Employees/members who self-refer may request off-duty appointments for full confidentiality or arrange on-duty appointments with the cooperation of the supervisor. On-duty EAP appointments do not require leave. The employee is detailed to the EAP for his/her meeting. However, once referred away from the program, sick leave or annual must be used. If an employee is attending an EAP appointment while on duty, the supervisor may require the employee to produce a document verifying his/her EAP visit.

Supervisory-referral

In the case of employees and volunteers who have documented problems in the areas of attendance, job performance, and behavior, the supervisor shall refer the employee or volunteer to the appropriate assistance program according to the following procedure:

- Call the EAP/VAP counselor to discuss the reasons for supervisory referral and set an appointment time for the first meeting.



- Document the problems in attendance, performance and behavior on the enclosed Form (Attachment 1). Send all documentation to the EAP/VAP. Remember, documentation of referral to the EAP/VAP cannot become a part of the personnel record, PPA, or disciplinary charges.
- Confront the employee/member with his/her attendance, performance, and behavior problems, express concern as needed, and then refer the employee/member to the appropriate assistance program. Supervisors shall refrain from attempting to diagnose the employee/member as a part of the referral.
- Send the employee/member to the EAP/VAP appointment at the pre-designated time. Employees should be detailed on duty.
- Upon arrival at the EAP/VAP, the employee/member will be given an introduction to the program and then the counselor will obtain written consent from the client to inform the supervisor only of the following facts:
 - Whether or not the employee/member has agreed to participate in the program
 - Whether or not the employee/member is attending EAP/VAP appointments
 - Whether or not the employee/member will require further time away from work for further treatment
 - When the employee/member exits the program

If the employee/member declines to accept assistance, the program counselor will document this fact and then notify the supervisor. An employee/member who is supervisor referred is not required to participate in the program beyond the initial

visit. If the employee/member fails to show up for the initial EAP/VAP appointment, the supervisor will be notified of non-compliance of the referral.

Supervisors are reminded that the Assistance Programs are not substitutes for the normal disciplinary actions. Any employee/member that exhibits significant problems in attendance, performance, and behavior, even after referral to the EAP/VAP, is subject to routine disciplinary actions.

6. Cost

The EAP and VAP are provided as benefits to the career and volunteer personnel. All in-house services provided by the assistance program are free of charge. However, any expenses incurred in seeking subsequent professional counseling, including in-patient or out-patient treatment, will be the responsibility of the employee or volunteer member. Every effort will be made to assist the employee/member in finding cost effective care, while utilizing their health care insurance coverage.

REFERENCES

N/A

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1 - Referral Form

Attachment I

TO: Employee (or Volunteer) Assistance Program Coordinator

FROM: _____
(Name) (Title) (Station/Division)

RE: Supervisory-Referral of Employee/Member

I am writing to document the supervisory-referral of
Rank _____ Name _____
To the EAP/VAP on this date _____. The
employee/member has experienced work related problems in the areas of: (include date, times,
specifics)

Attendance:

Performance:

Behavior:

The employee/member is also involved in the following disciplinary
process: _____

Other supervisors involved in this referral include:

I have instructed the employee/member to contact the Employee Assistance Program at
699-2936 or the Volunteer Assistance Program at 345-0635 to set an appointment by this
date: _____. The employee/member understands it is his/her responsibility to
maintain contact with the EAP/VAP.