



**The Association of Labor-Management Administrators
and Consultants on Alcoholism, Inc.
1800 N. Kent St., Suite 907
Arlington, Va. 22209
(703) 522-6272**

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EAPs

VALUE AND IMPACT

About ALMACA

ALMACA was started in 1971 by a group of occupational program representatives, and is today the professional organization representing nearly 5,000 employee assistance program practitioners. ALMACA is the forum for discussion and debate of new employee assistance program (EAP) policies and procedures, program innovation on both the clinical and administrative sides, program marketing, quality service delivery ... virtually all aspects of EAP communication and operation.

* ALMACA, representing the interests of its membership, works in cooperation with public agencies, private employers, labor unions, and scientific and educational institutions, and works with the media to inform the public about EAPs.

* ALMACA publishes a wide range of literature to promote a better understanding of EAPs, and to guide persons and organizations in the establishment and operation of programs.

* ALMACA's monthly journal, "The ALMACAN", keeps members informed of current EAP events and provides a forum for the introduction of new research findings and scholarly comment.

* ALMACA's Clearinghouse for Employee Assistance Program Information publishes a monthly newsletter, "ALMACA EAP INFO-Line", and a series of "Focus Papers" and "Fact Sheets" on EAP-specific topics; the Clearinghouse also responds every working day to 25 to 30 requests for information and technical assistance.

* ALMACA has initiated a certification project intended to validate the knowledge, skills, and abilities of EAP practitioners, and ensure continued high professional standards of performance for workers in the field.

* ALMACA is the only EAP-oriented organization of its type that holds an annual conference which customarily attracts between 1,000 and 1,500 participants, the great majority of whom are EAP practitioners; numerous regional meetings are sponsored by ALMACA chapters between national annual meetings.

In sum, ALMACA is the premier organization for the many professionals having an interest in efficient, effective employee assistance programming. That is clearly evident in the 116 percent growth in ALMACA membership between 1980 and 1986.

For more information, write ALMACA, 1800 North Kent Street, Suite 907, Arlington, VA 22209.

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This brochure was made possible through a grant from the Licensed Beverage Information Council. ALMACA is the author and takes sole responsibility for its content. For more information, contact ALMACA, 1800 North Kent Street, Suite 907, Arlington, VA 22209; telephone 703/522-6272.



par. Don't know what happened. Job performance began to fall off some months ago. We thought it would get better without our having to take any action. It didn't.

What makes this an "unsettling" option, particularly when it involves a highly valued, formerly high-production employee, is that there are alternatives . . . other ways of handling the problem that can salvage the employee while actually giving the employer a minimum 5-to-1 return on investment.

The alternatives are especially workable if the cause of the troubled employee's deteriorating job performance is alcohol abuse or drug use, which hardly ever "get better" without intervention by the employer. If the problem is misuse of alcohol or drugs, here's what the troubled employee is caught up in:

- Absenteeism that far exceeds company standards;
- Accidents both on and off the job;
- Claims for sickness benefits at a much higher-than-usual rate;
- Work that isn't being done properly, and most of the time has to be done over by someone else;
- Mood swings and hostility that have fellow employees confused and not willing to work with the troubled person.

When you confront such an employee with the facts of deteriorating job performance, here's what you're likely to get back:

- Out-and-out denial that there is even a problem;
- Insistence that if a problem is perceived, the real blame lies with supervisors and other people whose assessments are "biased by personal motives;"
- Or a misleading admission that the job has not been going all that well, but "things will be better from now on."

Here is a key employee whose job performance has deteriorated badly. The person was an asset; now, the person is a liability.

Again, the question is asked, what does a manager do with such a person?

That will probably be determined by whether or not the organization has an employee assistance program (EAP). If it does, the manager can tell the troubled person to contact the EAP staff or consultant and have them look into the matter. The employee will be assured that whatever happens, all contact with the EAP will be confidential. The employee can also be assured that there will be no black mark on the record resulting from contact with the EAP. The employer is concerned with job performance. And sound management practice means that employees are never fired for health conditions. The EAP in this sense is simply another tool for maintaining job performance at high levels. A gratifying second aspect is that a person beset by personal problems can be restored by the EAP to satisfying levels of physical and emotional good health.

What does a manager do with a formerly high-producing employee who just isn't getting the job done any more?

There is one option you probably hear talked about with unsettling regularity. *We had to let the person go; simply wasn't performing up to par. Don't know what happened. Job performance began to fall off some months ago. We thought it would get better without our having to take any action. It didn't.*

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If there is no EAP, the organization's options are severely constrained. In fact, they may boil down to an unhappy "either/or" situation: either job performance is restored to its former high levels by a given date, or job action — up to and including termination — will occur.

The possibility of termination is especially motivating. There is, of course, a financial concern. But on another level, people are defined by the work they do. Their work shapes their view of themselves, and it shapes their attitudes, their responses to other people and to situations. Work gives people identity. There are stirrings deep inside that make work the one thing people cannot afford to lose.

By the same token, people can become harmfully involved in some deeply troubling problem that can interfere with on-the-job productivity regardless of age, sex, prior history, employer, or social status.

An EAP must therefore be all-encompassing in terms of what it is prepared to confront, and in how the confrontation will occur. Most of the EAP impetus, however, goes into programs designed to prevent the disease of alcoholism and the use of drugs, or to assist in identification, treatment, and rehabilitation in those cases where prevention programs have not worked. Experience shows that these two are the predominant problems underlying deteriorating job performance. Through a wide



range of expertise and application, EAPs are credited with helping employers recover substantial amounts of money from the loss column and with being cost-effective investments in employees. The option of simply firing employees is made much less desirable by EAPs that can restore valued performers and thus relieve the organization of having to invest in the hiring and training of replacements. And there is always the need to salvage peoples' lives in ways that reflect a very real compassion for loyal employees. These employees can be helped, and they are worth helping.

There are several types of EAP structure for helping troubled employees.

One type is entirely "in-house". Not widely practiced, it is usually found among very large corporations that have their own legal departments, medical staffs, benefits managers, and trained EAP staffs including alcohol-specific counseling capability.

Another structure utilizes contracted community resources for counseling of troubled employees who have been identified at the worksite, through deteriorating job performance or self-referral to the EAP. In this model, the EAP functions as both a gatekeeper and a followup resource.

A third structure is designed for companies that have too few employees to justify their own EAP consultant service. A number of these small companies combine efforts, join their several small working populations into a single group consortium, and contract with an EAP provider to deliver a full-service program.

Whatever their structure, good, workable EAPs have in common generally the same characteristics. They are:

- A clearly stated, written policy that explains why the EAP is being implemented and what company expectations are for the program;
- A firm understanding by employees at all levels as to how they can best use the EAP, commonly achieved by a comprehensive employee education program at the worksite and an information program that reaches into the home by letter and literature;
- A training program for supervisors that teaches them how to recognize impaired behavior and how to handle it through non-punitive intervention;
- Confidentiality guarantees that protect the person in contact with an EAP.

Who pays for this? Alcoholism treatment funding (and payment for treatment of most other disorders) comes largely from third-party resources, mostly private health insurance. However, insurance and health organizations estimate that most EAPs will generate a return of \$5 for every \$1 invested in EAP programming. Now and then, a number of organizations have found from experience that an EAP has returned substantially larger amounts; up to \$16 for every \$1 invested, for example.

Some insurance companies also see that coverage for alcoholism in particular is good business. In one study of six plans providing appropriate coverage, the *savings* due to reduction in costs for treating other health problems *exceeded the cost of the benefits paid*. The study showed without equivocation that total health insurance premiums can decrease if alcoholism treatment benefits are added to the plan.

Historically, there is little doubt that once chronic problem drinking and abuse of drugs are brought under control, other life problems that plague business and industry can proportionately shrink to manageable dimensions.

It is estimated that up to 10,000 EAPs are in existence in American business and industry today. Whatever their number, EAPs are there because someone realized that chronic problem drinking can be turned around, that the problems caused by the disease of alcoholism are manageable and the damages can be reduced. The common experience of business, industry, and other employers is that treatment which puts the alcoholic on the road to recovery will reduce medical care utilization by a range of 26 to 69 percent, reduce the number of sick days by a range of 38 to 47 percent, and reduce sickness and accident benefits by a range of 33 to 48 percent.

This is because alcoholism and other cases of chronic problem drinking are treatable, and their harmful effects can be controlled, and often eradicated.

If conditions such as alcohol abuse, use of drugs, and other debilitating life events are to be reduced substantially, it will likely be the American employer and employee working together who get that job done.

With an awareness of the benefits to be gained, and the many accommodating structures for operation, every employment organization in the country should undergo a searching self-examination and then decide what form of EAP it needs.

Top executives and labor leaders in every organization should check out absences from the job, and be alert to the frequencies of absences and the amount of time lost. Comparative accident rates should reveal something. So should the frequency with which sickness benefits and compensation claims are filed.

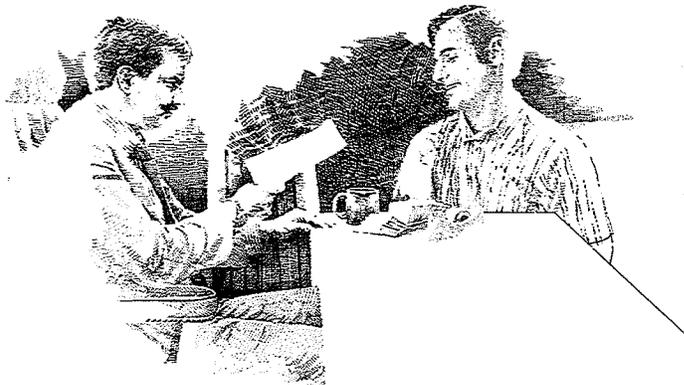
In this process, no one division or executive should be singled out for the absence of an EAP. The constructive outcome should be positive action, rather than finger-pointing.

Zeroing in on realistic indicators will save a lot of time. When there is a preliminary finding indicating a need for an EAP, a professional EAP consultant should be called in to make a more comprehensive evaluation, and to recommend structure, policy, and procedure should the indicated need for an EAP be verified. This is a sound investment to assure that the appropriate program is implemented.

If you are an employer, if you are a leader of your union local, remember in your deliberations that you are responsible for seeing to it that workers have at their disposal the tools for assuring their continuance as productive employees.

Remember, too, that you are a gatekeeper in the most basic sense of the word. You are in a position to help people pass through to a level of employment more beneficial to themselves and you, and to a higher level of personal living.

Not many people are in a position to help others do these things. Since you are, your options are really mandates. Act on those mandates; you'll be surprised at how programs designed to cut costs and create a more productive work environment can also be humane activities that touch the lives of affected workers and their families.



Other ALMACA Publications

| Title | Unit Price |
|---|------------|
| Standards for Employee Assistance Programming | \$.50 |
| A Guide for Supervisors | 1.50 |
| EAPs: Theory and Operation | 1.50 |
| Legal Monograph (EAPs and Liability/Confidentiality) | 3.00 |
| Starter Kit (for new EAPs; includes four publications above, plus other materials) | 7.50 |
| Continuum of Services (screening for substances) | 12.50 |
| EAPs: Value and Impact | 1.50 |
| Back issues of The ALMACAN (if available) | 1.00 |

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