

ARTICLE 35 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

35.1 Section 1. Programs

The Employer and the Union express strong support for programs of self-help. The Employer shall provide and maintain a program which shall encompass the education, identification, referral, guidance and follow-up of those employees afflicted by the disease of alcoholism and/or drug abuse. When an employee is referred to the EAP by the Employer, the EAP staff will have a reasonable period of time to evaluate the employee's progress in the program. This program of labor-management cooperation shall support the continuation of the EAP for alcohol, drug abuse, and other family and/or personal problems at the current level.

An employee's voluntary participation in the EAP for assistance with alcohol and/or drug abuse will be considered favorably in disciplinary action proceedings.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Article 35.1 affirms the parties' continued joint support for a national program of employee counseling for alcohol or drug abuse as well as for other types of family or personal problems. EAP provides free confidential counseling to all postal employees and their family members by trained outside professionals.

Confidentiality. Confidentiality is the cornerstone of EAP counseling. EAP counselors are bound by very strict codes of ethics, as well as federal and state laws, requiring that information learned from counseled employees remains private. EAP counselors have licenses and advanced degrees in their fields of expertise.

Management officials and union officials have no right to breach the confidentiality of EAP counseling sessions. What an EAP counselor learns in confidential counseling or other treatment of an employee may be released only with the employee's completely voluntary, written consent, except in the limited circumstances provided for in ELM Section 944.4.

Referral. EAP Counselor services are available, through voluntary self-referrals, to letter carriers and their family members. A management official may also refer an employee to EAP. However, participation is entirely voluntary. Currently, the national contact number for such self-referrals is 1-800-EAP4YOU, or 1-800-327-4968. Additional information is also available at the website www.eap4you.com.

35.2 Section 2. Joint Committee

For the term of the **2019** National Agreement, the Employer and the Union agree to establish at the national level a National EAP Committee. The Committee will have responsibility for jointly assessing the effectiveness of EAPs operating inside and outside the USPS, and for developing on an ongoing basis the general guidelines with

respect to the level of services and the mechanisms by which the services will be provided.

The Committee is not responsible for day-to-day administration of the program.

The Committee shall convene at such times and places as it deems appropriate during the term of the **2019** National Agreement. No action or recommendations may be taken by the Committee except by consensus of its members. In the event that the members of the Committee are unable to agree within a reasonable time on an appropriate course of action with respect to any aspect of its responsibility, the Vice President, Labor Relations, and the National Union President shall meet to resolve such issues.

The Committee is authorized to obtain expert advice and assistance to aid its pursuit of its objectives. The apportionment of any fees and expenses for any such experts shall be by consensus of the Committee.

The Employer and the Union agree that they will cooperate fully at all levels towards achieving the objectives of the EAP. This joint effort will continue for the term of the **2019** National Agreement.

(The preceding Article, Article 35, shall apply to City Carrier Assistant Employees.)

National EAP Committee. The joint National EAP Committee oversees the National EAP program, assessing program effectiveness and providing overall policy guidance. The Committee takes action only through a consensus of its members.

NALC officials participate in EAP matters at both the national and local levels (Article 35.2). The joint National EAP Committee administers the EAP at the national level. Within each of the Postal Service's Customer Service Districts, a joint Labor/Management Advisory Committee oversees the process. The committee, which meets at least quarterly, has both union and management representatives.

Except in those districts specifically designated by the National EAP Committee, EAP counseling is provided through a contract between the Postal Service and the selected service supplier.