FIRE DEPARTMENT WASHINGTON TWP DISTRICT 10 GLOUCESTER COUNTY N.J.

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT
TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON
GLOUCESTER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Board of Fire Commissioners
P.O. Box 653
Turnersville, N.J. 08012-0653

DISTRICT OFFICE
(856) 863-4000
FAX: (856) 589-0239

EMERGENCY
9 -1-1

FIRE DEPARTMENT POLICY #41-11

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The purpose of this policy is to provide assistance to active volunteer firefighters, career firefighters and full time staff (referred herein as "members") that are in need of counseling/treatment. The goal of the program is to retain the well trained, much needed membership we currently have in the department. (*If a truck were broken we would spend the money to fix it, if a member is "broken" then we need to assist them to help them get back on track.)* The purpose of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is to assist members in effectively coping with personal and/or job related stress issues. However this shall not have obligations or guarantee of a successful treatment. EAP services are available to all members. In addition, the EAP aims to retain valuable members of the department, to facilitate job effectiveness, and to encourage a positive work climate. A policy overview is provided below.

A. The Washington Township Fire Department recognizes that many personal problems can be improved and/or corrected with effective intervention.

B. The department has a vested interest in the health and well-being of all members of the fire department and will endeavor to provide a path to treatment when a member requests assistance and/or when a member's job performance is adversely affected.

C. Member consultation with and participation in the EAP, including all records and discussion of personal issues shall be treated in a confidential manner in accordance with the confidentiality regulations of the New Jersey Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation and Federal Regulation 42, CFR Part 2.

D. Self-referral to the EAP is encouraged.

D. Such voluntary participation in the EAP shall not jeopardize a member's job security or long-term promotional opportunities. However, participation in the EAP does not relieve a member of the responsibility of satisfactorily meeting job performance standards.

F. Beyond encouraging a member to use the EAP, any formal performance referral to the EAP must be based strictly on the member's job performance and/or personal problems. Department supervisors shall concern themselves only with such job performance and/or conduct issues. They shall not attempt to clinically diagnose a member's underlying personal problem(s). All levels of management shall be

responsible for consulting and referring members to the EAP when appropriate to assist in resolving such job performance problems.

II. CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY POLICY STATEMENT

In addition to the provisions outlined in Section I, the following policies apply to chemical dependency:

A. Chemical dependency (i.e., alcohol and/or drug addiction) is legally recognized as an impairment for which there is effective treatment and rehabilitation.

B. Members who suspect that they may have an alcohol and/or drug problem are strongly encouraged to voluntarily seek assistance from the EAP.

C. This policy is intended to ensure that no member with an alcohol and/or drug problem will have his or her job security or long-term promotional opportunities jeopardized by voluntarily requesting help from the EAP, however this policy does not insulate a member from the disciplinary process if found to be in violation Policy 22-2002 Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy.

D. The individual's rights to confidentiality and privacy are recognized and protected in the strictest manner.

E. Members with alcohol and/or drug problems shall receive the same careful consideration and opportunities for treatment that are extended to members requesting assistance from the EAP.

III. CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY STATEMENT

A. A primary responsibility of the EAP staff is to maintain confidentiality as outlined in the regulations of the New Jersey Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. Furthermore, the EAP adheres to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations, the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists, Standards for Providers of Psychological Services, and Federal Regulation 42, CFR Part 2. As such, information shall be released only under the following circumstances:

1. With the written and informed consent of the client. Such disclosures are made for the benefit of the client, and both the EAP Counselor and the client must agree that this release of information is, in fact, in the client's best interest. Any information that is provided shall be clearly identified as confidential. A Release of Information Form authorizing this disclosure shall be utilized and shall contain the following information:
    a. Name of the EAP organization and counselor.
    b. Name(s) of the person(s) and/or affiliate organization to whom the disclosure is to be made.
    c. Name and birth date of client.

d. Purpose of the disclosure.
e. Specific information to be disclosed.
f. Date on which the consent will expire without express revocation.
g. Date on which the consent is signed.
h. Statement that the client may revoke such consent at any time.
i. Signature of client.
j. Signature of EAP Counselor.

2. When the EAP Counselor determines that there is a clear and imminent risk to the client or to the community. "Clear and imminent risk" would include an individual who poses a serious, imminent physical threat of self-harm or harm to another person and/or an individual and whose ability to function on the job is so substantially impaired that he or she presents a serious threat to the safety or property of co-workers and/or the community. If the EAP Counselor assesses a client to be a "clear and imminent risk," he or she shall attempt to resolve the situation in the least intrusive manner.

3. When required by judicial order.

4. When child or elder abuse is suspected or known to occur, it shall be reported in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey.

Clients shall be informed in advance of these limits on the maintenance of confidentiality. Other than specified in Part A, the Washington Township Fire Department shall have no access to EAP files of client data.

IV. EAP CLINICAL SERVICES

A. The clinical services provided by the EAP to members and their immediate families include (a) consultation, (b) referral, (c) short-term counseling, and (d) case management. These initial services are provided at no cost to the client. The nature of these various services is described below.
   1. One of the primary roles of the EAP is to assist clients with personal problems such as marital or family stress; interpersonal conflicts; job stress; alcohol and/or drug use; weight control; smoking cessation; phobias; or possible financial, legal, or medical problems. Assistance is provided by assessing the client's needs and making recommendations regarding appropriate treatment of any identified problems. Treatment recommendations may include short-term counseling by EAP staff or may involve referral to outside resources.
   2. Individuals wanting to consult with the EAP staff should call the EAP office to discuss any questions and/or to schedule an initial appointment. Appointments will be scheduled on a timely basis with consideration given to the member's schedule and need for immediate services.
   3. Confidentiality is a primary consideration. The EAP staff may opt to not leave their name or a message when returning phone calls unless specifically instructed to do so by the caller.

B. If it is determined in the initial consultation session that the client would be best served by a referral to a community resource, the EAP staff will consider the client's health insurance coverage, ability to pay, location of the services, service provider's expertise and

philosophy, and the client's expressed preferences. Personal leave shall be used in pursuing any EAP recommendation(s).

C. When making a referral to a community resource, the EAP counselor shall request that the client sign a Release of Information Form. This release will allow the EAP to facilitate transition to this other resource and to maintain any necessary contact with the client and the service provider to monitor progress and to ensure that client needs are being met. The EAP counselor shall advise the client of this at the time the treatment recommendation is made.
D. The EAP staff shall not render an opinion regarding disability and/or Workmen's Compensation determination. This is a separate department function, and the member will be advised accordingly. EAP involvement will be limited to providing crisis intervention and/or EAP services as previously cited. This may, however, include providing pertinent information to the agency evaluating the disability or Workmen's Compensation issue as required by law. Clients also will be advised of any pertinent information.
E. The EAP staff shall make no determination of fitness for duty. The member's supervisor shall exercise his or her judgment in determining the need for a fitness for duty evaluation.

V. EAP EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. Information about the EAP shall be made available to all members to familiarize them with the Program's procedures and available services.
B. Supervisor (Fire Fighter with Supervisory Authority) orientation and training sessions maximize EAP effectiveness for the department, as well as for members in need of services. Supervisor training shall be provided to enable supervisors to understand EAP policies and procedures, to assist supervisors in the early recognition of member job performance problems, to increase the effectiveness of supervisors' responses to these members, and to encourage supervisors to consult with the EAP when dealing with members with deteriorating job performance

VI. TYPES OF REFERRALS

The services of the EAP are available through any of the following types of referrals.

A. Self-Referral: A member experiencing a personal problem or job-related problem may initiate contact with the EAP office on his or her own. In addition, another individual may encourage an individual to utilize EAP services and may first consult with the EAP staff to discuss how best to make this suggestion and to initiate contact with the EAP.
B. Supervisor-Suggested Referral: A supervisor may casually and informally suggest or remind an employee or volunteer about the availability of EAP services and may facilitate this by providing the EAP phone number to the member. The emphasis here is that the supervisor proactively suggests that the member consider utilizing the EAP before his or her job performance or behavior deteriorates as a result of some possible personal or job-related problem or disciplinary issue. This is not a formal action, and the supervisor may consider to first consult with the EAP staff to discuss how best to make this suggestion. At no point shall the supervisor attempt to label or to diagnose a suspected personal problem. Again, it remains the individual's choice to follow through with this suggestion and to initiate contact with the EAP.

C. Supervisory-Performance Referral: A performance referral is an immediate supervisor's formal, documented referral of a member to the EAP based on identified job performance or conduct problems only, e.g., a job-related incident or a decline in a member's work performance or interpersonal relationships. This is another proactive option available to supervisors in which the member is strongly encouraged to consult with the EAP. The supervisor may choose to exercise this option before formal discipline becomes necessary or at the same time discipline is being proposed or implemented. Ideally, a supervisory-performance referral should be made before it becomes necessary to propose discipline. If the immediate supervisor makes a performance referral, the following guidelines should be considered.

D. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to consult with the EAP staff to discuss the most effective means of handling the situation prior to meeting with the member and referring him or her to the EAP. If the member decides to follow through with the referral, he or she should contact the EAP directly to schedule an appointment. During the initial appointment of a supervisory performance referral, the EAP will suggest to the member that he or she sign a Release of Information Form to the referring supervisor. This allows the EAP to advise the supervisor that the member accepted the referral and kept the initial appointment.

E. No other information will be released except as agreed upon by the member and the EAP counselor. The supervisor will not be contacted if this authorization form is not signed. Authorized release of information is not a requirement of EAP participation, but it is in the member's best interest in the case of a performance referral in that it shows a good faith attempt on the part of the member to address the identified job-related problems.

F. If the member declines the performance referral or does not follow through with the referral to the EAP and the job problem(s) does not recur after the corrective interview with the immediate supervisor, no further action shall be required. The supervisor may remind the member that EAP services remain available on a self-referral basis if the member decides to pursue assistance later. However, no disciplinary action shall be taken solely because he or she declines use of the EAP.

G. If job problems continue, then the immediate supervisor shall use disciplinary procedures as outlined in accordance with SOP #7.

H. Nothing in this section shall limit the department's right to take disciplinary action with a member in a manner consistent with department regulations. The member's legitimate access to grievance procedures shall not be affected.

VII. EAP ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

A. The EAP is an external program composed of designated EAP counselors under the supervision of the EAP Agency, Apple Counseling Services, LLC.

B. The EAP agency is convenient to, departmental facilities so that members will have ready access to services while maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.

C. All requests for services shall be directed through the EAP agency number as indicated in the Employee Assistance Program materials.

D. Written records for individuals who utilize EAP services will be accessible only to the EAP staff and will be kept secured at the EAP office. All records are the property of the EAP and are, therefore, the responsibility of the EAP staff and subject to EAP agency control.

This policy was adopted at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners on 7-11, 2013 and takes effect on 7-11, 2013

BY:

Sam Micklus, Chairman

ATTEST:

Frank Stella, Secretary