

# EAP offers help when you need it most

**T**he Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free, voluntary and confidential program that offers assessment, consultation, counseling, life coaching or training for any postal employee who needs help with life's many challenges. Family members of employees are eligible as well, and EAP can also advise a concerned employee on how to help a co-worker.

"EAP is an amazing resource," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "The people at EAP, who are independent contractors hired by USPS, are there to provide or find help with a wide variety of problems—confidentially and at no charge."

EAP is jointly administered by NALC, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and the U.S. Postal Service. All EAP counselors have at least a master's degree in counseling or social work, as well as experience in dealing with a wide range of personal and workplace concerns.

Reasons a postal employee might seek help from EAP include difficulties with family, children, marriage, divorce, care of an elderly person, child care, depression or anxiety, grief or loss, substance abuse, job performance problems or personal or work relationship problems. Discussions with EAP are confidential, even when they relate to work. EAP services are provided by an independent contractor—letter carrier's discussions are never shared with postal management.

One NALC member, who asked to remain anonymous, told *The Postal Record* that he has turned to EAP to get help for himself and his family.

He learned about the resources when an EAP representative visited his station. When his wife was diagnosed with cancer, he said, "it was just a mat-

ter of calling the 1-800 EAP number and then talking with someone."

He called for assistance several times when he needed to talk. Each time, the EAP representative referred him to a nearby counselor. EAP even has counselors available in postal stations, with measures to ensure privacy. "They would either refer me to a therapist in my area or I would go to one of the ones in a postal facility," he said. Visiting an on-site counselor is optional.

"The EAP counselor helped me see positive aspects of my wife's treatment, and as she worked through chemotherapy and surgery and more chemotherapy, the EAP counselor was available to me," he said. His wife has since recovered.

His wife also turned to EAP by calling the toll-free number when changes at her workplace brought stress. "She became disillusioned and somewhat depressed," he explained. "The EAP counselor helped her find alternative strategies to do her job and feel appreciated."

His teenage daughter also called EAP for help. "She was feeling depressed and unhappy with the way things were going socially with friendships and school," he said. He added that his daughter was old enough to call on her own and discuss her problems confidentially.

"It always has to be on the person's own terms to make the phone call," he said. "She had to be ready to make the call."

The guidance that counselors provided to him involved both face-to-face meetings and talks on the phone. "With my wife and my daughter, since it was somebody in our own area, close to our house," he said, "it was one-on-one."

In addition to helping a postal employee or family members, EAP also can help postal employees support each other or deal with the repercussions of other people's challenges. If you notice



a co-worker who appears to need help, you can contact EAP for assistance. An EAP counselor will help you size up the problem and help you decide how to approach that person to offer help, including the option of referring the co-workers or family member to EAP.

Communications with EAP are confidential—your privacy is protected by strict federal and state confidentiality laws and regulations and by professional ethics standards for counselors.

Through technology, EAP has enhanced the way it serves postal employees and their families. In addition to person-to-person or phone communication, employees or family may use video counseling, counseling, messaging through a phone or tablet using its Talkspace tool; use the many online tools offered through the myStrength portal; or find articles, locators, assessments, trainings, webinars, calculators, advice, videos and recipes in the health resource library—all through the EAP's website, [eap4you.com](http://eap4you.com).

"As a union steward, I suggest to the members I represent EAP whenever they are threatened with discipline or feel they can't handle situations management are throwing at them," the anonymous EAP user added. "Use EAP!"

Letter carriers seeking EAP services can call 800-EAP-4YOU (800-327-4968), TTY 877-492-7341 or visit [eap4you.com](http://eap4you.com). **PR**