

IN SUMMARY:

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

OEM ANNOUNCES ITS EAP

SURVIVING THE COLD SEASON

JUMP START EFFECTIVE STRESS
BUSTERS

PAID SICK LEAVE A GROWING
DEBATE

BOOST PRODUCTIVITY WITH EAP

According to an article in Business Week, workplace distractions are costing \$650 billion a year in lost productivity. Not only are there work related distractions to slow an employee's productivity down, there are real life problems that are brought into the workplace; anywhere from juggling the normal demands of family life, children, school, aging parents, moving, etc. to more serious life problems such as mental illness. It is nearly impossible for employees to check these issues at the door and be fully focused on their work day.

In a given year almost one out of every five employees will experience some type of personal problem. A growing number of employers are looking to employee-assistance programs or EAPs to help people balance work and life.

EAPs are intended to help employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their work performance, health and well-being. Employees and their household members may use EAPs to help manage issues. EAP counselors typically provide assessment, support, and if needed, referrals to additional resources. An EAP's services are usually free to the employee or household member, having been pre-paid by the employer. In many cases, an employer contracts with a third-party company to manage its EAP.

Proponents claim employee-assistance programs boost

productivity because they help workers deal with disruptive personal issues and could be attributed to lowering medical costs, reduced turnover and absenteeism and higher employee productivity and morale.

EAPs cover a plethora of services. Some focus only on substance abuse problems; others undertake a 'broad brush' approach to a range of employee and family problems. Some include proactive prevention and health and wellness activities, as well as, problem identification and referral, and some are actively linked to the employee health benefit structure. EAP providers may offer services such as:

- Addiction issues - drugs, alcohol, food/eating, gambling and tobacco
- Depression, stress, & anxiety
- Sleep disturbances
- Grief & loss
- Marital issues & family conflicts
- Parenting issues such as adoption, day care & schooling
- Emotional & physical abuse
- Gay & lesbian issues
- Workplace issues such as harassment, violence & relationships
- Job changes & company change
- Telephonic & online assistance
- Individual crisis intervention services
- Concierge services
- Educational resources
- Consolidated customized reporting & billing



- Referrals for counseling with licensed clinicians
- Financial Planning Referrals
- Estate Planning
- Credit Counseling Referrals
- Adult Day Services/Long Term Care
- Emergency/Respite Care
- Consumer Protection
- Retirement Planning
- Child Support/Custody
- Medicare/Medicaid
- Wedding Resources
- Elder Law Referrals

Assistance programs have evolved and grown into an industry of their own since the 1970's. Today, the market is divided among several large, national behavioral health and assistance providers, a number of major, regional and numerous local and 'boutique' or specialized providers who focus on particular employee populations. ■

! BULLETIN

Verification of year-end information- Please remind your employees to check their social security numbers and addresses on their pay stubs. If changes need to be made, please fill out an employee maintenance form and fax to payroll at 860-218-2142. You can print a copy of the form online at oemamerica.com, click on login then document download.

W-4- Pursuant to the IRS, all employees who claim "exempt" on their federal W-4 MUST fill out a new form and submit it to the payroll department before February 16th 2008. After that date, unless a new W-4 is submitted the exemption will go to "single zero."

New I-9 Forms- There are new government issued I-9 forms. To download the new form go to www.oemamerica.com/oem_docs/I-9.pdf



Health, happiness and good morale are proven to have a positive effect on productivity levels. Our mental state tends to be tested one too many times and especially so during the holidays. Holidays can be joyous occasions, but they can also induce a megawatt of stress. From trying to finish off work-related initiatives and start to prepare for the next year to family gatherings to getting through the crowded shopping centers can be enough to make us all feel pulled to the limit.

Seventy-five percent of people report feeling tense or blue during the holiday season, says Janet Taylor, clinical instructor of psychiatry at Harlem Hospital, in New York City. A couple of low-cost ideas you can do for your employees to ease the holiday stress is let them drop off their personal holiday packages at the company mailroom, of course they pay for postage. Or, let employees use your business address when they place an online order this month. That way, employees don't have to rush home to sign for a package or stand in line at the post office.

We all look forward to the new year hoping for a fresh start and to re-energize ourselves, and not to mention the holiday rush coming to an end. In the meantime, included in this issue are a couple of articles that will hopefully aid in getting through the winter season and holiday clamor.

The OEM Staff and I wish all of you happy holidays and a safe, joyous and prosperous new year.

Until next year...

Ritsa LaFond
Ritsa LaFond

KEEP THE WORKPLACE HEALTHY THIS SEASON

Many of the most common and most dangerous infections spread via germs on the hands that make their way into the mouth, nose, or eyes.

Cleanliness equals protection, stopping most germs from penetrating. There are simple measures everyone can take to prevent illness from spreading in the workplace.

1. Encourage hand washing. Hand washing is the most effective preventative measure. Proper hand washing technique requires wetting hands first with cold water, then applying soap. Rub hands together for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces of the hands and fingers. Then rinse with warm water. Dry hands thoroughly, and use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.
2. Supply anti-bacterial gel. Dispensers can be placed or mounted in the bathrooms, break rooms and by exits and entrances.
3. Don't share towels. Remind employees who play sports on their lunch breaks not to share towels on the court. If your office bathroom still uses a rolling cloth towel dispenser, now is a good time to install hand dryers or paper towels.

Presenteeism, going to work when you're sick has effected many of us, up to 75% of people have headed to work with the common cold or other problems. Research shows that people sick with the common cold are not very productive. A warm seat is only costing money, not making any. For those that do go in sick risk getting others sick as well.

Not only is there the common cold and flu that can be easily passed from one person to the next while at work, people need to protect themselves from an easily acquired infection called MRSA. MRSA, or methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus spreads by contact and can cause havoc if it enters a victim's body through a small break in the skin like a paper cut or even a bug bite.

Recent outbreaks in the school districts across the nation and the death in October of an otherwise healthy high school football player in Virginia have shone a spotlight on the MRSA problem.

Take the extra step and be proactive this season and all year long. For more information on health, allergy and infectious diseases you can visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' website at www.dhhs.gov.

With the cold season giving way, there will inevitably be lost productivity from sick days. When should an employee call-out sick or suck it up and go into work not feeling up to par?

OEM GETS WITH THE PROGRAM

It all began when OEM sought out tools to create valuable strategies aimed at preventing injuries, as well as, helping employees return to work as soon as possible when an injury does occur. An Employee-Assistance Program was the solution OEM was searching for.

An EAP can also address common workplace problems and distractions that can trigger unsafe behaviors and in turn, be used to enhance injury-prevention efforts. Employees experiencing personal problems utilize more health care services than the rest of the workforce, are absent more often and use 15% more sick days, represent more than 80% of all involuntary terminations and account for more than half of all employment practice liability claims, and they are four times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim.

EAPs are not typically available to small and mid-sized companies due to the high cost of these programs. But in many times, these programs would be most beneficial for small companies, which rely on a smaller workforce. One person out for more than day can wreak havoc on the rest of the workforce. In response to this growing problem OEM now offers its clients a wide range of services to help employees be more productive while at work. And best of all, if you're a client of OEM America you automatically get to reap the benefits of this EAP.

Karen Morin can answer any of your questions on OEM's new and exciting program. Karen can be reached at 860-528-5555 ext. 236. ■

Did You Know...

- ✓ Up to 40% of industrial fatalities and nearly half of all industrial injuries can be linked to substance abuse.
- ✓ Lost time due to stress-related physical and mental illnesses or on-the-job accidents cost businesses as much as \$300 billion a year. That is \$7,500 per worker per year in absenteeism and lowered productivity.
- ✓ Depression ranks among the top 3 workplace problems, following family crisis and stress.

JOB STRESS DAMAGING

Stress on the job can be damaging to your health in that job stress is the outcome when job demands cannot be met. Do you think workplace stress can lead to injury and disability? The American Judicial System may seem to think so. Employers may be facing a future of increased liability and hefty court settlements for employee psychological claims.

A hospital maintenance worker was awarded an \$11.65 million jury verdict in Federal District Court in Chicago against his employer for intentional infliction of emotional distress.

Employee anger becomes employer litigation. Try these eight stress busters for you and your employees to relieve some stress:

1. The next time you find yourself becoming annoyed or angered practice letting go. Do not allow yourself to waste thought and energy where it isn't deserved. Effective anger management is a tried and proven stress reducer.
2. Before reacting to the next stressful occurrence, take a few deep breaths and release them slowly.
3. Whenever you feel overwhelmed, practice speaking more slowly than usual. You'll find you think more clearly and react more reasonably to stressful situations. Stressed people tend to speak fast and breathlessly, by slowing down you'll appear less anxious and more in control.
4. Jump-start an effective time management strategy. Choose one simple thing you have been putting off and do it immediately. Taking care of one nagging responsibility can be energizing and can improve your attitude.
5. Get outdoors for a brief break. Don't be deterred by foul weather or a full schedule. Five minutes of fresh air can be rejuvenating.
6. Drink plenty of water and eat small, nutritious snacks. Hunger and dehydration can provoke aggressiveness and exacerbate feelings of anxiety and stress.
7. Do a quick posture check. Hold your head and shoulders upright and avoid stooping or slumping. Bad posture can lead to muscle



- tension, pain and increased stress.
8. Plan something rewarding for the end of your stressful day. Put aside work, housekeeping or family concerns for a brief period to allow you to do something you enjoy. You need time to recharge and energize yourself to be prepared to tackle another stressful day. ■

The eight stress buster were put together by Medical Author, Melissa Conrad Stöppler, MD and presented in medicinenet.com.

NEW PULSE PAID SICK LEAVE

With the start of the winter season and the synonymous dreaded cold and flu comes an emerging debate over whether to make paid leave a right for every worker. Proposals have been introduced in Ohio and 12 other states.

Connecticut legislatures are weighing paid sick leave. The state Senate approved paid sick leave in May, but the measure died in the House. The proposed law generally require five to seven sick days annually for full-time workers

at firms that employ 25 or more people. Last November, San Francisco voters approved the nation's first mandatory paid sick leave law. The law provides about eight paid sick days a year for full-time workers.

Currently 43 percent of the nation's private workforce don't get paid when they call in sick, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. There is much controversy over mandatory paid sick leave. On one side of the coin there are

those who are in favor and state it could save business money and reduce the spread of illness caused by workers who can't afford to miss a paycheck. On the other side, many feel it would cost a business money and could force cuts in other benefits such as health care or vacation. We will have to wait and see if this becomes a hot button issue like raising the minimum wage. ■



THE WATER COOLER

Murphy's Law applied to the real world

The 50-50-90 rule: Anytime you have a 50-50 chance of getting something right, there's a 90% probability you'll get it wrong.

The things that come to those who wait will be the scraggly junk left by those who got there first.

The shin bone is a device for finding furniture in a dark room.

A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.

OEM America®

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