



Assistance Program

Guide for Key Persons and Supervisors

About your Assistance Program

Your Assistance Program is a professional service that offers counselling, coaching, information, and support for all types of issues relating to:

- mental health,
- career or workplace challenges,
- life balance,
- health information and management, and
- achieving greater personal well-being.

In addition, the Assistance Program is:

- a tool that can help make your job easier and less stressful,
- completely confidential, and
- designed to be your first call, not your last resort.

Why use the Assistance Program?

You'll recognize the Assistance Program as an obvious choice once you understand how it works and what it has to offer your employees, and yourself in your Key Person or Supervisor role.

Each of us faces challenges in life. Sometimes we welcome these challenges, like marriage, job promotion, or moving to a new location. And sometimes we don't, like divorce, job loss, or a serious illness. Your Assistance Program can help your employees prepare themselves to respond to these challenges and be the best they can be.

For employees, the Assistance Program:

- is a convenient source of information and assistance,
- relieves employees from the burden of handling issues alone,
- can help employees problem-solve and troubleshoot,
- offers employees encouragement and support during difficult times and situations, and
- is an easy way to get trusted, expert information.

For yourself as a Key Person or supervisor, your Assistance Program:

- is a convenient and central source of information and assistance,
- relieves you from the stress of handling employee issues alone,
- provides you expertise in areas that you may not have,
- allows you to focus on your other job responsibilities,
- and offers encouragement and support...to your employees and to yourself.

Your Role

As a Key Person or Supervisor, part of your role involves:

- monitoring health and safety,
- managing productivity,
- and managing performance.

To achieve these objectives, and continue to focus on your other job responsibilities, you need to know how to recognize the signs of a troubled employee, know when it is appropriate to get involved, and your role in providing effective help.

Signs of a distressed or troubled employee

Have you encountered situations that make you stop and wonder about an employee's well-being or questioned if the source of a performance problem was an underlying personal concern?

Some of the signs that an employee may be troubled or distressed, include:

- any notable change in normal behaviour or performance,
- changes in appearance or conduct,
- excessive lateness or absenteeism,
- lack of concentration,
- increased errors,
- withdrawal or avoidance,
- confusion or forgetfulness,
- conflict with peers, or
- difficulty making decisions.

You should also be alert to whether these signs occur repeatedly over a period of time or seem to be increasing in their frequency or intensity.

It's important to understand that as a Key Person or Supervisor, you are not an expert in diagnosing personal issues, and no one expects you to be. However, you are an expert in observing workplace conduct and performance and when you recognize the signs of a troubled employee, it is your responsibility to address it.

**Remember...the sooner a concern is acknowledged, the sooner performance can improve.
Left unattended many problems become worse and increasingly difficult to resolve.**

How do you address sensitive issues?

When approaching an employee with signs of a possible problem:

- use open-ended questions (for example “is everything alright?”),
- if the employee discloses a problem, show understanding. Remind them that help is available through the Assistance Program,
- have Assistance Program information at hand for the employee, and
- remember to treat the employee with dignity and respect at all times.

Employees may react in a number of ways to an offer of assistance, including:

- denial that a problem exists,
- expressing concerns about confidentiality,
- fear of a stigma associated with seeking help, and/or
- they may become intensely emotional.

It’s important that you respond to these concerns and show your support. You can do this by:

- staying calm,
- talking frankly with the employee about what you have observed and why this concerns you,
- ensure that the employee understands that the Assistance Program is a confidential service that can help with almost any type of personal or workplace issue, and
- assure the employee that the Assistance Program is a voluntary and confidential program that can help for a wide variety of personal or workplace issues.



Steps to addressing performance concerns

There are four main steps to addressing performance concerns:

1. Observe job performance.
2. Track performance concerns.
3. Schedule a meeting and refer to the Assistance Program.
4. Monitor progress and schedule a follow-up meeting.

Addressing performance concerns

Step 1. Observe job performance

Your first step in addressing performance concerns is to be alert to sudden changes or declines in an employee's job performance. Some examples:

- tardiness,
- quality of work,
- taking more time to perform the same task.

Step 2. Tracking Performance Concerns

Your second step is to make notes of your observations. Without this notation it may be difficult to motivate a troubled employee to improve his or her performance or to take disciplinary action if the situation calls for this response. Thus, be sure to make written notes of examples of behaviour or performance issues using factual language that measures and describes these issues in detail.

Step 3. Schedule a meeting and refer to the Assistance Program

- Consult with Human Resources to be certain you are taking all necessary and appropriate actions based on your observations.
- Start the meeting by providing positive feedback to the employee before you discuss concerns about their job performance.
- State your observations and use examples of behaviour or performance issues.
- Focus on measurable and objective facts about performance.
- Focus on the work, not the individual.
- Avoid labeling or making assumptions.
- Address appropriate work-related expectations and timelines to meet those expectations.

If and only when the employee reveals a personal or work-related problem, you may want to refer the employee to the Assistance Program. Have information about the program readily available and take this time to offer it. And remember...When meeting with an employee, pay attention to what you are saying with your body language as well as your spoken words.

- Listen with empathy.
- Do not provide personal advice.
- And do not relate the situation to your personal experience.

Step 4. Monitor Progress and schedule a Follow-Up Meeting

Your last step is to monitor the employee's status and progress as a part of a performance improvement plan. As part of this monitoring process, be sure to keep an open door policy that conveys your continued support for the employee.

How to access the Assistance Program

The services of your Assistance Program are available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in a variety of convenient ways and without needing a referral. Employees can access services:

- face-to-face,
- over the phone by calling our Client Services Centre, or
- online by visiting the protected Member Area of our website.

The choice is up to the employee and depends on your needs and your preferences. Simply let them know to contact us. International access is available for anyone working overseas or travelling for work or pleasure. And TTY lines are available for callers needing hearing assistance.

What happens when your employees contact us?

When employees first contact the Assistance Program, they'll speak with a qualified Assistance Program Support Specialist who will assess their situation, risk, needs, and preferences, and guide them to the assistance best suited to resolving their issue.

The specialist will ask them a few brief questions, including the name of their organization and their date of birth so that the specialist knows they are talking to the right person and so the specialist can confirm all of the services available to them as part of their benefit coverage.





Privacy and Confidentiality

Everyone who uses the Assistance Program is guaranteed complete confidentiality within the limits of the law and professional counselling guidelines.

The employee does not need to discuss their call with you and their participation is fully voluntary.

There are rare occasions in which these rules of confidentiality do not apply. These have to do with:

- legal mandates for information about child or elder abuse,
- court orders, and
- issues relating to suspected harm to oneself or others.

These exceptions are rare and they are always explained before any counselling takes place.

Who is Homewood Health?

Homewood Health is a trusted company with over 30 years delivering a full suite of counselling, coaching, and information services.

Our focus is on helping employees and their family members achieve positive mental health and well-being.

We have offices from coast to coast, more than 2700 counsellors in local neighbourhoods, official accreditation for our business operations and standards of care, and we offer all of our services in both national languages with additional languages available depending on the employee's, or your, needs.



Additional Resources

for Key Personnel and Supervisors

The Key Person Advice Line

The Key Person Advice Line is a dedicated information and support line designed for Human Resources, key personnel, supervisors and union representatives.

The Key Person Advice Line allows you to contact a Homewood Health counsellor at any time for consultation should a situation arise at the workplace which requires a professional opinion.

Situations that may require consultation include:

- employee conflict,
- how to provide assistance to employees,
- strategies around referring an employee, and/or
- unusual employee behaviour.

The Key Person/Supervisor Guide

An additional resource is the Key Person/Supervisor Guide. This handbook is an excellent resource for helping you to recognize the signs of potentially troubled employees, and provides details in how to respond in a supportive manner to help resolve these issues.

To obtain a copy of the Guide, contact your Human Resources.



Next steps

Your Assistance Program is a service that helps employees find solutions to personal, family, and work-related challenges... and it is a tool that can help you support troubled employees, help you address management and performance issues, and help provide direction to you for situations that you may not be certain how to handle.

To learn more about your Assistance Program, or to take advantage of the services available to you as a Key Person or Supervisor, contact us.

We're here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to:

- book appointments,
- provide you with immediate support, and
- answer any questions about the program you may have.



About Homewood Health

Homewood Health offers the highest quality of clinical support and intervention available within the EFAP industry, and an unmatched continuum of services—spanning health promotion, mental health and addictions support, and prevention - focused work-life balance services.

Contact Us

For more information please visit:

homewoodhealth.com



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