

Overview of Employee Assistance Program

Updated Sept. 28, 2009

Greetings Fellow AISD Employees,

I wish to express my gratitude for the work you do on behalf of the students in our school district. It's a difficult and often both rewarding and thankless job. I know many of you do what you do, and do it in the ways that you do it, because you actually believe it matters. And so I thank you for what you bring to the job, when you pour your *self* into it in all the ways that you do, day in and day out.

And I thank you for your interest in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Since personal problems are...well, personal...I am writing this overview in the tone of a personal letter to each and every one of you. Anytime we must experience and deal with either sudden or chronic challenging realities in any major area of our lives, it can be quite disconcerting to say the least! Workplace concerns are often amplified by personal concerns. Issues may pile up, even become tangled up, and it's easy to get bogged down and feel overwhelmed. The Employee Assistance Program is designed to be a network of support for all of us during those times when we simply need a little help in finding workable solutions to such challenges, or when we are simply trying to endure realities that sometimes may seem, or actually be, beyond our control.

Since I'm not sure what you know or don't know about the EAP, and since the program is still new and relatively unknown by many employees in the district, I think I'll just try to give you a brief overview of the program in this letter right now, and then if you have further questions you can call me and we can discuss your situation in greater detail over the phone.

Basically, the EAP is a program that provides counseling support over a wide range of life issues. EAPs grew out of industry as a means of supporting employees when supervisors or managers knew that personal concerns were affecting employee job performance. The idea was that if corporations provided assistance to help workers resolve those personal concerns, then the return on the investment in terms of increased job production would outweigh the cost of the assistance. Over the last 30-35 years, that premise has largely proven to be true...hence, EAPs have become almost standard parts of "Corporate America", and I'm very happy that AISD has now added this benefit for the employees of our district.

One of the first big questions that employees often ask is whether the counseling is confidential. The answer is YES...all information regarding counseling through the EAP is indeed confidential in accordance with all applicable federal and state confidentiality laws (no state has more stringent confidentiality laws than Texas), whether services are provided by our external, contracted EAP provider, **Alliance Work Partners (AWP)**, or through me at my office here at the Carruth Administration Center (CAC).

On the next page is a chart that provides most of the basic information regarding the EAP:

AISD Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

provided to the following benefits-eligible employees

- Employee, Retiree, Married/Divorced Spouse (may bring anyone else to covered sessions regardless of relationship to Employee)
- All family members **living in** employee's home, regardless of age, including Significant Others and their Children
- Children/Grandchildren (age 25 or under) of Employee or Married/Divorced Spouse or Significant Other **living outside** Employee's home
- Any terminated Employee eligible for benefits up to 6 months from date of termination, provided employee met eligibility prior to termination

for counseling assistance with **personal life problems** including, but not limited to

- Marital / relationship issues, legal or financial concerns, stress from any source, emotional problems, family problems, and/or drug/alcohol- related problems
- **All services provided by the EAP are free*(see below) and confidential.** We encourage you to make use of these services whenever you feel they are needed.

Two Options

AISD **Internal** EAP Coordinator

Contact: **Jerry Webb**

Licensed Professional Counselor
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist
414-9607

employeeassistance@austinisd.org
Hours: M-F, 7:45 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.
(except school holidays)

<http://www.austinisd.org>

- Direct counseling as time permits
- Help with questions/referrals
- **These services are FREE of charge**

may refer to

AISD **External** EAP Service Provider

Contact: **Alliance Work Partners**

24/7 Hotline: Toll Free 800-343-3822
(Hearing Impaired #: 800-448-1823)
EAP Teen Line: 800-334-TEEN (8336)

<http://www.alliancewp.com>

- Use these numbers to speak to a live counselor, to request routine appointments, or for urgent requests for help.
- For life-threatening emergencies, dial 911.
- **These services are FREE of charge**

may refer to

Collaboration
With
Referrals

Blue Cross Blue Shield Mental Health Care & Chemical Dependency Treatment
Managed by **Magellan (Inroads) Health Services: call 1-800-528-7264**

***(These services have co-payments associated with your major medical benefits plan.)**

If you call Alliance Work Partners (AWP) at 1-800-343-3822, the phone will be answered by a live intake counselor with whom you may share your concerns and preferences. AllianceWP has over 150 licensed therapists on their provider lists here in Austin alone. They will know the local counselors who would be most suited to help with your specific concerns and who are closest to where you live. They will recommend a counselor and even help you set up an appointment. If the therapist turns out to be a poor match for you, then they will refer you to someone else. Unfortunately, the only way you can ever really know whether a therapist is a "good fit" for you is to make the appointment and find out for yourself. Under the District's contract with AWP, you will be entitled to up to three face-to-face counseling sessions, **per separate issue**, per calendar year. These sessions are provided to you through the EAP at no cost to you (though you must be a "full-time" employee...20 or more hours per week). AWP also has providers in major cities around the country in case you need counseling services while away from home...just call the same 1-800 number.

If you have need of "live" legal or financial consultation with attorneys or financial experts, call the 1-800 number at AllianceWP and they will explain to you the benefits and limitations of that aspect of the EAP. If you just need legal or financial information resources, simply go to the website home page of AWP at www.alliancewp.com and login*. Once logged in you will have access to vast online legal and financial information resources. All of the above services are part of our **external employee assistance program** administered by the district's contracted external provider, Alliance Work Partners.

Your other option is to go through our **internal EAP**, which consists of me. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, and have been in private practice for 21 years (though my private practice is temporarily inactive due to the demands of my current position with AISD). In my role as: a) the Coordinator of the district's EAP, and b) the **ONLY** direct service provider (the only therapist) for the district's internal EAP, I am not limited in the number of sessions I can provide for those who wish to work with me directly. My only limitation is the number of hours in the day. And I only see "clients" (employees) during my work-day hours here at the CAC...so, after-hours appointments are not an option with me, like they would be if you sought counseling through AWP. But I see many employees right here in my office on a regular basis. My door is open to you if you wish to consider me as a counseling option, or if you'd simply like to discuss any aspect of the program further.

If an appointment is needed, the quickest way to get one is to call our contracted external service provider, **AllianceWP, at 1-800-343-3822**. You may call that number any time of the day or night, 24/7.

Or you may call me at 414-9607. Or email me at employeeassistance@austinisd.org

Hope this helps. Please don't hesitate to call or email me if you have further questions.

Jerry

*AWP has new website login procedures. See instructions for login http://www.austinisd.org/inside/hr/eap/docs/EAP_New_Benefits.pdf