

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

I. PURPOSE

The City of Harlingen recognizes issues may arise including personal problems that can sometimes affect an employee's attendance or work performance. This employee assistance program is designed to help employees and their families work through personal difficulties.

II. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The City's employee assistance program is provided through Valley Baptist Medical Center (VBMC) Behavioral Health Services (BHS). Its professional counselors can assist employees with a wide range of issues, including family problems, depression, financial concerns, stress, interpersonal conflicts, alcohol or drug abuse and other issues. Employees may be referred to VBMC Behavioral Health Services in one of two ways:

- Voluntary self-referral
- Job performance referral

Telephones are answered 24 hours a day at BHS's toll-free number: 1-888-551-6950 or 1-956-389-6906.

A. VOLUNTARY SELF-REFERRAL

An employee may voluntarily contact BHS at any time for assistance. This self-referral can be completely of his/her own initiative. The self-referral can also be in response to informal suggestions by supervisors, through whom employees are made aware of BHS's services.

In most cases, appointments are available after normal working hours. If appointments are

necessary during normal work hours, the time will be charged to accrued sick leave. If sick leave is not available, other leave may be used.

Up to three assessment visits may be provided free of charge by BHS to each employee per occurrence. If additional treatment sessions are necessary, they will be covered according to the specifications of the employee's health plan.

Information regarding the reasons employees are seeking assistance through BHS is strictly confidential. Supervisors should not ask what the reasons are and, if an employee volunteers any information, it should be treated confidentially.

B. JOB PERFORMANCE REFERRAL

A job performance referral by a Department Director may occur in conjunction with some form of disciplinary action, such as a performance improvement plan, based on documented performance deficiencies.

If a director feels that he or she should refer an employee to BHS, the Director will contact the BHS representative with the initial information that the employee has been encouraged to contact BHS within 24 hours. (The director may or may not have previously talked to the employee informally about seeking assistance from BHS.). The director should then tell the employee that he/she is encouraged to contact BHS within the 24-hour time period to schedule an appointment.

In most cases, appointments are available after hours. Scheduled appointments during working hours for a maximum of six (6) assessment visits should be recorded as time

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worked. An employee should not have his or her time docked for job performance referred BHS assessment appointments up to a maximum of six (6) visits.

Up to three assessment visits may be provided at no charge by BHS to the employee. If additional treatment sessions are necessary, they will be covered according to the specifications of the employee's health plan and may be charged to sick leave or other paid or unpaid leave.

Although case specifics will be treated confidentially, BHS will inform the appropriate director whether an employee has attended the scheduled appointments.

If job performance does not improve, the director may continue the disciplinary process, whether or not the employee contacted BHS.