

Chapter 4

Employee Assistance

I approved a plan in 1996 to reorganize and restructure the FBI's Health Care, Safety and Employee Assistance (EA) Programs. Since that time highly skilled professionals have been hired both at FBI Headquarters and in FBI field offices, to include medical doctors, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, occupational health nurses, industrial hygienists, environmental protection specialists and others. In addition, regional managers for each of these programs have been assigned in Houston, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. This core group of technically trained and knowledgeable experts is initiating and implementing programs to reduce occupational injuries; materials losses and damages; and to provide FBI employees the healthiest and safest work environments possible. Health, Safety and EA sub-programs, which did not exist prior to this restructuring, are now in place to help ensure that FBI employees are ready to deploy to all domestic and international assignments and upon arrival to receive full support which ensures safe and healthful working conditions.

* The FBI is determined that employees receive the help they need to maintain satisfactory job performance and solve job-related and other problems. The Employee Assistance Unit (EAU) administers four of the most advanced programs in law enforcement designed to help employees overcome problems that impede job performance. The four component programs are:

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): It provides counseling and referral services (Immediately in a crisis situation) for employees and their immediate family members going through personal, family, job, substance abuse, or financial difficulties. The EAP also offers assistance to supervisors who feel the need to refer an employee whose personal problems are affecting job performance or negatively impacting the workplace. Training is also afforded to all Bureau supervisors and managers in the use and capabilities of the EAP. FBI policy states that job security, promotional opportunity, and career assignments will not be jeopardized simply because an employee is seeking EAP services.

The Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Program helps Special Agents who have been involved or exposed to a sudden, intense, or life-threatening situation or trauma such as a shooting incident, bombing investigation involving fatalities, suicide or homicide, or involvement in a natural disaster. There are four regional response teams which may be deployed immediately in the event of a critical incident. Team members consist of EAU headquarters staff, FBI Peer Support Team members, FBI Chaplains, and mental health professionals with experience in police psychology and trauma. EAU routinely conducts Post Critical Incident Seminars for FBI employees and family members adversely impacted by trauma. This four-day seminar is designed to allow attendees to discuss their reactions in a safe, confidential environment and provides them with various tools to assist in coping with the impact of the trauma.

Peer Support Programs: The participants are employees and family members who complete the Post Critical Incident Seminar and volunteer to take part in this program. It is about linking up people who have experienced a traumatic event with someone else who has gone through a similar situation and, therefore, is uniquely able to listen and assist.

The Chaplain Program consists of a group of over 100 volunteer chaplains who put in more than 20,000 hours annually working with FBI employees and their family members during times of need. Each chaplain has passed a full background investigation and has a "Top Secret" clearance. FBI chaplains understand the unique situations and problems faced by law enforcement employees and management, as well as the universal life problems encountered by people everywhere.

The institution of alternate work schedules under the "work-life program" enables our employees to meet family needs by altering their work hours. The Family Friendly Leave Act of 1994 has been another important improvement. The institution of this Act allows employees to take a leave of absence for the