



LIFE ENRICHMENT
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Your Employee Assistance Program NEWSLETTER

Life Enrichment is a program of The Center for Family Services of Palm Beach County, Inc.

When Caring for Your Elders Leads to Problems at Work

By Sonja Kobrin, M.P.S., C.M.C., *Geriatric Care Manager, V.I.P. Care Management, Inc.* • www.vipcaremanagement.com

It is estimated that forty percent of all employees who are caring for an aging family member are missing work on a regular basis. In 1995 the Metropolitan Life Company reported that it had 85,000 employees and elder care related absenteeism cost the company 33 million dollars that year alone. The Dupont Corporation studied their employees who were caring for elderly family members and found that they had the highest burnout rate. This is a devastating phenomenon which will only become more prevalent as the “baby boomers” enter their senior years. For that reason proactive employers are turning to Employee Assistance Programs that offer Geriatric Care Management services.

Take the case of Janet. She has spent the last fourteen years rising through the ranks of her company. She is known for her expertise and dedicated work ethic. When Janet’s mother first moved in with Janet and her family, everything seemed manageable. Janet’s staff and supervisors listened with compassion as she explained that she would need to take an afternoon off in order to bring her mother to the doctor. Six months later, the doctor appointments are more frequent and her supervisors’ compassion is waning. Her staff cannot help but notice all the personal phone calls she is receiving. It is apparent that others are beginning to question her commitment to her job. Her husband is also questioning her commitment. He is disappointed that Janet cancelled the family vacation for the second time. Janet cannot commit to

a new vacation date because “Mom shouldn’t be alone right now”. To make matters worse, Janet is feeling resentment towards her siblings who live out of state. They are not available to help, yet they expect to be consulted on matters concerning Mom. The latest affront came last week when Janet’s brother called to ask for a financial accounting of their mother’s funds. Janet felt as though he was questioning her honesty and they had an argument. This upset Janet and her husband and then they had an argument.

Janet can see the problems are about to escalate and she is afraid she may lose her job and her marriage. She does not know where to turn. She promised her mother she would never put her in a nursing home but she is wondering if that is a promise she can keep. Janet called a local nursing agency and was shocked to learn that it would cost over sixty dollars per day to have an aide stay with her mother during the day. Her mother’s meager social security check would not even cover the cost. At this point, Janet is afraid to tell her husband that she must now help pay for her mother’s caregivers.

Thousands of employees are struggling with the issue of balancing family life, work life and caregiver responsibilities. Some of them lose their jobs because they simply cannot solve the problems of care giving without neglecting other important areas of their lives. Geriatric Care Managers specialize in consulting with elders and their families. First the Care Manager

assesses the situation from a medical, social, psychological, financial, legal, government benefit, insurance and environmental perspective, so a Care Plan can be presented to the family. The Care Plan offer solutions to address the immediate needs but also anticipate the future needs.

Even if a family knows about the traditional community resources such as Assisted Living Facilities, Day Care, or Home Health Care, they often do not realize how much these services can cost. More importantly, families are not told about free programs and financial aid programs such as Veteran Special Pensions and Medicaid Diversion which could really make services affordable. Many elders and their families pay huge sums for services they never knew were available for free or at a discount. Families expect that hospital social workers, doctors and other health care workers will educate them about any appropriate programs. Sadly, many health care professionals are unaware of these programs or falsely assume that financial aide is only for the indigent. Geriatric Care Managers can determine which solutions are appropriate, access affordable or free services when possible and help elders and their concerned families plan for their future needs. The financial aspect is just as important as the medical aspect. While Geriatric Care Management services like these usually cost an hourly fee, most families find the information they receive

COPING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS

Submitted by Clyde A. Bailey, PhD

The holiday season is a tremendous challenge to many people. There are some people who worry about which dinner party to attend, or that they do not have enough time to do the many rounds of shopping, or the ever-growing list of people on the gift list. Similarly, others do not look forward to the holiday period for various reasons, as it provides them with numerous instances of stress. Some of us might have lost loved ones this past year or even earlier and the holiday period is a painful reminder of such enormous loss. We at the Life Enrichment EAP Program have chosen to share with you some ideas to reduce the stress element in the holiday period.

You will very likely get invited to a party or two and you are sure to attend them. For those of you who have children, you often make plans for a babysitter to ensure that the children are safe. In the same way, make prior arrangements for how you will get home after drinking. Ensure you have a designated driver - you could call for a taxi or plan for a friend to pick you up at a certain time and so reduce the risk of putting yourself or someone else in

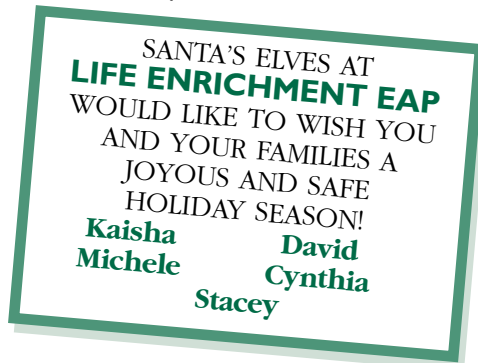
danger on the road and being caught driving under the influence of alcohol.

In the same context there is the temptation to overindulge when you are faced with exquisite cuisine and enormous quantities of your favorite foods. Many of us have worked hard

would like to have you around for 2007 healthy and well.

Some families might be missing loved ones at this time especially those who have relatives serving in the armed forces overseas. We are very grateful for those servicemen and servicewomen who so valiantly fight for our country. Maybe one way of relieving the stress of your loved one being away for the holidays is to make links with other military families and have dinner parties. Some people might not be able to make such connections but maybe you can invite friends of your family member who is in the armed forces to a special meal with your family and ask them to tell stories.

Finally, enjoy the holidays doing what will bring you joy and happiness. This is a great time of the year and we want you to remember the reason for the season, while you celebrate with family and friends. We here in Florida can say an extra note of gratitude for surviving a whole year without any major hurricane. What a relief. Whatever you do, stay safe, be kind to others and we look forward to having you around for next year.



over the last couple of months to get rid of the weight and to keep the cholesterol down. Why throw it away over the holidays? One wise man encouraged us to do everything in moderation and so each time you pick up a holiday plate, don't forget your health. Better to say no to that extra serving of cheesecake or chocolate ice cream, than to end up in the hospital in the New Year, or putting on a few extra pounds. We

CARING – Continued from page 1

saves them thousands of dollars. Of course, if the Care Manager can help a caregiver better balance their work, family and caregiver responsibilities, the value is priceless.

As it turns out, employees who are caring for an aging family member find that successfully managing the role of caregiver is much like managing a company. All of the "work" of caring for an elder must be broken down into separate tasks. The caregiver must see themselves as the manager and outsource and/or delegate any tasks that can be done by others. Your Employee Assistance Program can refer you to Geriatric Care Management consultants for professional advice and trustworthy, time-saving services. With the right help you can care for your aging loved ones and still maintain balance at home and at work.

EAP NEWS

EAP Has a New Director – Kaisha Thomas, LMHC, LMFT, PhD. Candidate, Senior Director of Counseling, Life Enrichment EAP.

Ms. Thomas has been with the Center for Family Services for three years as Director of Individual & Family Counseling. She brings with her a dual license in the State of Florida as a Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) and a Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), and holds certification as a Substance Abuse Professional (SAP). Ms. Thomas has over fifteen years experience in behavioral health and has extensive training in Brief Solution-Focused, systemic therapy, Critical Incident Stress Management, organized systems and program management. She is a Florida State approved supervisor and meets State of Florida requirements to provide Hypnotherapy and treat sexual offenders. Ms. Thomas has co-authored and published a professional article on Brief Solution-Focused Therapy. She is currently pursuing her doctorate.

ELDER CARE SERVICES – LIFE ENRICHMENT EAP HAS PARTNERED WITH V.I.P. CARE MANAGEMENT as your elder care referral

source in Medicaid Application, Medicaid Diversion Programs, Veteran's Pension/Widow's Pension, facility and home care selection, bill payment services and financial planning. If you have any questions regarding these services, or for a confidential consultation, please call **561 588-5151 V.I.P. Care Management** and state you are a Life Enrichment EAP client.

Featured Employer: The Health Care District of Palm Beach County

Interviewer: Michele Romaglino, EAP Marketing Representative

HCDPBC: Jannis Muscato, Human Resource Director

EAP:

Jannis, can you please explain to our readers: what exactly is the Health Care District of Palm Beach County and what services do you provide.

Jannis Muscato:

The Health Care District of Palm Beach County was approved by the voters in 1988 and established by the legislature as an independent county-wide taxing district. The District's mission is to ensure access to a comprehensive healthcare system for all Palm Beach County residents by providing a safety net of health services like trauma care, health coverage for the uninsured, a nurse in every public school, a skilled nursing home and rehabilitation center and a hospital in the Glades.

Over the last 18 years the District has grown in scope of operations and in size, employing 750 people. Those dedicated professionals carry out the following programs and services that help improve the lives of more than 300,000 residents.

- **Trauma System** - The Palm Beach County Trauma System, now in its 15th year of operation, is recognized at the state and national level as a model trauma system. The District funds and oversees two Level II trauma centers, one at St. Mary's Medical Center and the other at Delray Medical Center. The District also operates the state-of-the-art Trauma Hawk helicopter EMS transport facility based at Palm Beach International Airport. In 2005, more than 3,000 trauma victims in the county received life-saving critical care in the Golden Hour—the time when treatment literally makes the difference between life and death. The aeromedical program has an impeccable safety record and the trauma system's preventable death rate is less than one percent.

- **Covering the Uninsured** - The District operates the Coordinated Care Program, a managed care program launched in 1993, which insures that lower-income Palm Beach County residents have access to health care services. This is accomplished through a network of physicians, hospitals, pharmacies and ancillary health care providers.

The District also operates Healthy Palm Beaches, Inc., a licensed and accredited Medicaid HMO that provides health insurance to Palm Beach County residents in the Medicaid program. Under Healthy Palm Beaches, Inc. the District offers two programs:

1. Personal Health Plan, an HMO for Medicaid recipients that reaches medically and financially underserved individuals and
2. Vita Health, a new affordable health care option for eligible working Palm Beach County residents and families. With a network of primary and specialty physicians throughout Palm Beach County, Vita Health offers health care benefits that include hospitalization, emergency room services, outpatient surgery, diagnostic services, primary care services, and prescription drugs. Vita Health provides subsidized low cost health coverage with monthly premiums that range from \$25 to less than \$100 per individual and affordable co-payments for health services.

In addition, the District provides prenatal care through the Maternity Care Program. More than 17-hundred women have received services since October 2004.

- **Children's Health Programs** – The Health Care District operates 160 school health clinics and employs more than 200 school nurses who help ensure that 170,000 students in the nation's 11th largest school district have access to first aid, medication administration and other health services from a medical professional. Palm Beach County is the largest school district in the country to have a nurse in every public school.

In addition, the District employs behavioral health professionals who work in 46 public elementary schools to help at-risk children with behavioral and emotional issues. Under the Comprehensive Services program, multidisciplinary teams provide physical and behavioral health services to newborns through children up to age five who are in subsidized childcare and school-based centers throughout the county.

- **The Edward J. Healey Rehabilitation and Nursing Center** – The District operates a 198-bed skilled nursing facility serving Palm Beach County residents who require long-term skilled nursing care that they cannot receive at other nursing home facilities. The Healey Center provides occupational, physical and speech therapy and other specialized care, including intravenous drug administration, wound care and sub-acute care. Currently, the District is planning for the upgrading of the 60-year-old facility.

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is a publication of Life
Enrichment EAP and
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- **Glades General Hospital** – The District owns and operates Glades General, the only public hospital in Palm Beach County. The 73-bed acute care facility, built in 1944, delivers in-patient and out-patient services and a 24-hour physician staffed Emergency Room with access to Trauma Hawk air ambulances. Since taking ownership of Glades General Hospital in May 2004, the District has invested \$3.5 million dollars in new technology that has improved the quality of care. In February 2006, the Health Care District committed to building a new \$52 million regional hospital in the Glades within the next four years. The selection of a contractor and design team for the project is now underway.
- **Pharmacy** – The District's pharmacy program supports the District's health coverage programs and community programs like the Palm Beach County Health Department, Palm Beach County Fire Rescue, Ryan White, immunizations and public health events. It also responds to critical needs in the community, such as hurricane support and relief, staff support at the County's Special Needs Shelter and Bio-Terrorism Planning.

EAP:

How has our Sexual Harassment Seminar and Benefit Presentations made a difference to your employees?

Jannin Muscato:

The Sexual Harassment Seminar has been extremely valuable during our orientation of new staff. It tells our new employees that they have joined an employer that is committed to providing them with a healthy, comfortable work environment. It also lets them know from the beginning the type of behavior that will be acceptable at the District and a method to report behavior that is inappropriate. The benefit presentations assist employees in the full understanding of the scope of services provided by the EAP.

EAP:

What do you think would encourage more of your employees to utilize their EAP benefits?

Jannin Muscato:

A quarterly EAP newsletter mailed to the insured's home would encourage benefits awareness among employees. I think the newsletter could explain the benefits offered and provide tips in articles on such topics as: balancing work and family, minimizing stress and helping a family member who struggles with alcohol or drug dependency. Providing employees useful benefits-related information that can be read in the privacy of their homes is sure to make a difference. Another suggestion: provide employees better access to multi-lingual counselors to help support their cultural needs and foster better communication. Having counselors available who speak Creole and Spanish is very important to our employees who speak English as a second language.

Deck the halls I'm feeling stressed...

Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la

Traffic, crowds, it's all a mess...

Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la

Life Enrichment is the best...

Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la

Call us now, we'll do the rest...

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