

# EAP offers help when you need it most

**L**ife happens. Stress from work, school or home can make coping difficult for a letter carrier or family member, if living under the same roof. Fortunately, the U.S. Postal Service provides a resource for facing life's many challenges—at no cost. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential program that offers assessment, consultation, counseling, life coaching or training for any postal employee or covered family member who needs help. EAP can even advise a concerned employee on how to help a co-worker.

EAP is jointly administered by NALC, the American Postal Workers Union, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union and USPS. All EAP counselors are required to have at least a master's degree in counseling or social work, be licensed in their state, and have experience in dealing with a wide range of personal and workplace concerns.

Reasons a postal employee might seek help from EAP include difficulties with family, children, marriage, divorce, care of an elderly person, child care, depression or anxiety, grief or loss, substance abuse, job performance problems, or personal or work relationship problems.

Discussions with EAP professionals are protected by strict federal and state confidentiality laws and regulations, and by professional ethics standards for counselors, even when they relate to work. EAP services are provided by an independent contractor.

"EAP is an incredible resource for all sorts of problems letter carriers may face," NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said. "Don't hesitate to use it."

One NALC member, who asked to remain anonymous, told *The Postal Record* that he had turned to EAP to get help for himself and his family when his wife was diagnosed with cancer. "It was just



a matter of calling the 1-800 EAP number and then talking with someone," he said. Sometimes he talked on the phone with counselors, other times he visited therapists whom EAP had referred him to in his area. He also went to EAP counselors located in postal facilities, using measures that ensure privacy. His wife, who also sought help from EAP to deal with her health crisis, later recovered from her illness.

In addition to helping a postal employee or family members, EAP can help postal employees support each other or deal with the repercussions of other people's challenges. If you notice a co-worker who appears to need help, you can contact EAP for guidance on how to assist. An EAP counselor will help you size up the problem and help you decide how to approach that person to offer help, including the option of referring the co-worker or family member to EAP.

Technology has opened up opportunities for communicating with EAP. In addition to person-to-person or phone communication, employees or family can use video counseling or even text messaging through a phone or tablet using EAP's privacy-protecting portal. The EAP's website, [eap4you.com](http://eap4you.com), is also a rich resource for getting help—you can find articles, locators, assessment tools, training, webinars, calculators, advice, videos and recipes there.

Letter carriers seeking EAP services can call 800-EAP-4YOU (800-327-4968), TTY 877-492-7341 or visit [eap4you.com](http://eap4you.com).

## NALC's ERT offers support during critical incidents

As an additional way to help letter carriers in crisis, NALC has created the Emergency Response Team (ERT). When there's a critical incident that has happened at a station or affecting a member in the station, NALC's ERT is ready to help members in need. With more than 30 deployments to date, the ERT has already assisted letter carriers dealing with trauma in post offices throughout the country.

ERT members are there to provide peer-to-peer support, talk with members on the workroom floor or in private, and in some cases to meet with the family of the affected letter carrier. Their role is to assist members and the family by providing emotional first aid and guiding them to the available resources in the aftermath of the traumatic event. They offer peer-to-peer encouragement from trained union members who are there to listen, understand and help.

"We've seen an increase in violence against letter carriers," President Renfroe said, "but that's not the only trauma carriers are experiencing. All too frequently, I get reports of accidents and deaths of letter carriers on the job. We need to be there for our brothers and sisters when they're facing the aftermath of these critical incidents. And that's why we've created the Emergency Response Team."

If your post office experiences a traumatic event, NALC members can reach out to the ERT through their branch president or by contacting their national business agent's office. **PR**