



Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee

Employee Assistance Programs - Consultation Report



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- Consultation Report

**Royal Canadian Mounted Police
External Review Committee**

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The Committee is publishing a series of discussion papers to elicit public comments to assist the Committee in the formulation of recommendations pursuant to the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act* (1986). The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily the views of the Committee.

Comments are invited; they should be addressed to:

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Other publications

Discussion paper 1

Suspensions - A Balanced View

Suspensions - Consultation Report

Discussion paper 2

Relocation - A Painful Process?

Relocation - Consultation Report

Discussion paper 3

Medical Discharge - A Police Perspective

Medical Discharge - Consultation Report

Discussion paper 4

Post-Complaint Management -

The Impact of Complaint Procedures on Police Discipline

Discussion paper 5

Employee Assistance Programs -

Philosophy, theory and practice

Discussion paper 6

Disciplinary Dismissal - A Police Perspective

FOREWORD

The fifth discussion paper published by the RCMP External Review Committee entitled "Employee Assistance Programs - Philosophy, theory and practice" was distributed for consultation in October 1990 to several federal and provincial government agencies, federal, provincial and municipal police forces and selected Canadian corporations.

The Committee thanks the many respondents who took time to comment both on the issues raised in the discussion paper and on their varied experiences with employee assistance programs. Their substantive and informative comments were extremely valuable to the Committee. As previously, all comments published in this report remain anonymous.

In the Committee's continuing research program, work is currently underway on four discussion papers on off-duty conduct, principles of sanctioning, special events and the evolution of police management.

Simon Coakeley
Executive Director
RCMP External Review Committee

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS CONSULTATION REPORT

1. Consultation

(a) Method and Objective

In preparing the report on its fifth research topic, Employee Assistance Programs - Philosophy, theory and practice, the External Review Committee has continued to use an approach consisting of two phases.

The first phase consists of the preparation of a study by a consultant, following which the Research Directorate of the Committee produces a discussion paper dealing with issues raised by the consultant.

The second phase of the process is a report on the views, ideas and impressions of a predetermined readership on the contents of the discussion paper. In order to preserve confidentiality, the sources of quotations remain anonymous. The role of the Research Directorate of the Committee in these consultations is to gather feedback on the form and content of the discussion paper and to complete its comparative analysis of the issues discussed. As well, it may be presented with models or options other than those presented in the discussion paper.

To gather the material for this consultation report, the Committee consulted the Deputy Attorneys General and Deputy Solicitors General of the provinces and territories, the Commissioner of the RCMP and the National Executive of the RCMP's divisional staff relations representatives. A large number of police forces, as well as a representative number of members of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Police Association, were also consulted. In the federal sector, the Committee also sought the views of the Public Service Commission, the Department of National Defence and the Department of the Solicitor General. Selected Canadian corporations were also canvassed for their views or comments. In all, 165 individuals and organizations, representing both employers and employees, were provided a copy of the discussion paper for consultation purposes.

As with other reports, the Committee did not limit its consultation solely to police organizations as this would have limited the variety of responses and ideas. It was important to get feedback from all types of organizations to broaden the views explored in the paper.

(b) Response Rate

In publishing its series of research papers, the Committee is attempting to stimulate discussion, not to take a position on the issue. Because of this, when research is conducted on a problem touching many police forces, the material will not meet the objectives of all forces at all times. As a result of this, the rate of responses varies considerably from paper to paper, as does the amount of detail in the replies.

The response rate in this consultation process was very high. By January 1991 there had

been 42 respondents out of the 165 to whom the discussion paper was sent. This overwhelming response rate can only indicate a very high interest level in employee assistance programs as well as a commitment to programs of this nature.

While the responses varied considerably in the amount of detail provided, many had substantive comments to make on the subject. As well, the sources of the comments covered a wide range. Responses were received from the RCMP, provincial police forces, municipal police forces, provincial government officials, as well as senior officials in federal departments. The senior levels of many of those replying indicates that there is support for employee assistance programs from the top down.

Response figures were as follows:

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Percentage of Respondents</u>
Government	
· Federal	19.0%
· Provincial	11.9%
· Municipal	2.4%
Police	
· Commissions	2.4%
· Forces	61.9%
· Members' Associations	0.0%
Private sector	2.4%

(c) General Comments

The comments received during the consultation process are a great source of information not only to the Committee but to police forces as well.

Both the Committee and the police community benefit from the views of others on the issues. It is valuable to share in the views of other police forces, as well as those from government departments or the private sector.

The Committee received a large number of general comments on the paper. Many of those who wrote referred to the overall quality of the discussion paper.

I found the Committee's report to be a very professional and well written document which represented the E.A.P. movement and of course Police Community E.A.P. in a positive educational manner.



It is immediately apparent from this paper that an immense amount of work has been accomplished by your committee, and I offer you my congratulations.



The Discussion Paper is a comprehensive and well researched document.... The document provides a solid foundation on which to build.



It is a highly comprehensive document that very interestingly presents the problems surrounding employee assistance programs (EAP).



I would like to emphasize that I fully agree with the findings of the report which suggest a need to take a more preventive approach; the fact that certain organizations are more likely than others to create and perpetuate problems necessarily implies that EAPs must be provocative, and that, very often, a person can be treated only light of the work environment.



I found it to be very informative in an easy to read format.



I found it well written, comprehensive and easily understandable.



I commend the Committee's report for its thought provoking content and thoroughness.



The report is an excellent overview of Employee Assistance Programs and I agree with the findings.



As usual, I am impressed with the objective and wide-ranging approach given the topic.



We consulted this report with great interest.

A large number of the general comments made reference to the interest generated by the paper and the information the reader gained from it.

Your paper gives me a much better understanding of the role of such a program.



I must say, first of all, that this Discussion Paper provides a very comprehensive overview of Employee Assistance Programs. It is well researched and contains a lot of valuable information....



... a comprehensive document which addresses the critical issues of commitment, confidentiality, professional resources, training, accessibility by family members and evaluations. They also noted that the picture painted of these programs, the obstacles to their implementation, their limits and advantages to organizations is realistic.



Your report ... was most enlightening and addresses many of the concerns found throughout today's policing services.



The paper provides a useful background on employee assistance programs which will no doubt be of particular interest to those who are involved in police management issues.

In addition to being invited to offer views on the discussion paper, those consulted were invited to comment on employee assistance programs in their organizations and the Committee received extremely useful information from many respondents based on their experiences.

Overall our experience with the E.A.P. has been favourable. In many instances, the program has helped members through major crises or personal problems. As such, a number of employees have been able to remain as productive workers, where otherwise they would have become marginal performers. This is significant in a union environment, since the dismissal of problem employees is difficult, if not impossible.



It is our belief that the E.A.P. has had a positive effect on staff health issues.



I strongly endorse the use of E.A.P.'s in police organizations as our experience has shown that these programs are not only cost effective financially but in human terms as well.



... many managers have underlined the positive impact of the EAP. They have noted that the program was of real benefit to people with problems and enabled them to perform effectively at work. Unions and employee associations encourage their members to use the EAP and actively promote the program.



The credibility and image of our program has improved over several years, and we are pleased that these services are now used on a regular basis. It provides a positive effect for many of our members and also contributes to the overall esprit de corps of our employees.

One respondent recommended the creation within organizations of a separate program

tailored for senior executives.

... very few managers make use of these programs even if contracted out for a number of reasons including a concern of perception, confidentiality, fear of meeting an employee on his/her way out of counselling etc The problems of stress, alcoholism, burn out, family/career issues, career changes, among others, certainly affect these managers and the employees they supervise and consequently have an impact on the entire organization ... recommend that the discussion paper addresses this specific issue and examines options to overcome the situation. One possibility may be having an EAP tailored specifically to the senior executives and their needs.

The Committee was pleased to receive these practical views on the value of employee assistance programs within the police community, and in government departments; it is particularly encouraging that so many police forces see great value in having such programs in their forces. Sincere praise is due to police forces which have committed themselves to assistance programs for their employees.

Respondents expressed interest and appreciation for the opportunity to receive the Committee's research paper on employee assistance programs and to participate in the consultation process and most continue to be interested in taking part in any future studies and in remaining on the Committee's mailing list.

2. Commentary on Content

Respondents recognized the value of the paper as a guide providing useful information for those in the process of establishing employee assistance programs within their organizations or those who wish to evaluate existing programs.

... your Committee's fifth discussion paper is an excellent document and could serve as a guide to any agency endeavouring to implement such a program.



Your research on the models, approach and scope, as well as the limitations and challenges, of the employee assistance programs is very realistic in the Canadian Context. Companies considering the establishment of such a program can most certainly draw inspiration from your work. Congratulations on a job well done!



Your discussion paper will become a valuable tool to assist us in developing an employee assistance program and I look forward to

receiving your consultation report based on your analysis of views you receive from the police community.



In my view, any organization researching the feasibility of an E.A.P. would find the paper of great assistance.



We have forwarded it to our E.A.P. co-ordinator as a reference booklet.



The information provided by your discussion paper will prove useful in evaluating our programs.

(a) Models for EAP

A number of respondents commented specifically on the chapter dealing with models for employee assistance programs. Some commented generally on the value of this chapter.

In particular, the section on "Models for E.A.P." was very interesting. These guidelines would have been most helpful when our program was being developed.



This research is very thorough and highlights some very important facts about assistance programs. The inventory of the various approaches and models used makes it possible to compare our experience with that of other organizations.



... an objective and realistic paper. They were very pleased to see the neutral position taken by the writer with regard to the comparison of the different programs found within the international E.A.P. Community.

Others had more specific comments on the ideas in the chapter, based on their own experiences. Most deal with adaptations made to the basic models to suit their own organization's own particular needs.

We agree with your ideas in Chapter Three concerning various dimensions of EAP models. Our Employee Assistance Program is a broadbrush program that provides assessment and immediate short term counselling by provincial government employees, followed by referral and follow-up As your Paper suggests in Section 3.1, we often have to adapt our Program to suit the special circumstances of clients, such as geographical location.



We agree with your contention in 3.6 that it is possible for Labour Unions to effectively administer an EAP, either directly or through co-operation with management. We feel that, without full-time co-operation between labour and management, it would be much more difficult to implement and administer an effective program.



Since all models of the E.A.P. are governed by the same rules and confidentiality, we are not of the opinion that one model can deal more effectively with the issues than another.

On the subject of the individuality of employee assistance programs within organization, there was also useful information on the specifics of how elements within certain programs differed from the common elements described in the paper.

With respect to comments made on page 14 of the discussion paper, moreover they tend to concentrate on medical referrals and on alcohol related problems, referring to in-house services. We do not agree with this opinion in light of our experience.... Our organization indicates less than 10% alcohol problems.

Such examples reinforce the importance of tailoring employee assistance programs to the organizations for which they are being designed, not simply adopting and applying one of the models described in the paper.

(b) Implementing, Maintaining and Evaluating an EAP

In relation to the chapter on implementing, maintaining and evaluating an EAP, there were a number of comments on specific elements of the text. Most related the ideas in the text to experience within their own programs.

The drawbacks, as identified within the paper, are well founded, particularly with regard to the company not being experienced with the workplace.



The other problem I would like to identify is the short term counselling provided by most contracted service providers. I have found it necessary to build in a contingency within the Budget to provide for intense professional counselling, when required...



Missing from your list of key ingredients in Section 4.5.1 on page 21 is any direct mention of adequate resources, unless this is presupposed in the "support" demanded of top management and Union and/or unless it is implied in "insurance involvement".



In reference to "Teamwork" as stated in section 4.5.1, the existence of an active joint EAP (labour/management) committee would be the best way to ensure that this teamwork existed.



We do agree that EAP's are cost-effective (section 4.6). In large organizations, however, it is difficult to acquire data to convincingly back this up, as you touch on in 4.6.1.



Some may take exception to the last sentence in 4.6.3. It can be argued that EAP's are here to stay, given the basic soundness of the concept. The fact that they have been increasing steadily in North America and elsewhere over the past 25 years ... testifies to this.

We hope that such comments will provide those considering the establishment of an employee assistance program with additional issues to keep in mind when tailoring a program to suit their organizations' needs.

(c) Job-Based Programs in the Police Force

There were a few comments on specific elements relating to the chapter on job-based programs in the police force. One comment dealt simply with the terminology used, but others suggested important elements which should be included in employee assistance programs for police forces.

On page 29, paragraph 3, the term "policemen" is used. It is our practice to have both male and female officers as peer counsellors, therefore, you may wish to alter that terminology.

Secondly, with respect to page 31, item #3, psychological testing, in our view, would be most beneficial during transitional periods in a police officer's career. Such periods should include but not be limited to promotions, transfers or changes in assignments which demand substantially different roles.

(d) Problems with EAPs

In addition to deciding the elements to include in an employee assistance program, it is also important to decide how active a role that program should be allowed to play within the organization. As these following comments indicate, this is an element that will vary with the nature of the organization.

... para 6.1 sets out contemporary EAP problems and alludes to treatment rather than cause, and a reactive and not a proactive focus. This ties in with a comment made at para 2.3.2 that EAP activities are now moving towards a preventive strategy. This gives me some personal difficulty.... While the referral role of EAP is one I can support, I would be reluctant to see EAP referral agents being in my office as advocates....



The discussion paper summarizes very well the state of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) industry in the workplace. It recognizes some of the difficulties in agreeing on the best EAP for a particular industry.

3. Additional Material on Subject

One respondent recommended the following additional literature on the subject:

- "Women in Canadian Urban Policing: why are they Leaving?" (1989), Belinda M. Crawford and Dr. C. Stark-Adamec, University of Regina;
- "Predictors of Attrition Among Officers in Canadian Urban Police Forces" (1989), Belinda Crawford and Dr. C. Stark-Adamec, University of Regina;
- "Stress and Police Work", a report prepared in 1978 for the Ontario Provincial Police Association by Peat Marwick and Partners.

Another respondent mentioned gaining greater information relating to Canadian police experience with employee assistance programs by looking at the following:

- RCMP - Member Assistance Program;
- Metropolitan Toronto Police Force
 - Employee Assistance Program,
 - Critical Incident Stress (C.I.S.): Response Team;
- Ontario Provincial Police - Employee Assistance Program;
- Windsor Police - Peer Counselling Program;
- Ontario Law Enforcement - Stress Association.

4. Conclusion

The following comment received by the Committee echoes one of the important messages in the discussion paper:

... we fully support the position the EAPs lead to a double-winning position: furthering organizational effectiveness and enhancing employees' well-being without being a panacea.

This and other comments provided to the Committee both reinforce and amplify the views put forward in the discussion paper, and provide equally useful information for the readership.

Comments received indicate that there is great interest in and general support for employee assistance programs within the police community and in government departments. They indicated that there is a huge variance in the degree to which police forces across the country have established employee assistance programs within them. For those who are just now

embarking on such programs, it is hoped that the discussion paper and consultation report will assist them in that endeavour.

Respondents generally reinforced the view expressed in the discussion paper that employee assistance programs should be tailored to suit the organization within which it is being established, and that careful attention should be paid to the unique characteristics of that organization.

To reinforce this, we have seen that the elements causing problems to organizations establishing employee assistance programs have varied as greatly as the organizations themselves: ensuring adequate resources, problems with short-term counselling by contracted service providers, difficulty in acquiring data to convincingly back up cost-effectiveness.

As well, we have seen the same variety in the mention of elements seen to be of key importance in establishing an employee assistance program: teamwork between labour and management, the establishment of a separate program for senior managers and adaptability of the program to suit special circumstances for clients.

While respondents see that there are problems and complications in the establishment of employee assistance programs, none seem to doubt the value of such programs. Those with established programs in their organizations are now seeing the positive results of their efforts, while in some cases acceptance of the programs by employees took a considerable length of time.

While some respondents spoke of interest in establishing employee assistance programs, others spoke of how the image of their programs has improved over the years and of evaluating existing employee assistance programs. This is an important element in ensuring that the needs of the organization and the employees continue to be met. An important aspect of this is the continuing support of both management and labour, as has been pointed out by a number of respondents.

Conclusions which can be reached on the basis of the respondents' views are the following:

- i) There is general agreement on the value of employee assistance programs, both for furthering organizational effectiveness and for enhancing employees' well-being.
- ii) There are still many questions and issues which remain to be sorted out by organizations establishing programs for their employees; however, it is generally agreed that the benefits outweigh the problems and obstacles.
- iii) It is important for organizations to look at the available models of employee assistance programs to assess the services available within each model, then to

make a decision on which segments of these models will suit their own specific needs and those of their employees.

- iv) Ongoing evaluation and adjustment are important to ensuring continued effectiveness and continued support by both management and labour.

This consultation process based on the discussion paper on employee assistance programs has been designed to promote the discussion and communication of views on this important human resource management issue within the police community.