CONNECTIONS INC

Employee & Family Solutions | Employee Assistance Programs Vol. 26 #5

A Message from Matt

Curiosity

Strong leaders resist the urge to make assumptions and instead choose curiosity. When challenges arise, asking questions and seeking to understand another person's perspective can prevent misunderstandings, strengthen relationships, and improve collaboration. Curiosity doesn't mean lowering standards or avoiding accountability. It means gathering information before making judgments. In today's workplace, leaders who lead with curiosity create greater trust, engagement, and teamwork while helping employees feel heard and valued.



MATT VISSER, CEO
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"Don't discuss sensitive subjects before dinner, eat first. My husband is very irritable when hungry!"
-Renee Flager, Everlasting Matrimony



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FIRST RESPONDER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

First responders make up an indispensable component of the workforce, vital to protecting public and environmental safety and health. Those working within emergency service organizations arrive at the scene of emergencies varying from isolated accidents and violent incidents to large-scale terrorist attacks or natural disasters(a). Connections Inc. is honored to provide first responder assistance services for over 25,000 individuals in this unique segment of the workforce. Safety focused first responders are a population experiencing a high incidence of *'post-traumatic stress disorders'* (PTSD), burnout, depression and suicide.

'In Considerations and Best Practices of EA Services for First Responders', authors Ficke and Dalton-Theodore provide a helpful summary of insights and best practice guidelines for reaching out to and embracing these dedicated emergency workers (b). The emotional, physical, and mental stresses of work and personal life for the first responder, are easily ignored by those of us who benefit greatly from this community workforce.

PTSD is rooted in real events involving human suffering, life threatening catastrophes, violence, death, and other threats. High levels of distress, depression, anxiety, suicidality, and sleep disturbances accompany this line of work. Alcohol and/or substance misuse surface as a coping response to traumatic intense suffering and fatal accidents.

An international summary survey (c), conducted between 2008 and 2024, notes the sources of trauma and the frequency of diagnosable PTSD for varying activities. The data, briefly summarized, reveals that…

- 1 in 7 first responders (14.3 %) have probable PTSD in response to routine duties.
- 1 in 12 first responders (8.3 %) have probable PTSD after responding to disasters.
- Prevalence may be increasing over time, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Workers in low/middle-income countries are at greater risk of PTSD.
- Varied first responder occupations have similarly high risks of PTSD

a. https://cdn.ymaws.com/eapassn.org/resource/resmgr/jea/jea_2026/eapa_journal_vol56_no1.pdf

b. Considerations and Best Practices of EA Services for First Responders: EAP Practice By Patrick Ficke, LPCC and Maia Dalton-Theodore, LCSW, SAP. JOURNAL OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE April 2026

c. Arena A., Gregory M., Collins D. et al. (2025) Global PTSD prevalence among active first responders and trends over recent years: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Clinical Psychology Review. 120(102622). https://doi. org/10.1016/j.cpr.2025.102622

Written by: Andy Visser

Connections Inc. Employee Assistance Program's mission is to provide holistic assistance products and services that support optimum productivity, team work and healthy community in the workplace.

Connections Inc. Employee Assistance Program mission statement since 1988

NOTEWORTHY

CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY RECOVERY!

…The biggest priority in my life had to be recovery. To serve all the other priorities in my life, recovery had to be put first. I didn't understand that every morning when I woke up, I had to put that commitment first. And every night, I have to remember to be thankful that I have completed another day of sobriety.

In recovery, I had to see that every day was critical to the success of the entire process. Things to watch for include:

• Complacency when life begins to improve. People in long-term recovery may believe that they no longer need to focus on their recovery efforts; they may be convinced they will never begin using again.

• Lack of self-care as the person becomes exhausted and develops or returns to irregular eating or poor general health habits.

• Increasing or returning to denial. People in long-term recovery may start rationalizing, justifying, minimizing, or generalizing addictive thinking and behavior.

• Isolation and attempting to solve problems on their own; they may not share what is going on with others.

• Setting unrealistic goals or wanting too much progress too quickly.

• Discounting or discontinuing a recovery program, such as neglecting to attend 12-step meetings or counseling sessions.

William Moyers, Vice President of External Relations, Hazelden Treatment Center

https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/apprenticeship-gains-attention-as-employers-confront-skills Author: Roy Maurer, Report Summary by Andy Visser

Maynard's Corner

Maynard's Corner:

I recently attended an excellent meeting with HR managers from various companies. The emphasis of the presenters was proper and consistent employee/manager communication. Addressing performance issues properly is paramount to achieving the intended results.



Your EAP is here to help you with those communication concerns. Connections Inc. can be your "COACH" to help make the discussion productive.

After all, we are here to help. That's what we do!

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NEXT ISSUE: THE ART OF CONFLICT

CONNECTIONS INC