

# EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT LETTER

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Please find enclosed in this issue the annual *Employee Assistance Professionals' Salary and Benefits Survey*.

This short survey will only take a few minutes to complete.

As a thank you for submitting completed surveys, we are offering a 20% discount coupon on an audio conference registration.

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## Blood Test Determines Level Of Stress, Serves As Prevention And Intervention

Stress can lead to multiple health problems, diabetes and hypertension to name a few, the problem is people often do not see the long lasting signs of stress until it is too late to improve their health.

Allostatix LLC can see stress in a blood test and step in before every-day stress turns into life threatening and costly chronic illnesses.

“Our bodies are built to respond and adapt to stress by using its ‘fight or flight’ response – which jumps the body into ‘hyper mode’ and affects every part of the body,” Gordon Horowitz, founder and CEO of Allostatix LLC, told **Employee Assistance Program Management Letter**. “Since prehistoric times, this response has been a function that provided us with the jolt of energy and adrenaline we needed to survive life or death situations. This same hard-wired response is being ‘kicked on’ every time we experience a stressor in today’s fast paced 21st century life.”

“In some individuals, it’s estimated that the stress response is triggered as many as 80 times a day. As daily stresses keep the stress response turned ‘on,’ the body begins to show signs of wear-and-tear,” said Allostatix’s white paper, “Predicting Future Wellness: Improve Employee Health and Cost Savings.”

The 10 minute blood test takes biometric measurements to analyze an individual's whole body health, paying attention to adrenal, hormone, immune, cardiovascular and metabolic levels. The test measures the accumulated stress and poor lifestyle habits associated with levels of stress, concluding the Allostatix Load Test, said Horowitz.

"It is the combination and interaction of these measurements that matter. It can be thought of like a domino stack triggering one to fall, then the next, then the next – each elevated level causing a different system to become unbalanced because they are all interrelated," Horowitz said.

According to the white paper, the human body shifts into a state of allostatis as a response to daily stresses, "the body's attempt to find stability in the midst of change. The Allostatix Load Test measures the cumulative negative effect of stresses on the body over time."

Once all biometrics are collected and analyzed a numeric score is given to the individual ranging from 0-400. The points then correlate to one of three color coordinated groups, green 0-46, yellow 47-111 and red 111-400.

"The 'green' category means daily life stresses have not built up to a level that is causing damage to whole body health. A 'yellow' trajectory means that damage caused by daily stresses has accumulated to a level that may become detrimental to an individual's health without proactive changes. A score in the 'red' category indicates that whole body health have been compromised by accumulated stress and intervention is necessary," the white paper reported.

Further break down of the three categories into 11 sub groups total – four for green, four for yellow and three for red – allows individuals to know exactly where they stand within a particular color to determine what their next step should be.

"For example, a participant with a 108 is on the high end of green, almost turning yellow and progressing into the cautionary zone. This color and score placement should be used as an indicator of how aggressively a participant should engage in healthy behavior change activities. Those who are on the high end of any range/spectrum need to instill thoughtful changes immediately, as to not progress into the next category," Horowitz explained.

"As we live our lives and experience more stressors in life allostatic load builds. Repeated stress,

along with stress induced lifestyle habits and bad coping skills like poor nutrition, bad sleeping habits, smoking, etc., has become so ingrained in our lives that we fail to recognize the small changes in ourselves and our health. The damage of stress builds day after day until the buildup can undermine and deteriorate overall health. Until the load becomes too heavy to handle and significant disease sets in, we may not pay attention to the slow changes these stressors are having on our body," Horowitz said.

"It [Allostatix Load Test] identifies those individuals on a negative health trajectory before they experience illness and the high cost associated with it. We predict the likelihood of illness before it happens; allowing the individual and employer to proactively implement healthy behaviors and programs to stop small problems from turning into large, costly ones," Horowitz said.

Changes in habits that will lower an individual's Allostatix score, Horowitz recommends, is the "Big Four" – good nutrition, getting enough sleep, exercise and stress management.

If precaution is not taken, stress can add up to diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension, depression, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, insulin resistance, cardiovascular/heart disease, etc., warned Horowitz, which can become costly for individuals and their employer.

The test has proven an 80 percent accuracy in predicting an individual's health without the use of self-reported data or isolated testing methods, said Horowitz.

Address: Allostatix LLC, 1776 Mentor Avenue, Suite 361, Cincinnati, OH 45212; (513) 351-0368, [www.allostatix.com](http://www.allostatix.com).

## Rewards Of Work Change And Decrease With Age

As the first wave of baby-boomers quickly approaches retirement, employers are searching for ways to retain younger and mid-career employees based on benefits and reward packages targeted to their age groups, reports the "Rewards of Work Study," by Sibson Consulting.

“[Companies] are likely to have difficulties in keeping the older workers as long as desired, attracting these young employees as needed, and finding creative ways to train employees quickly and thoroughly enough to fill the roles that Boomers once held,” said Trevor Kunkle, consultant for Sibson.

The results of the survey showed how employees from different age groups gauged the value of affiliation, compensation, benefits, work content and career when choosing jobs. According to Sibson, these five elements help determine employee motivation, productivity, performance and an organization’s ability to attract and retain talent.

The study focused on the importance of the five employee value proposition (EVP) elements to different age groups of employees, illustrating what qualities were important to retaining employees of all ages.

According to the respondents, compensation and career concerns (title, status and opportunities for growth) decrease sharply in their value for older employees, while it remains the most important component of retention for employees under age 31.

For the oldest group of respondents, those over 61 years of age, work content was the most important factor keeping them in their jobs, closely followed by affiliation and benefits. Respondents in the middle-aged groups of 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60 all reported work content, compensation and benefits as the most important retaining factors.

The study also measured employee’s engagement at work, comprised of knowing what to do and wanting to do the work. Employees in the three youngest groups were the least engaged, indicating that older employees are 8 to 13 percent more likely to be engaged than younger employees.

“There is a strong, positive correlation between employee’s perceptions of the five elements of EVP and their level of engagement. Consistently, we see that affiliation and work content are the two EVP aspects that are most strongly correlated with engagement,” said Kunkle.

The study’s findings can be helpful for employers looking to attract or retain certain age groups of employees. Respondents in all age groups reported work content was the most important aspect of a job. The oldest group of respondents, those over age 61,

was the only one to value affiliation as most important. And benefits were most important to the youngest respondents, those under 31 years of age.

“If a company wants to attract, engage and motivate both older and younger employees,” Kunkle advised, “programs and processes that enable older employees to bestow work knowledge and company ‘tribal knowledge’ on younger workers will prepare the younger workers for quick career growth, and permit older workers to leave their own legacy with the company.”

Overall, all five elements decrease in importance as workers grow older, indicating that these factors have less impact on job motivation and performance as employees age.

Sibson concludes that flexible rewards packages that can be tailored to employees of different ages will help companies increase their return on investment.

“Companies should remain cognizant of the fact that a ‘one-size fits all’ approach is not the most effective approach to total rewards. When looking to attract employees, for instance, companies should be thinking about the specific job, the function and the age of likely candidates, and focus on how the company will meet those specific expectations,” Kunkle concluded.

A random sample of 1,059 American workers across jobs, industries and ages completed the survey.

Address: Sibson Consulting, 101 N. Wacker, #400, Chicago, IL 60606; (312) 456-7930, [www.sibson.com](http://www.sibson.com).

– Colleen Curry –

## Increasing Number Of Gamblers Seeking Help For Addiction

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling reported a 12 percent increase in call-requests to its 24-hour gambling hotline, following a 25 percent increase in contacts from the year before.

The council said that the average debt callers reported was over \$37,000, with 15 percent of callers owing more than \$90,000. The callers accrued various debts because of their gambling habits, including credit card debt, defaulted mortgage payments, delinquent car payments, utilities and child support.

Of those that called, 13 percent were unemployed, up from 8 percent last year and another 5 percent were disabled or on workers' compensation. Additionally, 11 percent had filed bankruptcy as least once as a result of their gambling.

"A gambling addiction wreaks havoc on one's financial well being," said Pat Fowler, executive director of the council. "Compulsive gamblers tend to view their gambling problem as a purely financial one, and ironically, continue to turn to betting to try to dig themselves out of it."

Fowler estimates that 750,000 Floridians experience severe gambling problems, only a small percentage of which reach out to the hotline. In an effort to encourage prevention and treatment, the council publishes information including phases of addiction and warning signs for gamblers and their friends, families and coworkers.

For gamblers, warning signs can include

- the need to gamble with increasing amounts of money to feel excitement;
- feeling restless when trying to cut back;
- lying to loved ones to conceal extent of gambling; and
- relying on others to relieve desperate financial situations.

For family members, friends, and others, the council recommends asking oneself questions about the gamblers. Warning signs include feeling helpless about gambling, sensing a loved one is lying about gambling, and feeling that family or social activities revolve around gambling.

For more information on The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, call (407) 865-6200 or visit [www.gamblinghelp.org](http://www.gamblinghelp.org).

– Colleen Curry –

## Smoking Still A Problem For Organizations, According To Survey

A study by the non-profit Midwest Business Group on Health (MBGH) found that smoking continues to present problems for businesses despite increasing numbers of states passing smoking-cessation laws.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that US companies lost approximately \$167 billion annually in direct medical costs and lost productivity due to morbidity. Additionally, smoking costs businesses more when absenteeism and lost productivity, due to smoke breaks and workers compensation claims are included.

The survey found that employers are increasingly offering counseling and prescription drug coverage for smoking cessation, but just 7 percent of employers would cover all costs.

Additionally, over a quarter of employers have or will have reduced premiums for those who do not smoke in the next one to two years. However, of those that reduce non-smokers' premiums, only 20 percent actually verify a person's status as a smoker.

For employers that have implemented smoking cessation policies, about 55 percent take advantage of their employee assistance plan, health plan or wellness vendor for programs and counseling, while 15 percent use on-site professionals and 15 percent use community resources.

The survey found that most employers have failed to measure or monitor success of their smoking cessation programs. Less than 10 percent of respondents knew how many people in their programs actually quit smoking, while less than 5 percent measured impact on productivity or return on investment.

"While more employers recognize the negative impact of smoking on employee health," said Larry Boress, president and CEO of MBGH, "organizations that offer smoking cessation programs need to do a better job of promoting, monitoring and measuring programs."

Address: The Midwest Business Group on Health,  
35 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 1500, Chicago, IL 60601;  
(312) 372-9090; [www.mbg.org](http://www.mbg.org).

– Colleen Curry –

## Smoking Cessation Designed To Wean

**B**rady Development Inc. has introduced three new variants of its drug-free smoking cessation tool – the Linkman Habit Reversal Tool.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gave a 95 percent failure rate to smokers trying to quit without an action plan. The Linkman Habit Reversal Tool uses weaning to increase the odds from 1 in 20 smokers successfully quitting, said Brady Development.

The smoking cessation program uses a battery-powered mock cigarette, small enough to fit on a key chain, to curb the symptoms of withdrawal.

The tool is designed to gradually wean the smoker down to one cigarette a day within 1, 3 or 6 months, said Brady Development.

The tool uses a permission-based model, when the smoker feels the need to have a cigarette they will push down the button on the mock cigarette. If the light turns green, then the smoker will have permission to have one, if the light turns red then the smoker will be denied.

Each time the green light gives the smoker permission the interval between the next green light becomes longer in an effort to break the habit, said Brady Development.

For more information on the Linkman Habit Reversal Tool, visit [www.linkman.com](http://www.linkman.com) or call (919) 306-0831.

## Veterans Hotline Helps 55,000 In First Year

**T**he Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline provided help to over 55,000 callers in its first year, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that runs the help line.

The hotline provides help for both veterans and their loved ones. Over 22,000 calls have come directly from the veterans, with the remaining coming from friends, families, coworkers, etc.

SAMHSA launched the hotline last summer as a collaborative effort with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The hotline offers counseling and behavioral health services 24-hours a day.

Headquartered in Canandaigua, N.Y., the hotline's operators can connect callers to their local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator for follow-up or monitoring. In some cases the call volume exceeds the capacity of the Canandaigua facility, in which case callers are connected to SAMHSA's National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Address: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1 Choke Cherry Road, Rockville, MD 20857; (240) 276-2000, [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov).

– Colleen Curry –

## Employers Recreate The Workweek To Keep Employees

**T**elecommuting and compressed workweeks are becoming more popular because of gasoline costs and commuting hassles, reports CCH.

CCH reports that increasing financial strains on commuting employees are encouraging companies to reduce costs. Programs that minimize commute times can help attract and retain employees, while also saving costs for the companies.

“Telecommuting offers a win-win solution by reducing the amount of money employees spend on transportation costs, while at the same time allowing employers to reduce costs of their own,” said Brett Gorovsky, employment law analyst at CCH.

Employees spend less money on transportation costs, while companies can expect cost savings in office overhead, increased productivity, reduced turnover and improved morale, explained Gorovsky.

Currently, over 22 million U.S. workers telecommute at least one day a week. The U.S.

government could soon add to the number by allowing federal employees to work from home on a full- or part-time basis.

The report notes that the trend raises new legal concerns for employers, including wage and hour laws that can be more easily monitored with employees on site than at home. Further, employers must compensate for any overtime hours worked, whether or not they were approved by the employer.

Safety issues are also a concern for employers implementing telecommuting policies, as the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe workplace. While an amendment to the act states that home offices will not be inspected for safety, many companies are worried about liability hazards in home-offices.

“So far, the courts have not tried to expand employers’ liability to cover all the in-home injuries of telecommuters, even when they aren’t directly job-related, but this is an area to watch,” Gorovsky said.

Many employers have instituted compressed workweeks instead of or in addition to telecommuting, reports CCH. The state of Utah recently implemented a four-day work week for 17,000 state employees, extending their workday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. for Monday through Thursday.

While telecommuting and compressed workweeks are the most significant ways to reduce commuting costs of employees, some companies alternatively offer carpooling or financial assistance for public transportation or gas costs.

Address: CCH, 2700 Lake Cook Road,  
Riverwoods, IL 60015; (800) 344-3734,  
[www.cch.com](http://www.cch.com).

– Colleen Curry –

## Improve Productivity With Dress Code Changes

Sixty percent of U.S. managers think casual dress is good for the workplace, while only 49 percent of entry and mid-level employees thought it would hurt employee productivity, according to a recent poll.

The Fortune Personnel Consultants (FPC) Workplace Web Poll surveyed 9,105 employees across all industries.

Employees from most industries surveyed thought casual dress was good for the workplace, while pharmaceutical, biomedical and chemical industry employees overwhelmingly disagreed. Employees in chemical industries showed the biggest discrepancy, with 59 percent viewing casual dress as an obstacle to productivity.

“Companies are always trying to figure out the magic ingredient for happy employees and increased productivity,” said Ron Herzog, president and CEO of FPC. Employee motivation can be affected by details such as dress code,” he explained.

Herzog noted that the difference between the pharmaceutical industries that disliked casual dress and the others that were in favor of it could be a sign of what is important to employees in different industries. For employers looking to increase motivation and productivity, they should listen to employees’ suggestions.

“For some companies it’s a matter of giving employees autonomy and a voice in the company. Sometimes little things can make a big difference in productivity, though what is important does seem to differ across industries, so it’s important that companies take steps to find out what is important to their particular employees,” he said.

For more information on Fortune Personnel Consultants, visit [www.fpcnational.com](http://www.fpcnational.com) or call (212) 302-1141.

## NIMH Offers Grant For Trauma Prevention For High-Risk Employees

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is calling for research applications for the design of occupational prevention strategies to limit trauma associated with the profession.

Grants will be awarded to projects investigating preventative approaches prior to trauma exposure for

employees of high-risk occupations. A total of \$1.6 million is available over fiscal years 2008 and 2009, with an expectation of 4-6 grants awarded, said NIMH.

Deadlines for letters of intent for “Prevention of Trauma Related Adjustment and Mental Disorder’s in High-Risk Occupations” grants are due Oct. 21; and only electronic applications will be accepted by Nov. 21.

“From a scientific perspective, occupations that involve exposure to trauma, higher than average frequency, present unique opportunities for testing the effectiveness of preventive interventions designed to minimize post traumatic adjustment disorders,” said NIMH.

“From a public health and national security perspective, attending to the mental and behavioral health of individuals and groups who respond to emergencies, provide disaster relief, defend national interests, participate in peacekeeping missions and maintain a civil society can be viewed as strengthening our national infrastructure,” said NIMH.

The projects the grants will fund should focus on:

- testing theoretical models and mechanisms of disorder risk and resilience;
- experimental studies to learn whether certain factors buffer against stress reactions;
- development and testing of new prevention strategies;
- developing and refining measures of risk, resilience and post-traumatic outcome in the context of pilot interventions;
- examining whether existing training and preparation activities have a beneficial impact on post-trauma adjustment at the organizational, group, individual and family levels; and
- examining the potential economic costs and benefits of various intervention strategies and how they impact organizational “end-users.”

Anyone with the skills and the ability to carry out the research proposed will be accepted as the lead investigator, there are no specific organizations not eligible for funding.

For the complete criteria of eligibility and to apply for the grant, visit: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

Address: National Institute of Mental Health, 6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 8184, MSC 9663, Bethesda, MD 20892; (866) 615-6464, [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov).

## Flexible Work Schedules Top Employee Productivity Wish List

Asked to name the one benefit program that would make employees more productive on the job, the answer was clear, 63 percent of respondents cited a “flexible work schedule,” according to a LifeCare Inc. poll.

The next popular response was “enhanced health and wellness program,” with 10 percent of respondents.

The respondents to the poll named their productivity motivating benefit program as:

- Flexible work schedule – 63 percent
- Enhanced health and wellness program – 10 percent
- Enhanced child or elder care assistance – 8 percent
- Stress management program – 7 percent
- Time management program – 6 percent

Another six percent cited a variety of other reasons, each representing less than one percent. These included: family sick time, an on-site gym, regular break times and less micro-management.

“Clearly, flexible work schedules are attractive to far more people than Gen Y-ers alone,” said Peter G. Burki, LifeCare’s chief executive officer. “They’re a great attraction and retention benefit because they enable people of all ages to take care of important obligations outside of their jobs – caring for a spouse or older loved one, taking care of their children or addressing their own health and fitness needs.”

However, flexible schedules don’t work for every organization due to the nature of their business, Burki noted.

In these cases, employers should look to the other items mentioned in the poll to enhance their attraction and retention strategies, he suggested.

“Enhanced wellness programs, enhanced child and elder care programs and stress management programs all offer employers a win-win proposition,” he said.

“They not only help employees become more focused and productive on the job but they also reduce an organization’s medical expenses and other productivity losses related to these issues. They’re the kind of benefits that end up paying for themselves in the long run.”

Address: LifeCare Inc., 2 Armstrong Rd., Shelton, CT 06484; (203) 226-2680, www.lifecare.com.

## NIMH Study CBT To Treat Body Dysmorphic Disorder

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is conducting a study to determine the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) as treatment for body dysmorphic disorder (BDD).

BDD is a mental disorder causing an individual to fixate on a physical flaw, slight or perhaps non-existent, resulting in emotional and social distress when trying to fix their believed flaw. One common example of BDD is the obsession with weight loss and dieting when an individual perceives themselves as overweight, said NIMH.

“The disease has high instances of comorbidity and is very often found in association with eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia,” said NIMH.

The study will begin by dividing participants into two groups, the first will start CBT treatments immediately, the others will be wait-listed for a three months before treatments.

Each participant will have 22 manual-based CBT private sessions weekly. The sessions will “engage in activities that will help them confront their BDD, learn new ways of thinking about body image and learn relapse prevention techniques. Self-report scales will be used to assess participants,” said NIMH.

Address: National Institute of Mental Health, 6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 8184, MSC 9663, Bethesda, MD 20892; (866) 615-6464, www.nimh.nih.gov.

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