

EAP REPORT

I have very little to report regarding my time as UNDE EAP OPI. I met once with Micheline Hickeson and her EAP executive team in Ottawa, where they brought me up to date with current issues and gave me an EAP Co-chair primer, which I will pass along to my replacement whether or not they are elected co-chair.

I also joined in on one teleconference call with the Union Reps, where we were discussing RA usage numbers and 1-800 number usage, in addition to the general reasons for such contact. The purpose of this call was to determine if the 1 to 100 ratio of RAs to employees was adequate, excessive, or inadequate. The results, according to the EAP Program's own data, provided by their Regional Coordinators, was inconclusive in my opinion. The issue faced by this program, and virtually all others, is the decreased funding being allocated. This has resulted in very few RAs being trained for several years, and very little ongoing training for those already trained as RAs. The issue seems to be, how many RAs should there be to provide the service the members need, and yet not so many that those trained are rarely allowed to use and maintain their skills. The EAP executive team assures me that they are completely committed to continuing to provide a "hybrid" EAP model with both RAs and a 1 800 number, depending on the needs and wants of the client.

I encourage all involved in the EAP program to continue to push to ensure new RAs are trained, trained RAs are kept up to date and current with their skills, and that RA workloads do not become excessive to the point where these valuable volunteers are overwhelmed and leaving the program. This is a program that must not fail, as our most vulnerable members depend on it.

Blair Winger