

Norwescap

A Private Non-Profit Corporation



This busy non-profit creates opportunities for thousands of low-income individuals and families and serves **more than 30,000 people each year** in Hunterdon, Morris, Somerset, Sussex, and Warren counties in New Jersey.

The agency **employs about 300 people**, both full- and part-time, who are dedicated to programs including:

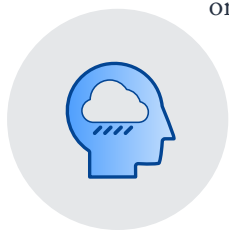
- housing support
- community development
- energy assistance
- childcare
- education
- volunteerism
- food bank
- nutritional support
- case management
- workforce development

There is a wide range of needs and personalities at play across the organization.

With multiple federal and state-funded programs, including Early Head Start and Head Start, Norwescap is committed to best practices in employee management and interaction. Company leaders initially approached Preferred EAP to explore options for employee testing protocols, and eventually brought Preferred EAP in to work on other issues, from conflict resolution to critical incident coverage.

Problem

According to Patrick Grogan, Norwescap Chief Operations Officer (now retired), with all the various locations maintained throughout two states, any one of them has potential to become a “hotspot for conflict” at one time or another. It’s not uncommon, he says, based on what Norwescap does. He cites challenges with work/life balance, high stress levels, and occasional interpersonal problems among employees since people are working under typical nonprofit budget constraints and wearing many hats.



In one case in particular, certain employee behavior was causing great turmoil, affecting others to the point of considering quitting just to avoid the ongoing conflict. EAP was brought to

the site to provide on-the-spot intervention with the individuals involved.

At another time, EAP was called to one company site in an emergency crisis management situation. An employee, who had been with Norwescap for more than 30 years, collapsed and died while at work.

A fast-acting manager alerted EAP, and two counselors were already en route to the site when the call from company leaders came in.

When they arrived, EAP’s counselors were met with distraught coworkers, confusion, and inability for fellow employees to continue work. They provided immediate assistance to the many people affected by this incident.





Solution

In both situations at Norwescap, managers and leaders were able to make one phone call and have professional, experienced counselors ready to help them onsite with their problem. In the case of the conflict between colleagues, counselors offered the opportunity to work through the issues by way of group consultation and individual counseling, as well as educational sessions on how to improve communication. Former COO Grogan says the efforts worked. “I no longer heard about any conflicts at that location,” he says.

“EAP really helped with retention of our employees and helped them continue to work at their jobs.”

In the case of the employee death, there was complete disruption that day, as the employee

who died had a close relationship with many coworkers. When EAP arrived, a group counseling session was set up immediately, and that was broken up into individual sessions, which were conducted throughout the day.

The counselors made themselves available and continued to meet with individual employees and held follow-up sessions as needed.

The counselors made themselves available and continued to meet with individual employees and held follow-up sessions as needed. “I had employees crying in my arms,” says Grogan. “I don’t know how we would have gotten through the day without EAP. I can’t imagine employers managing that on their own.”

Norwescap Testimonial

Creating a Team Culture

At Norwescap Head Start educational centers, there is typically significant turnover among the staff. As new employees come onboard, there can be communication problems and varying opinions on protocol between new staff and existing staff members. Several times, Preferred EAP was brought in to work on team building and communication to help the staff effectively move forward.

“The first thing they did was help us create center ‘norms,’” says Debbie,* an employee.

In our center, we established things like, say hello every morning, respect everybody’s belongings and points of view, know what is expected of you as an employee, and what you need to do in your job.”

She says they also taught the staff communication tools so they could better understand and relate to their fellow workers.

Debbie says now, at staff meetings, they talk about the norms and reinforce the guidelines that EAP gave them. Posters on the walls help them remember what they agreed to do and how to do it. “Establishing norms and reinforcing them has really helped change the center dynamics,” says Debbie. “As we work more together as a

team, it improves morale and adds understanding to whatever we do.”

Debbie says she feels very comfortable talking with EAP counselors and can reach out by phone at any time. “They have provided guidance to employees on a personal level, have given us tools and feedback, and helped us work through various situations. They even helped me with my son at one time when he was having some problems at school.”

EAP counselors also come in several times a year for overall employee training on effective communication, and civility and respect in the workplace.

“It’s very valuable when you know there is someone qualified – who isn’t directly involved in the situation – that can give you guidance or tools to work with,” says Debbie.

EAP is a great benefit for the staff. We promote this resource with new employees and talk about it at staff meetings so that everyone can see the benefits and take advantage of the services if they need to.”

*Not her real name

