





For more information about EFAP training programs or the work of an EFAP/Worker Referral Agent, contact Mike Byrne, Unifor National Employee Family Assistance Representative, 1-800-204-3121 [mike.byrne@unifor.org](mailto:mike.byrne@unifor.org)

For more information on Unifor Education programs and to view our complete schedule and description of courses, please visit our webpage: [www.unifor.org/education-en](http://www.unifor.org/education-en).



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## Supporting Members: Worker Referral and Employee Family Assistance Plan Training Programs



## Introduction

Depression. Anxiety. Suicide. Drug and alcohol dependency. Broken relationships. Bullying. Bankruptcy.

Every union rep knows that workers are under even greater stress these days—whether that’s from the physical demands on our bodies due to speed up or longer hours or repetitive strain, or whether it’s from the emotional and financial distress of job insecurity or the strain of working late, alone, or short-staffed. There’s the stress of dealing with difficult supervisors, or even co-workers. Add to that the increasing demands on families, as we struggle to care for our kids, our aging parents, and attend to our personal relationships and ourselves.

Through collective bargaining, the grievance procedure, and our on-going push for social programs and family supports, our union works hard to alleviate many of these stresses.

But as union reps we also need to be prepared to offer individual support. We need to know how to help connect our members with community supports when the stress becomes too much to handle, or when coping mechanisms themselves present new problems.

In many workplaces we have negotiated an Employee Family Assistance Plan (EFAP), and along with that Workplace Referral Agent or Women’s Advocates. But in the majority of our workplaces, it’s elected leadership and workplace reps who offer front-line support for our members.

[The training programs outlined in this booklet can give you the tools that can literally help save lives.](#) Please, join us and learn more about how you can continue to support your membership.

Depending on the size of the workplace, these positions would be paid full time.

Smaller employers allowed for paid time as and when required. Over time employers agreed to equip these positions with tools such as private offices, mileage or transportation, private phone numbers, pagers, Cell phones, etc.

In the second part of the 1980s, as the realization of other life issues affecting workplace production began to be recognized, Substance Abuse Programs began expanding into what are known today as “Broad Brush Programs”. The employee’s family also began to be recognized as part of the new Employee Family Assistance Programs (EFAP).

At the same time for-profit “Providers” (usually American), began to offer services at one overall cost to employers, for a myriad of life problems beyond the traditional Alcohol & Drug Abuse issues.

By the late 1990s, the AA model of Assistance had been mostly set aside.

Some SA/EFAP representatives now take some type of professional Addictions Training. (ie: EAPA Accreditation), but most workplaces do not have a full-time EFAP representative. Most have a union chairperson and/or stewards – our goal is to ensure these reps are trained to support members in need.

If you are interested in learning how to approach this important work, Unifor offers the programs outlined in this booklet – Community Liaison Level 1 and 2 at our Education Centre. Check out our National webpage to find out when the next course is scheduled. We are also committed to getting language in our collective agreements that covers substance abuse and attempt to bargain EFAP representation wherever possible.

## Employee Family Assistance Programs – a Brief History

*Mike Byrne, Unifor National Representative, Staff Liaison to EFAP/Substance Abuse Committees*

In Canada, in the early 1970s, Employers began to utilize Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), in response to employees with mainly alcohol problems which were having an adverse effect on production in the work place.

At that time, Unions, for the most part, rejected these programs, considering them as Head Hunting Programs, designed to weed out troubled employees.

When EAPs were being introduced, employees who were recovering from an alcohol or drug addiction, and who were associated with AA or NA, began to push these Programs toward Peer assistance with a strong emphasis on the AA 12 Step Program.

Later, in the 1980s, as EAPs became more accepted by the Unions, those associated with AA, were chosen as “Peer Support Persons” in the workplace.

These peer support reps usually had the confidence of the Employer, the Union and the workers.

Through their efforts, employers began to allow paid time to talk to and refer employees to AA and/or other courses of treatment.

These individuals also began to acquire the tools required to perform the duties of a “Peer Support Person” in a more professional manner.

In the late 1980s, Unions began to recognize peer support Substance Abuse representative positions in some Collective Agreements. These positions were filled either by selection or election within the Union.

## Employee Family Assistance Program - 1 Day

This is a course that all workplace and local union leadership should take as well as local union EFAP representatives and interested members.

The course introduces the issues and needs that Unifor EFAP programs address from alcohol and substance abuse to other issues where members or their families may need referral to professional counseling.

Participants discuss root causes, primary issues, and effects. They gain insight into the complex and progressive nature of addictions. The class identifies the principles (best practices), actions, and the resources we need to achieve recovery for co-workers and families who need our help.

The class tries out and discusses active listening strategies so essential to successful union programs. The class discusses what enabling is and the better choices.

Participants learn about the duty to accommodate as it applies to workers with dependency issues, the value of early intervention, and the rights and duties that apply to the employer, the union, and the individual worker.

Members find out what they can do to help build the program or become an EFAP representative.

## Worker Referral Assistance Program - Level 1

The Worker Referral Assistance Program is a week-long program offered at the Unifor Family Education Centre in Port Elgin. This course is open to participants from all Unifor Local Unions.

This course is for Employee & Family Assistance or Substance Abuse Representatives or new peer referral agents who have not yet had the opportunity to take part in the Canadian Labour Congress Labour Community Advocate (previously called Union Counselling) course in their communities. This is a course designed by the Canadian Labour Congress and delivered by United Way Labour Programs and Services staff.

In Level one, participants will discuss:

- Unions and communities working together;
- Your community services;
- Principles of communication;
- Interviewing and referral skills;
- Implementing/strengthening employee and family assistance program in the local union;
- Stress;
- Addiction and dependency;
- Loss and grief

Level one is part of a three level program. Those who graduate from Level one can apply to take Level 2 in Port Elgin, or are encouraged to contact their labour council for information about Labour Programs and Services in their community and the availability of levels two and three.

## Worker Referral Assistance Program - Level 2

This week-long course is for graduates of Worker Referral Assistance training/ Labour Community Liaison Training Level 1 or Employee & Family Assistance or Substance Abuse Representatives with equivalent to Level 1 experience. This is a course designed by the Canadian Labour Congress and delivered by United Way Labour Programs and Services staff.

Level 2 offers Worker Referral Assistants/Liaisons an opportunity to share the experiences they have had in the workplace and community and provides more in-depth information about specific social issues.

Level 2 covers:

- Review of Level 1,
- Linking labour and community,
- Understanding violence,
- Mental health,
- Harassment and bullying,
- Gambling addictions,
- Activists: caring for ourselves,
- Time management for activists,
- Everyone matters – building empathy