

# InfoNetwork

## IN THIS ISSUE:

P2  
HOW TO DO MORE  
WITH LESS  
P3  
USING VOLUNTEERS  
TO HELP FLESH OUT  
OUR HR RESPONSIBILITY  
P4  
PARTNERING WITH  
AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
P4  
RESOURCES

INSERT  
EXPERTS CORNER

Volume 1, Issue 2

May/June 2006

## HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: INVESTING IN YOUR STAFF FOR A STRONGER ORGANIZATION

Staff members are the lifeblood of our organizations. They provide our services, interact with our clients, operate our systems, and run our departments and programs. Their personalities, work habits and skill levels shape our organizational culture and have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of our programs. Their importance to our agencies can be measured by the large percentage of our organizational budgets dedicated to their salaries and fringe benefits. Employees truly are “human resources” and the growing acknowledgement of that fact is recognized in the abandonment of the term “personnel.”

Given the integral role of employees to our operations, one would think that most social services agencies dedicate a lot of time and resources to HR issues and functions. But the reality is many social service organizations do not have a staff member dedicated to human resources management because of limited budgets and resources. Instead, staff members with other responsibilities are charged with taking on many HR functions, including recruitment, training, performance reviews, and benefits. Many of these HR duties are delegated to the finance staff or executive assistants, while larger issues – disciplinary matters or terminations – become the responsibility of the Executive Director. Although this may work in smaller organizations, there comes a tipping point when the size of the agency requires a separate, dedicated HR function.

So how does a human services organization without an HR manager - or with an HR manager who has too much on his or her plate - address human resources issues and stay up to date in a constantly changing landscape?

This issue of InfoNetwork is dedicated to addressing the challenges of human resources management and will assist you in HR planning and development. It includes some strategies, resources, and inexpensive, creative ideas for incorporating critical Human Resource functions into your organization.



## PARTNERING WITH AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ON EMPLOYEE ISSUES

We've all experienced it: an employee loses control at work. He or she might burst into tears for no obvious reason or fly into a rage over a trivial matter or comment. When questioned about what's going on, we often discover that the employee is having trouble dealing with a stressful personal issue.

*(Continued on page 4)*

*Helping New Yorkers in need since 1922.*

**The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies promotes the social and economic well-being of greater New York's most vulnerable by strengthening human services organizations and advocating for just public policies.**

Please feel free to contact the editor, Angela Spruill, at [aspruill@fpwa.org](mailto:aspruill@fpwa.org) or 212-801-1323.



A PRIMER ON HR-RELATED ACRONYMS

**ADA** – Americans with Disabilities Act:  
[www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/)

**COBRA** - Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985: (offers extension of health coverage after termination of employment) [www.dol.gov/dol/topic/healthplans/cobra.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/healthplans/cobra.htm)

**EEOC** - Equal Employment Opportunity Commission:  
[www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/qanda.html)

**ERISA** – Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974: (covers issues relating to employee pension plans)  
[www.dol.gov/ebsa/compliance\\_assistance.html](http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/compliance_assistance.html)

**FLSA** – Fair Labor Standards Act: (covers issues relating to hourly wage laws) [www.dol.gov/esa/whd/flsa/](http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/flsa/)

**FMLA** – Family Medical Leave Act: [www.do.gov/esa/whd/fmla/](http://www.do.gov/esa/whd/fmla/)

*(Continued on page 3)*

## HOW TO DO MORE WITH LESS: PARTNERSHIPS AND VOLUNTEERS CAN STRENGTHEN YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES

One of the reasons human resources management can be so time-consuming and stressful for a non-HR professional is because we don't know about – or don't take advantage of – certain outsourcing options, thinking it's probably less expensive to do everything in-house. But the opposite is often true.

### *Working with Insurance Brokers to Reduce Health Insurance Costs*

The price of health insurance premiums has skyrocketed in the past 10 years, with double-digit increases every year for the past four years. And as the prices increase, so do the premium options – HMO's, PPO's, POS's, and HSA's. Who's got the time to sort it all out? You don't, but an insurance broker does.

A reputable, licensed insurance broker can work with you to find substantial savings in your health, dental, vision, disability, AD&D and life insurance premiums. Their goal is to relieve you of the burden of benefits management.

By marketing your benefits plans to multiple insurance providers, insurance brokers can obtain competitive price quotes and receive comparative analyses of premium prices and benefits packages. They can also work with you to find additional savings in your insurance plans. For example, modest increases to your employees' prescription co-pays or increases to infrequently used deductibles can result in substantial savings to premiums. Your broker will spend time answering your questions and explaining the nuances of various options so you can select an insurance benefits package that makes sense for your agency.

Once you've decided on a package, your broker will walk you through the contracting process, explain any procedural or processing changes, and help you convert to the new plan. Many brokers will conduct meetings with your employees to introduce them to new benefit plans and provide written summaries about their benefits package. And they will work with you on an ongoing basis to troubleshoot any employee insurance issues that may arise, such as rejection of an insurance claim.

All of this work and expertise must cost a small fortune, right? Wrong! For agencies with less than 50 employees, it doesn't cost anything to have a broker – their fees are built into your insurance rates. For groups larger than 50 employees, the broker's fee is generally built into a commission rate paid by the insurer. In short, there are no out-of-pocket expenses for a benefits broker, and they can save you a lot of money. It's a win-win situation.

*If you're interested in working with an insurance broker to manage your employee benefits package, be sure to find a brokerage firm that is reputable and can give you a clear list of deliverables up front. Get references and check them. Some brokers that FPWA recommends are:*

*HUB International, Inc. [www.hubinternational.com](http://www.hubinternational.com) Contact: J. Jay Carroll 212-338-2351*

*NEMCO Brokerage, Inc. [www.nemcobrokerage.com](http://www.nemcobrokerage.com) Contact: Ron Collins 212-659-5235*

*Frank Crystal & Co., Inc. [www.frankcrystal.com](http://www.frankcrystal.com) Contact: Kenneth W. Liebman 212-504-5931*

## USING VOLUNTEER EXPERTS TO HELP FLESH OUT YOUR HR RESPONSIBILITIES

You know that you need to update your personnel manual, but you have no time to do it and you don't have the resources to hire someone to do it for you. So you put it on the back burner and deal with more pressing responsibilities. A year goes by and the manual still needs updating, but other priorities continue to take precedence. Sound familiar?

Unfortunately, those human resources projects that are put on the back burner could have legal and financial consequences for your agency. A lot of what comprises human resources management is based in federal and state legislation, and non-compliance with mandated regulations – which might include creating new policies to comply with new regulations and including them in your personnel handbook— could result in substantial fines and penalties.

When you have lots of competing responsibilities, it's hard not to procrastinate. We typically tackle those responsibilities that come easiest to us first which doesn't bode well for the personnel manual or those other HR-related chores on the back burner. But you know they have to be done – so how do you find the time? You don't – you delegate them to a volunteer.

Here are some strategies on how to find and use volunteers to help you manage your HR duties:

- ◆ If your organization has an internship program, bring on an intern specializing in social administration or Advanced Generalist Practice & Programming (AGPP) from one of the social work schools (this will require that you have a SIFI-certified supervisor) or another master's degree level program that includes human resources management in their curriculum (MBA, MPA, MS, etc.). If you don't have a formal internship program, consider starting one. Contact local colleges and universities to inquire about their internship programs.
- ◆ The student intern can spend the semester, or the year, updating your personnel handbook, researching and drafting policies and procedures where none exist, revamping your personnel files to make them HIPPA compliant, helping to update job descriptions – the possibilities (and those back burner projects) are endless. The intern will appreciate having the opportunity to do “real-life” work that adds value to your organization and experience to their resume. And you will appreciate having an enthusiastic, results-oriented volunteer to help you complete some important projects.
- ◆ Solicit a current or retired human resources professional to volunteer for your agency. Many corporations encourage employee volunteerism, and one of FPWA's services to members is volunteer placement. The volunteer doesn't have to be executive level – as long as they have the time, the dedication, and some expertise in human resources management, they can probably help you complete some of your human resources projects. Many of these projects don't require them to be on-site at your agency, but can be done from a home computer on their own time, which will greatly expand the volunteer pool.
- ◆ Recruit an HR executive or employment lawyer to provide pro-bono work to your organization, or to serve on your Board of Directors. While they won't be available to take on time-intensive projects, they can review HR-related documents and procedures for your agency and help you keep up-to-date about new personnel-related legislation, and provide advice when you need to consult an expert.
- ◆ Make sure volunteers have the specific skills you need and that you give them a clearly defined project. Also, have any product that they complete, whether it be a personnel handbook, or any other written document reviewed by an attorney to make sure it is legally compliant.

*(Continued from page 2)*

**HIPAA** – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act: (standards to protect the privacy of personal health information)  
[www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/)

**HRIS** – Human Resources Information System: (a specialized database created to collect and manage personnel-related information)

**OSHA** – Occupational Safety and Health Administration:  
[www.osha.gov/](http://www.osha.gov/)

**USERRA** – Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (covers issues relating to military service and employment):  
[www.do.gov/elaws/userra0.htm](http://www.do.gov/elaws/userra0.htm)

## PARTNERING WITH AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ON EMPLOYEE ISSUES *(Continued from page 1)*

Although we'd like to believe we can compartmentalize our personal lives, issues that affect us outside the workplace often affect our performance at work. Many of us in social services who may have social work or counseling backgrounds, automatically go into counseling mode when an employee presents a difficult personal issue. But while this may seem like the compassionate thing to do, it may be an inappropriate reaction that can blur the lines of the supervisor-employee relationship and create problems down the line.

An employee assistance program is a terrific and inexpensive resource that can help your employees manage their personal affairs. Staff and their family members can have access to free personal counseling, child and elder care referrals, substance abuse referrals, assistance with legal or financial issues, and

much more. It's all free, and it's all confidential.

The benefits to the employer are also substantial. In addition to having a place to refer your employees if they are experiencing personal difficulties that are affecting their work performance, an EAP can also offer assistance with disciplinary and supervisory matters, provide information on workplace wellness programs, and help you deal with other workplace issues. For example, they can work with you to develop progressive disciplinary procedures and policies, which can include "administrative referrals" in which the employee is referred to the EAP. For an additional fee, your EAP can provide sexual harassment trainings, management training, and executive coaching.

An EAP can give your employees the information and support they need to manage their daily lives so that they can focus on their work while they're on the job. Can you afford not to partner with an EAP?

*As mentioned in the Feb/March issue of InfoNetwork, FPWA offers discounted services to its member agencies from Corporate Counseling Associates (CCA). Employees and their family members have 24-hour hotline access to experienced, professional counselors, as well as in-person counseling, on-site wellness seminars, and manager consultation. Services are \$41 per year per employee.*

Contact Judith Milone at FPWA, 212-801-1350, or Michael Portz at CCA, 646-459-0302

[www.corporatecounseling.com](http://www.corporatecounseling.com)

## RESOURCES

There are several legal firms specializing in employment law that distribute free newsletters and alerts with updates on new legislation, best practices for avoiding litigation, and case studies. Two firms with helpful information are Grotta Glassman & Hoffman PC ([www.gghlaw.com](http://www.gghlaw.com)), and Jackson Lewis LLP ([www.jacksonlewis.com](http://www.jacksonlewis.com)).

Mandated labor law posting requirements for employers vary by state, and must be updated as laws change. Remember that labor law posters are required at each location of your agency, not just in your central office. Several companies sell laminated posters that include all mandated federal laws and state-specific laws. Some of these companies are [www.allinoneposters.com](http://www.allinoneposters.com),

[www.laborlawposter.us](http://www.laborlawposter.us) and [www.businessknowhow.net/store/index.htm](http://www.businessknowhow.net/store/index.htm).

If you prefer, you can download and print federal postings from the US Department of Labor's Poster Page at [www.dol.gov/osbp/sbrefa/poster/main.htm](http://www.dol.gov/osbp/sbrefa/poster/main.htm), and you can find and download many state mandated posting requirements from the New York State Department of Labor website at [www.labor.state.ny.us/workerprotection/laborstandards/employer/posters.shtm](http://www.labor.state.ny.us/workerprotection/laborstandards/employer/posters.shtm).

The gold standard in human resources management is the Society of Human Resources Management, which is the largest professional association of HR professionals in the world. Membership is relatively af-

fordable (\$160 per year) and includes a subscription to HR Magazine, their monthly magazine. [www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org) The local chapter of SHRM is HR/NY, and you must be a member of SHRM to join HR/NY. The annual membership fee is \$75 (if you join both organizations at the same time, you get a \$15 discount on your SHRM fee, at \$145). [www.hrny.org](http://www.hrny.org)

There are lots of sites with human resources information, including sample policies and handbooks. Some are free and some are not. An excellent starting point is <http://humanresources.about.com/od/policysamples/> which has lots of downloadable information and samples, and links to a variety of other HR-related sites.

## EXPERT'S CORNER

MICHAEL ALAN PORTZ, PSY.D., CORPORATE COUNSELING ASSOCIATES

### *Dealing with Performance Issues*

We are all affected by personal and work-related problems from time to time. Sometimes these problems can disturb workflow, work time, and productivity. Beyond the various ways in which both personal and work-related issues impact job performance negatively for the employee, managers are themselves often faced with the task of trying to assist and help resolve these situations.

First steps for the manager involve recognizing early warning signs of performance issues that may include changes in one or more of the following areas:

- Absenteeism
- Decreased job efficiency
- Interpersonal problems at work
- Trouble with accepting responsibility

Secondly, it's important to note that observing problems is not enough. Carefully document specific instances where an employee has failed to meet reasonable, acceptable performance standards. It is important that managers are specific and maintain a precise record of these critical incidents that are anchored in concrete behaviors. This means you can address the real problem, which is the behavior, NOT the person!

Meet with the employee to discuss the problems. Be sure to set clear expectations and time frames, mutually agree on what specific changes in job performance are expected, and make a plan to follow up with the employee.

If performance does not improve, meet with the employee again. Review past problems and the fact that you have discussed and formally documented performance failings. If you have an employee assistance program:

- **STRONGLY** suggest that the employee contact the Employee Assistance Program for an appointment and provide the phone number to make it as easy as possible.
- Explain the feedback process, that is: the Employee Assistance Program will let the HR contact know if the employee has called and is following through with the Employee Assistance Program's recommendations. The Employee Assistance Program will **not** say **WHAT** the recommendations are and absolutely no clinical information will be given to the manager because confidentiality is assured.
- Explain that the Employee Assistance Program will follow up to ensure that recommendations are being followed and that you, the manager/supervisor, will follow up on work performance issues.