



February 2009

Dear Employee:

As you may have heard, education budget cuts are anticipated statewide this year. You may be anxious about the potential changes related to these budget cuts. You have a number of resources available through the PacifiCare Behavioral Health Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help you during times of stress or change. The EAP is offered to employees enrolled in a Kaiser or PacifiCare medical plan through the Southern California Schools Voluntary Employees Benefits Association (the VEBA), the benefits administrator for your district or association.

The following two pages, *Coping With Transition* and *Emotional Reactions to Stress and/or Change*, provide information and tips from the EAP on coping with stressful situations.

The EAP also offers tools and resources designed to help you learn new, useful techniques for dealing with stress, anxiety, depression and other common challenges. EAP services are confidential and may be accessed telephonically, via the web or face-to-face. Examples of services include:

<p>Emotional Well Being Stress and depression Anger management Family issues Domestic violence Grief and loss</p>	<p>Legal Assistance Divorce Landlord/tenant conflicts Wills/consumer issues Free 30 minute consultation Referral to legal specialists</p>
<p>Work Issues Co-worker relationships Job stress Career planning Performance concerns</p>	<p>Financial Planning Help with credit reports Debt management Budgeting Dealing with delinquent payments</p>
<p>Transition & Change Articles and resources for change Therapy options and referrals Transition skills Strategies for dealing with change</p>	<p>Substance Abuse & Recovery Alcohol/drug abuse Eating disorders Outpatient counseling Support groups/community services</p>

In order to access services, **you must contact PacifiCare Behavioral Health at (800) 625-4809 before beginning any treatment.** A brief telephone conversation will help ensure you get access to the most appropriate provider/services for your needs.

You may also visit PacifiCare Behavioral Health online at www.PBHI.com, under Members. Enter **VEBA** for the log-in and **time** as the password.

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO STRESS AND/OR CHANGE

During a time of stress and/or major change, it's normal to experience a wide spectrum of emotions. Here are some common reactions to stress and/or change from PacifiCare Behavioral Health, the administrator of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offered to employees enrolled in a Kaiser or PacifiCare medical plan through Southern California Schools VEBA.

- **Shock and disbelief:** In the beginning, most people feel a profound numbness. When the fog clears, most people's emotions fall into turmoil.
- **Fear and/or anxiety:** You may have panic attacks and feel afraid. You may be filled with restlessness unable to concentrate on anything. You may be unable to sleep at night or find it very hard to get out of bed in the morning.
- **Grief/depression:** As the reality sinks in, depression usually is not far behind. The world may seem to lose its meaning for you. Activities that you once enjoyed may seem like a burden. You may feel as if there is little point in going on, or you may want to withdraw from everyone.
- **Disorientation:** A feeling of being lost or unable to get your bearings for a little while.
- **Denial:** Denying that the event has taken place.
- **Mood swings:** People can become surly, angry and then giddy. You may find that you cycle through a number of emotions without realizing it.
- **Worrying/ruminating:** You may keep replaying the moment when you were notified of the event.
- **Nightmares:** Disturbing dreams about the event or perceived consequences of the event.
- **Feelings of helplessness:** Feeling as though there is nothing you can do.
- **Panic or feeling out of control:** Your first reaction may be to panic and let your thoughts run away with you.
- **Guilt:** Many people live with "what-ifs," such as "What if I had been a better employee?" This is a normal reaction. Remember that no one can predict the future or re-create what might have been. Continuing to blame yourself will only be destructive.
- **Feelings of detachment:** Feeling as though this is only happening to you and no one else; feeling as though you are separate from everyone.
- **Minimizing the experience:** Not taking the situation as seriously as needed.
- **Searching for understanding:** You will probably experience a great need to understand why this happened. Rumors and opinions of many peoples may come your way. Remember that you may not find answers to all your questions.
- **Emotional numbing:** Cutting yourself off from your feelings.
- **Difficulty trusting:** Deciding not to trust anyone or any company again; feeling bitter.
- **Feelings of betrayal:** Betrayal is a very common feeling in these situations.
- **Loss of a sense of fairness.**

During this time, it may be very important to talk with a nonjudgmental person you trust. The Employee Assistance Program, administered by PacifiCare Behavioral Health, can connect you with a counselor. Any information you provide will remain confidential. **To reach the Employee Assistance Program, call (888) 625-4809.**

VEBA is a cooperative labor–management trust program that manages health care benefits for participating school districts and associations by positively influencing the quality, affordability, and accessibility of care delivered by contracted health plans and their providers. Learn more about VEBA at www.vebaonline.com.

COPING WITH TRANSITION

Stress Management Tips

- Care for yourself by eating well, exercising, and resting when needed. Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, chocolate and nicotine, and depressants such as alcohol.
- Seek out comfortable, familiar surroundings and avoid spending too much time alone.
- Share your thoughts and feelings with those who are supportive and helpful — don't try to block recollections. It helps to talk about them. Feel free to set boundaries with people who have not been helpful in the past.
- Don't be anxious if reactions from past events re-emerge even though you may have felt those issues were resolved.
- Give yourself time to recover. Difficulties with concentration, memory or decision-making are common but short-term reactions. Seek help if reactions are interfering with job responsibilities. Focus on concrete, easily-achievable tasks.
- Remember that difficulty sleeping, nightmares, flashbacks, and feelings of being "hyper-alert" are common and will diminish in time.
- Avoid personalizing or taking responsibility for how others respond to the event. Do not compare or measure your reactions to those of other people — each individual's experience is unique and personal.
- Communicate your feelings clearly. Others may not know how to respond to you appropriately. Let them know which responses are helpful and which are not.
- Seek help from a professional counselor if symptoms persist.

Common Reactions to Transition

Physical Responses

- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in appetite
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Increased heart rate
- Stomach upset

Emotional Responses

- Shock or numbness
- Anger toward others involved
- Fear
- Depression
- Guilt/frustration
- Sadness
- Feeling unsafe or vulnerable
- Loneliness

Mental Responses

- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering details of event

Behavioral Responses

- Withdrawal from others
- Angry outbursts
- Crying
- Irritability

For more information about resources available through the Employee Assistance Program, contact PacifiCare Behavioral Health at (800) 234-5465.

VEBA is a cooperative labor–management trust program that manages health care benefits for participating school districts and associations by positively influencing the quality, affordability, and accessibility of care delivered by contracted health plans and their providers. Learn more about VEBA at www.vebaonline.com.