Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual - Policy 3750: Counseling, Assistance, and Referral Services

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Process Owner: Director, CARS

1. General
Behavioral, medical, or other personal problems may cause an employee's work performance to deteriorate. As the employee assistance program for the University, the Counseling, Assistance, and Referral Services (CARS) program provides counseling and other appropriate professional resources to help employees with such problems. While assistance can often help to prevent any further deterioration of work performance and return an employee to productive employment, CARS staff recommend that employees seek help before they experience a deterioration of work performance. Supervisors will encourage employees to seek help at CARS for work-related and/or personal issues. A supervisor shall not impede an employee from using services provided by CARS or attempt to force an employee to seek services at CARS.
The CARS program does not alter or supersede the University's employment policies or disciplinary processes. The program does not require any special regulations, privileges, or exemptions from University policies and procedures.

2. Services
CARS offers a variety of services, including:

- individual therapy, group therapy, and relationship therapy; substance abuse counseling;
- workshops and training, including prevention information;
- critical incident stress debriefing;
- supervisory consultation; and
- referrals to outside agencies for assistance.
CARS may be able to provide the service directly or refer the employee to an outside social service agency or mental health provider. If it is determined that the employee is in need of long-term therapy or twenty-four (24) hour support, CARS will help in arranging referral to an outside agency.

3. Eligibility
Regular full-time employees and regular part-time employees (as described in UAP 3200 (“Employee Classification”) are eligible to use the services provided by CARS. In addition, all UNM retirees, and spouses and domestic partners of benefits eligible employees or retirees are eligible to receive services through CARS.

4. Released Work Time to Attend Sessions
Eligible employees will be given time off with pay to attend CARS sessions offered on campus during regular work hours. Supervisors may contact CARS to confirm that an employee is attending a CARS session. CARS can provide this confirmation only if the employee has voluntarily provided CARS with a written authorization for release of information. If CARS cannot confirm the absence, the time off may be charged to sick leave subject to all the provisions described in UAP 3410 (“Sick Leave”).

5. Confidentiality
By law and ethical codes, all CARS employees will maintain confidentiality of client information. None of the information will not be released to anyone who does not report directly or indirectly to the Director of obtained by CARS, becomes a licensed psychologist. Any release of confidential employment or personnel records. The information, including information that may identify a client, to University administrators or external individuals or agencies must be authorized by the Director of CARS in advance in writing. All client information revealed while receiving clinical services including but not limited to individual counseling, team building, and couples or family counseling is confidential and is only released with the client’s written authorization within the limits of applicable law and ethical guidelines. If a CARS employee deems that an individual presents an imminent danger to self or others, confidentiality may be breached, as required by law, to individuals who can help the employee and/or foreseeable victim. Supervisors shall not inform others of an employee’s referral to or attendance in sessions at CARS without the employee’s consent. All supervisors, direct or indirect, must maintain the confidentiality of the referral to CARS and any information reported to them.

6. Referrals
Any eligible employee may seek services from CARS without a supervisor’s referral.

6.1. Supervisory Referral
Before referring an employee, the supervisor, dean, director, or department head should call CARS to describe the situation. The supervisor should discuss with the CARS staff the best possible strategies and how and if
the employee should be referred to CARS. CARS offers training to supervisors which can help them identify employees who might benefit from the CARS program.

6.1.1. Informal Referral
Supervisors may make informal verbal referrals based on concern for the employee's well-being (short of danger to self or others) or future productivity.

6.1.2. Formal Referral
A formal verbal referral is intended as a strong recommendation by a supervisor that an employee seek assistance in dealing with problems that are affecting work performance. The decision by a supervisor to make a formal referral of an employee to CARS must be based on unsatisfactory work performance or possible danger to self or others. A formal referral does not mean an involuntary or forced referral.

6.2. Documentation
A referral to CARS will not jeopardize an employee's employment.

- A referral will not be documented in the employee's personnel file by the supervisor.
- Supervisors shall not document a referral to CARS in an employee's performance evaluation.
- Referral to or use of CARS should not be reported to or alluded to in a grievance process, nor shall employees of CARS be asked to serve as witnesses in a grievance process.

CARS provides services to assist managers and employees and such services are not to be used to document difficult employees.

6.2.1. A supervisor may document the fact that he or she recommended an employee seek assistance for a specific behavior or performance issue; however, the supervisor shall not document where or to whom the employee went to for assistance or what type of assistance was received. The permissible information will be maintained in a separate file and may be used only when defending a grievance or lawsuit. The supervisor will destroy the information when it is no longer needed.

6.2.2. A supervisor seeking assistance for himself or herself through supervisory consultation at CARS may document or disclose that fact at his or her discretion.