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New Partner Expands Employee Assistance

MICHAEL HAGEARTY
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

From time to time, we all need to consult with an expert. Whether it’s formulating a household budget, helping a child through a difficult transition, or developing one’s managerial skills, staff and faculty are invited to try Georgia Tech’s employee assistance program (EAP), a free benefit that recently expanded its range of services to cover the needs of a diverse campus population.

Through its contract with EAP Consultants, Tech employees have 24/7 access to counselors who can help provide guidance and support for work-life issues. With a local network of licensed clinical social workers, counselors are available by phone, web, or smartphone app. Benefits-eligible full-time employees may use the EAP free of charge. We asked Suzy Harrington, executive director of Georgia Tech Health & Wellness, to provide an overview of options available for Tech employees.

The Short-Term Disability Route

For employees who have enrolled in Tech’s short-term disability plan through MetLife, they may use short-term disability coverage during maternity leave. Short-term disability coverage kicks in following a 14-day elimination period, during which time employees are charged sick leave for work days.

Short-term disability coverage pays out 60 percent of an employee’s gross salary for six weeks following a natural delivery or eight weeks after a cesarean delivery. Both those time frames include the elimination period, meaning employees receive short-term disability payments for either four or six weeks, respectively.

Following that time, employees can use vacation leave or unpaid leave through the remainder of their FMLA time. Those enrolled in short-term disability are not required to file a claim and use the coverage for maternity leave if they have sick and vacation time they prefer to use instead.

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- Employees do not receive a Tech paycheck.
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As Open Enrollment season approaches, many employees may be thinking about how their health or family could change in the coming year. One important life change that requires benefit planning is welcoming a new child.

Human Resources offers regular presentations through their Be Well series that offers a wealth of information on using benefits for maternity leave. The team held its most recent session on this topic in September.

Athena Jones, leave management specialist for Human Resources, provided an overview of options available for Tech employees, emphasizing that the Institute fully supports parents taking time to bond with their new children.

Below is a primer, but the full presentation is available for view at ohr.gatech.edu/be-well-presentations.

The Right to Leave

Employees are protected while taking leave through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). FMLA was designed to give employees the right to time off and return to their same or equivalent job following medical leave. In the case of pregnancy, it provides for 12 weeks of leave in a 12-month window for a birth or adoption. Employees must have been employed for 12 months or worked 1,250 hours during the previous year to be eligible.

Beyond FMLA protecting employees’ right to leave, there are two primary methods for Tech employees to receive compensation while on leave. Both are options for either pregnancy or adoption. One uses short-term disability along with sick and vacation time, and the other only uses a combination of sick and vacation leave. (For adoption, only vacation time is used.)

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A Guide to Open Enrollment 2017

Open Enrollment materials will be mailed to every employee’s home this week, including a guide of all benefits offered through Georgia Tech and the University System of Georgia (USG). While not everyone must re-enroll in benefits plans to maintain coverage, it’s important to review current selections to ensure they are still the best choices for the coming year. If you don’t enroll for 2017 benefits, your 2016 coverage will continue at 2017 rates. Remember — you MUST re-enroll if you want a flexible spending account (FSA) in 2017.

Continue below for a primer on what to look out for this year.

The Basics

Medical

The same medical plans are being offered as in 2016, but premiums have increased as the USG attains equal, defined employer contribution across all plans.

Dental

Premiums for Delta Dental Base and Delta Dental High will increase. The premiums for DeltaCare HMO will remain the same.

Vision

EyeMed will continue to provide vision coverage, and rates will remain the same.

Pharmacy

CVS/caremark will continue to be the USG’s pharmacy benefit manager for employees enrolled in BCBS health care plans. Your BCBS ID card also includes your CVS/caremark information. There are annual formulary prescription drug coverage and tier changes.

Tobacco

If you are enrolled in a medical plan, you must certify if you are a tobacco user. If you do not make a change, your tobacco use status will remain the same as last year. Tobacco users will have a $75 per month non-refundable surcharge added to health care premiums.

Beyond the Basics

The University System of Georgia has added new options and altered others for 2017.

Critical Illness

The USG Critical Illness plan can help employees and their families recover from the financial stress of a critical illness. This coverage assists with meeting financial obligations, such as out-of-pocket medical bills and deductibles, as well as indirect costs (such as mortgage payments and other living expenses). Employees receive a direct, lump sum cash payment if they or a dependent are diagnosed with or treated for a covered critical illness.

Hospital Indemnity

The USG Hospital Indemnity plan pays a daily benefit if you have a covered stay in a hospital, critical care unit, or rehabilitation facility. The benefit amount is determined based on the type of facility and the number of days a patient stays. (This plan is not health insurance and does not satisfy the requirement of minimum essential coverage under the Affordable Care Act.)

Accident

The USG Accident plan provides benefits in the event of a covered accident. This coverage can protect employees and their families from the potential financial impact of an accident by helping to offset out-of-pocket costs, such as increasing deductibles and copayments, that are not paid by a health care plan. (This plan is not health insurance and does not satisfy the requirement of minimum essential coverage under the Affordable Care Act.)

Donated Sick Leave

There are Donated Sick Leave policy changes, effective Jan. 1, 2017: To request hours from the Donated Sick Leave pool in 2017, you must be a member. Donated Sick Leave Membership requires a one-time sick leave donation of a minimum of eight hours/maximum of 80 hours during Open Enrollment via TechWorks. View policy changes at c.gatech.edu/usgsickleave.

Legal

The USG Legal plan provides legal support for services including:

• Home and residential: Buying a home, landlord or neighbor disputes
• Financial and consumer: Debt collection, bankruptcy
• Estate planning and wills: Will, living will, health care power of attorney
• Family: Separation, divorce, name change, prenuptial agreement
• General: Identity theft, civil litigation defense

In collaboration with the USG, Georgia Tech employees can get answers to questions and concerns over the phone from the USG’s Shared Services Center. Representatives will be on hand to assist Oct. 31 to Nov. 11, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., at 404-894-GTHR (4847).

Helpful Resources

2017 Open Enrollment Timeline

• Oct. 14: Materials mailed to employees’ homes.
• Oct. 24: Info Session, 2 p.m., Student Center Theater.
• Oct. 26: Info Session, 11:30 a.m., Student Center Theater.
• Oct. 27: Info Session, 10 a.m., Gordy Room, Wardlaw Center.
• Oct. 31: Open Enrollment begins.
• Oct. 31: Phone Help Line opens (404-894-4847).
• Nov 2: Benefits Fair, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Student Center Ballroom.
• Nov. 11: Open Enrollment ends.

Contacts

Phone Help Line
404-894-4847 (4847)

Georgia Tech Human Resources
ohr.gatech.edu/openenrollment

USG Benefits
usg.edu/hr/benefits

Email
openenrollment@ohr.gatech.edu

Tobacco Cessation

For employees who are interested, Stamps Health Services and Human Resources offer programs to provide support in quitting smoking. You may also contact your USG insurance provider for additional assistance. Learn more at tobaccofree.gatech.edu.
THE WHISTLE • whistle.gatech.edu October 10, 2016 • PAGE 3

EAP, from page 1

Well-Being, and EAP Consultants Representative Adrienne Moberg to further explain what the program is and how staff and faculty can take advantage of its services.

What’s the function of an employee assistance program? Harrington: We want Georgia Tech’s EAP to support staff and faculty by providing services that can optimize health and well-being and assist in various life challenges that occur both at work and at home. The EAP helps with personal and professional concerns such as stress, conflict at home or at work, financial or legal questions, substance abuse, emergency planning, and even finding places to care for our loved ones — to include children, elders, or even pets.

Tell us about the selection process for an employee assistance program. What types of attributes was Tech’s selection committee looking for? Harrington: The selection committee was Human Resources Associate Vice President Kim Harrington, Georgia Tech Chief of Police Rob Connolly, and me. First, we consulted the Employee Assistance Society of North America to identify criteria for our initial request for proposals. We knew we wanted a high-quality, high-touch program that provided a wide range of services to include work-life, counseling, and managerial support.

Who are the EAP counselors and what is their role? What kind of assistance do they offer? Moberg: EAP Counselors are independently licensed mental health professionals located near campus and near where Georgia Tech faculty and staff live. They offer consultation, assessment of issues, short-term counseling, and referral to other resources if needed.

Help us understand how the process works. What kinds of problems does the EAP help with? What can an employee expect when they contact the EAP? Moberg: The Georgia Tech EAP can assist faculty and staff with most any personal or work-related issue that causes distress. Common issues include marital and family concerns, parenting, stress, depression, anxiety, legal or financial issues, communication difficulties, interpersonal conflicts, and many others. When the employee or dependent contacts the EAP by telephone or website, professional counselors briefly interview the client to obtain registration information, assess for safety, and then arrange a referral to a counselor, attorney, financial professional, or other specialist who provides the one-to-one service.

The EAP is being promoted as a free service for employees. What does this cover? Under what circumstances would an employee need to pay for services? Moberg: All EAP services are at no cost to clients, such as the private one-to-one counseling or the work-life services consultations and resources. All employees receive six free counseling visits, per subject, for themselves and their family members. If a client needs services beyond the scope of the EAP, then the individual will need to pay for those services. EAP counselors refer employees to services that are covered by the employee’s health care plan and consider client affordability for any resources they recommend.

How does EAP vet its referral network? Are these outside vendors periodically evaluated? Moberg: The EAP has a network management department that vets counselors. Its specialists recruit and screen network counselors to ensure they meet our credentialing criteria. All counselors are independently licensed and have an average of 10 years’ experience, have no board sanctions, and carry appropriate malpractice insurance. Counselors also have various specialty areas of practice, and the EAP matches clients to counselors based on these specialty areas, as well as other factors such as the client’s request concerning office hours or location. Most offer evening or weekend office hours. Counselors are re-credited by the EAP every two years. They are also evaluated on an ongoing basis for quality of services.

Where do face-to-face counseling sessions occur? Moberg: Face-to-face counseling occurs in the private offices of network counselors. These offices are located near where employees and family members work and live.

How can one be assured that confidentiality is respected? Does EAP report any data to Georgia Tech? Moberg: EAP Consultants are licensed mental health professionals and are bound by federal and state confidentiality laws, regulations, and guidelines governing the confidentiality of counseling and medical records. EAP Consultants will not provide any employee identifying information to anyone, particularly to Georgia Tech. Exceptions to confidentiality include when a person is an immediate risk of harm to self or others and instances of suspected child or elder abuse, which requires EAP counselors to ensure the safety of clients and others, or to report suspected abuse to appropriate authorities as required by law.

Harrington: As with all programs, data is required for quality improvement and to determine cost effectiveness and success. I will receive a quarterly aggregate de-identified report — no names or identifying characteristics — that have the number and type of services provided, so that we can build quality programs that meet the needs unique to Georgia Tech faculty and staff.

MERRITT, from page 1

the Bursar’s Office for health care premiums (still at the Tech employee rate), since they are not being deducted via paycheck.

• Disability plan deductions and spending account deductions are stopped.

Employees may apply for short-term disability coverage during open enrollment but may not be eligible if they are already pregnant. For those who enrolled as new employees, Jones advises keeping the coverage as a safeguard, should they choose to use it for maternity in the future.

Using Sick and Vacation Time

For employees not enrolled in or not choosing to use short-term disability benefits, they can use sick time for up to six weeks for a natural delivery or eight weeks for a cesarean, then use vacation time until they return to work. Sick time may also be used for doctor appointments, sick children, or complications with pregnancy. When using sick or vacation time for leave:

• Employees continue to receive their Tech paycheck with benefits deductions.

• Disability plan deductions and spending account deductions continue.

Don’t Forget the Forms

Following a birth, Tech employees who want to add their new child to their benefits should submit a Family Status Change Form within 30 days of birth.

Employees will also need to complete an FMLA Return to Work Form, which needs to be completed by a physician or include a note on a doctor’s letterhead confirming that the employee is cleared to return to work. This form must be submitted to Georgia Tech Human Resources before any work is resumed, including teleworking.

While teleworking is an option, Jones emphasized that employees are not required to telework during their leave.

If you want to, your position is amendable to it, and your manager and doctor agree, you may begin teleworking and go to a reduced FMLA schedule,” she said. Hours worked remotely would not count against FMLA time.

Given the nature of pregnancy and child delivery, Jones emphasized that plans can, and often do, change. Working remotely or starting back part-time may be good options but should be discussed in detail between employees and managers.

“Communication is critical for any type of leave, especially if you are gradually coming back,” she said. Each employee’s case may be different, and Jones is open to discussing options with any employee who anticipates taking leave. She can be reached at 404-385-2377 or athena.jones@ohr.gatech.edu.

EAP Resources

Online

http://health-and-wellbeing.gatech.edu/
eap or eapconsultants.com/sign-in

(password: “wellbeing”)

Phone

678-616-TECH or 1-844-GA-Tech

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Tech Wreck Break Camps

Tech Wreck Break Camp is a day camp offered for children in first through eighth grades whose parents are part of the Georgia Tech community (faculty, staff, or students). It is six, one-day sessions during the 2016-17 academic year. Break Camp runs from 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Campus Recreation Center (CRC). The daily cost per child is $40. Post-camp supervision is available until 5:30 p.m. for an additional $10 per day.

This year’s camp dates:

• Day 1: Monday, Nov. 21
• Day 2: Tuesday, Nov. 22
• Day 3: Thursday, Dec. 22
• Day 4: Tuesday, Jan. 3
• Day 5: Wednesday, Jan. 4
• Day 6: Monday, Feb. 20

Camps are provided with lunch and an afternoon snack and will enjoy a variety of activities such as organized games, arts, crafts, and maybe even a magic show. In addition, campers are able to utilize the state-of-the-art swimming pools at the CRC.

Registration opens Wednesday, Oct. 26, at 7 p.m. at myrec.gatech.edu.

EAP, from page 1

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Celebrating Tech Traditions

Homecoming is a busy time on campus not only for students, but also for faculty and staff, as well as alumni who come back to campus. This year, there are several events that could be of interest to Tech employees, as well as those that spotlight some of Tech's oldest traditions. This year’s theme is “TReching Through the Jungle.”

Campus Walking and Bus Tour
Friday, Oct. 28, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Global Learning Center
Student Ambassadors will gate attendances on a tour around campus highlighting landmarks and new additions.

Mini 500 Tricycle Race
Friday, Oct. 28, 9 to 11 a.m., Peters Parking Deck
The Mini 500 event has been part of Homecoming since 1969 when it started as a fraternity prank, where new pledges were forced to transport themselves around campus on tricycles. Today, the Mini 500 race is far from being considered a punishment; it is an exciting, intense competition filled with humor and fun.

Freshman Cake Race
Saturday, Oct. 29, 6:30 a.m., McCammon Pavilion
All first-year students are invited to take part in one of Tech’s oldest traditions, where students rise before the sun to run uphill for cake. All participants get a free cupcake.

Ramblin’ Wreck Parade
Saturday, Oct. 29, 9 a.m., Fowler Street
Students will design and build vehicles to parade down Fowler Street.

Ramblin’ Wreck Rally Tailgate
Saturday, Oct. 29, 2.5 hours before kickoff, Tech Tower Lawn
Enjoy free game day swag, pictures with the Wreck, and live entertainment.

Football vs. Duke
Saturday, Oct. 29, Bobby Dodd Stadium
Homecoming culminates with the Yellow Jackets taking on the Duke Blue Devils. Kickoff time will be announced seven to 10 days before the game. Check ramblinwreck.com as the event gets closer.

Dec the Doors
Are you looking for an opportunity to showcase your Tech pride and spread the spirit of Homecoming all over campus? All departments are invited to participate in this year’s Dec-A-Door competition.

Show off your spirit and creativity by decorating your office door in one of two design categories: (1) TReching Through the Jungle or (2) Beat Duke. Applications to participate are due Friday, Oct. 21, by 5 p.m. Apply at c.gatech.edu/decadoro-appl.

Doors will be judged beginning Tuesday, Oct. 25, with winners announced on Friday, Oct. 28. For more information on rules and prizes, visit c.gatech.edu/decadoro-rules. Contact kate.curnow@stcsrc.gatech.edu with questions.

(Photos: One of last year’s entries designed on the theme of “Buzzin Out of This World.”)

Some events require registration. To register, visit gthomecoming.gatech.edu. To learn more about Tech traditions, visit traditions.gatech.edu

PAGE 4 • October 10, 2016 whistle.gatech.edu • THE WHISTLE