

1.8 PERSONAL WELFARE COUNSELLING AND ASSISTANCE

Have you ever felt the need to talk about your personal problems with someone who is not directly involved? It can be very comforting to know that you can count on a sympathetic ear at a time when personal matters are affecting your job. That is why the Department has an Employee Assistance Program and Personnel Welfare Program which are staffed by two professional counsellors. Their personal interactions with foreign service members (employees and dependents alike) are strictly confidential. If you approach them, you can be assured that nothing will be placed on your personal file. To emphasize their detachment from the rest of the Bureau of Personnel, their offices are located two floors above on C-6.

Many employees have a rather narrow impression about what benefits can be derived from seeking advice or assistance from these people. There is an erroneous belief that all they do is try to help employees who have drinking problems. It is true that one of the counsellors, APRN, devotes a significant amount of his time to persons suffering from that illness. To set the record straight, however, he is also responsible for administering the Department's Retirement and Superannuation programs. Employees going out on their last or penultimate posting would particularly be interested in having a short chat to review their entitlements and keep informed of new developments. APRN is also the section to see for employees who are thinking about "buying back" their pension.

The other half of this duo is APRW - the Personnel Welfare Counsellor - available to assist those employees who have personal or work-related problems. She welcomes the opportunity to meet employees or members of their families who are getting ready to leave Ottawa or just passing through en route to the next post. A lot of her work relates to identifying stress factors and, where employees are interested, she can arrange enrollment in a stress workshop.

The services of APRN and APRW are available to you whether you are in Ottawa or overseas. Have you some concerns, for example, about close relatives you are leaving behind? Perhaps it is an elderly widowed parent who has stopped writing to you or a timid child who, for the first time, is living and attending school away from the family. In such cases, APRW can help you keep tabs on someone and attempt to allay your fears.

Since you will not be too far away from C-6 while doing Rounds, why not at least stop into their waiting room and have a look at some of the publications available for you to take home. Keep APRN/APRW in mind and do not hesitate to write, phone or visit if the need arises.