

POLICY ON EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Amended as at September 2002

1. BACKGROUND

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a programme that provides confidential and professional assistance to help resolve problems that are affecting employees and/or their families. When a personal problem makes life difficult, it can also lead to difficulties at work. The EAP is designed to help employees before their personal problems become work problems. EAP create a safe, healthy and productive environment for employees and their families. Personal difficulties (including physical, mental, emotional, marital, family, alcohol, drug abuse or financial problems) may have serious effects on the work performance, personal life, and health of an employee as well as work colleagues and family members.

The Department of Public Works is committed to maintaining a healthy work environment and recognizes that many human problems which may affect work performance can be resolved if they are identified in the early stages and assistance is sought from an appropriate resource.

Employees sometimes experience personal or work-related difficulties which may impact negatively on their well-being, their work and their colleagues. This in turn usually has an adverse effect on the performance and productivity of the department. The Department of Public Works demonstrates its concern for the emotional and social well being of its employees through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

The EAP structure will be utilised to identify troubled employees at an early stage of their lowering performance due to lack of training, inadequate placement, or development of personal problems.

The benefits of using an EAP for the department are clear if employees are preoccupied with whatever personal difficulties they are experiencing, productivity and work performance are bound to suffer. Effective use of an EAP for employee counseling can increase employee morale and performance. EAP is also a nice benefit to provide in order to retain top talent and reduce turnover.

Besides reducing costs associated with personal problems, a well designed EAP helps managers more effectively deal with human performance issues; complements the employee benefits programme; and demonstrate management's concerns for employee well-being.

2. PURPOSE

To minimise disruptions in the employee's life and to return the employee to the fullest level of functioning at home and at work through a minimum involvement in treatment.

To assist employees to improve work efficiency and quality of life by provision of preventative and remedial services.

❖ *Provision of preventative services*

By identifying the factors which hamper psychological functioning as well as work performance, including health-related factors. These preventative services include stress management, substance abuse, personal financial management, HIV/AIDS and other life threatening diseases.

❖ *Provision of remedial services*

By identifying and eliminating personal factors which hinder the functioning and work performance by means of short-term therapeutic techniques e.g. counselling service. Provision of referral system for intensive psychological management of emotional and addictive disorders at a higher level.

3. AUTHORISATION

- ❖ The Public Service Regulations, 1999 [chapter 1, part VI (D)] require a Head of Department to establish and maintain a safe and healthy working environment for employees of the department.
- ❖ The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa protects employees from unfair labour practice.
- ❖ Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (Act no 85 of 1993) places specific obligations on the employer in regard to the health and safety of employees.
- ❖ Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act no 66 of 1995) places certain obligations on the employer to take remedial actions before terminating employment.
- ❖ Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act no 55 of 1998) requires the employment to redress the effect of discrimination and eliminate unfair discrimination in the workplace.
- ❖ Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act no 97 of 1998) requires the employer to develop and improve their employee's skills.
- ❖ Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997 (Act no 75 of 1997) places certain obligations to the employer to maintain fair labour practice.
- ❖ Employee Assistance Programme Association- South Africa' (EAPA-SA) standards 1999, require EAP practitioners to utilise the standards as a guideline to establish and implement the programme.

4. DEFINITION OF AN EAP

The Employee Assistance Programme Association (EAPA) defines an EAP as: a work-site based programme designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems associated with employees impaired by personal concerns, but not limited to: health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal concerns which may adversely affect employee job performance.

5. PRINCIPLES

The implementation of Employee Assistance Programme in the department will be underpinned by the following principles:

5.1 Confidentiality

Any information shared during consultation or counselling shall not be disclosed to anyone (management included) without the employee's written consent except when disclosure is required in terms of law or court order.

The information provided by the employee / client during consultation shall not be utilised for any purpose other than those agreed upon, between EAP Practitioner and the employee's/client's records shall be kept strictly confidential and not in the employee's personnel files or any official record of the department.

5.2 Eligibility and Accessibility

EAP will be accessible and available to all employees irrespective of position or occupational level in the department.

5.3 Neutrality

The programme should not become enmeshed in the traditional interface between management and employees and should not clash with the existing administrative procedures and contractual agreements.

5.4 Timeous intervention

Efforts should be made to ensure early identification and treatment of problems, thus facilitating a good prognosis.

The Department (through the EAP) will assist individual employees in assessing the nature of their difficulties and to help them overcome these with a view to improving their work performance and productivity.

5.5 Impartiality

Participation in the programme should not prejudice employee's job or security or chances of promotion or any other job related benefits.

5.6 Equal and dignified treatment

Employees treated should receive the same consideration as those with medical problems.

5.7 Prevention of abuse

Any employee or participating party as well as the executing authority should not abuse the programme.

5.8 Voluntarism

Participation in the programme should be voluntary without, however, denying management the prerogative of recommending some employees for assistance.

5.9 A balanced programme

There should be a healthy balance between rehabilitative and preventive services in the Department.

5.10 Access

Employees can use the EAP on a self-referral basis. Their supervisors may also refer employees when personal problems affect job performance.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 The Department

6.1.1 Since the Department of Public Works has a vested interest in the well-being of its employees and in their development and utilisation, it is therefore committed to assist employees in identifying the nature of their problems and if necessary, to make a financial contribution to their recovery. All employees should, however, seriously consider contributing towards a medical aid fund, which can make such services more accessible and affordable.

6.1.2 The Department will also see to it that the role-players are briefed on/or receive basic training on EAP to fulfil their responsibilities and / or exercise their rights.

6.2 The Manager/Supervisor

6.2.1 The primary responsibility for identifying troubled employees is that of the individual managers/supervisors. Such employees should be encouraged to seek assistance through the EAP.

6.2.2 Early identification and referral of troubled employees to EAP is necessary in order to contribute to excellent service delivery and prevent the lowering job performance.

6.2.3 Bring the availability of EAP to the attention of all employees before problems affect productivity.

- 6.2.4 Support the programme by being part of the Advisory Committee addressing EAP related issues.
- 6.2.5 Liaise with Union representatives to ensure early intervention.
- 6.2.6 Maintain and encourage adherence to all EAP principles, especially the principle of confidentiality.
- 6.2.7 Assist with the assessment of organisational needs and employees' needs.
- 6.2.8 Discuss deteriorating work performance with employee concerned and complete documentation for formal referral of such EAP if a need arise.
- 6.2.9 Ensure that employees are fully informed on EAP, its policy, objectives and functioning (include EAP module in relevant courses and in the induction and orientation programme).
- 6.2.10 Make follow-up to evaluate progress after the referral.

6.3 The Employee

- 6.3.1 The individual employee is normally in the best position to identify when she/he is experiencing difficulties which impact negatively on her/his work situation. Hence employees have the right and responsibility to report such problems to their managers/supervisors and co-operate when assistance is offered to them through EAP.
- 6.3.2 Participation in the EAP will not affect the employee's employment or career development. On the other hand, employees' participation will not protect the employee from disciplinary action for continued sub-standard work performance or misconduct.

7. EAP Unit

- 7.1 The EAP practitioner will be stationed at Head Office under HRD sub-directorate and will be supported by regional co-ordinators.
- 7.2 The unit will be responsible for managing EAP in the most efficient and effective way and maintaining EAP policy and making it available to all employees.
- 7.3 Develop a strategic plan and budget of the programme and monitor the implementation and expenditure.
- 7.4 Design preventative programmes to address identified needs.

- 7.5 Regularly assess the needs of the department and its employees through research.
- 7.6 Establish and maintain effective and confidential record keeping data and management information system.
- 7.7 Develop the marketing strategy of the programme and ensure the implementation thereof.
- 7.8 Establish and maintain linkage with various inter-departmental functions such as Human Resources Management, Unions, as well as external resources.
- 7.9 Regularly evaluate the appropriateness, effectiveness, and efficiency of EAP services.
- 7.10 Render EAP services to all employees in the department irrespective of their occupational positions.
- 7.11 Facilitate and co-ordinate EAP services with regional co-ordinators.

8. REFERRAL PROCEDURE

- 8.1 Referral to EAP is not part of disciplinary process and should not be regarded as such by employees. Referral to EAP can be done in three ways:
 - *Self-referral*: The employee as the person who is in a best position to identify problems experienced, consults the EAP practitioner voluntarily.
 - *Informal referral*: The employee receives a recommendation from other people such as manager, friend, colleague, union representative, etc to consult the EAP practitioner. No documentation is necessary.
 - *Formal referral*: The supervisor refers the troubled employee in writing to EAP unit for assistance due to lowering job performance. This should be done if the problem cannot be resolved internally and if the employee consent to such referral. The supervisor or the employee may arrange an appointment with the EAP practitioner.
- 8.2 During initial consultation, the EAP practitioner will be responsible for intake and assessment of employee's problem as well as determination of appropriate action plan. The action plan might include referral to an internal resource or external service provider such as a psychologist, social worker etc for further intervention.

- 8.3 When the employee is referred to external service provider, it is the responsibility of both the employee and the EAP practitioner to inform the supervisor without compromising confidentiality of the consultation process. The employee in question shall give the dual consent to enable the EAP practitioner to render follow up services effectively.
- 8.4 Record keeping is essential, as a result the EAP practitioner shall keep reports and progress reports of all consultation with the employee client or other role players strictly confidential. Records shall be kept for a period not exceeding five years before being destroyed.
- 8.5 As the EAP practitioner only render short-term counselling of not longer than eight sessions, unresolved problems of employee after those sessions will be referred to external service providers or employees will be referred to external service providers if long -terms therapy is required.
- 8.6 Troubled employees who require specialised services/ treatment will be referred to external service providers or government rehabilitation centres/ agencies. Those who require treatment at private institutions will pay for the treatment expenses.

9. PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE

- 9.1 Certain external service providers offer services free of charge or at a fee. Most medical aid schemes cover costs that may result from the use of external service provider. If costs are not covered by medical aid scheme, the affected employee will be responsible for the payment or the Department will assist through procurement service.
- 9.2 If the employee is a member of a medical aid scheme, the Department of Public Works will pay the amount not covered by the medical aid scheme upon receipt of the required documentary proof (i.e. proof that the services were rendered and the cost thereof, as well as proof of what the contribution of the medical scheme will be).
- 9.3 The employee is responsible for furnishing the bills to her/his medical scheme.
- 9.4 If the employee is not a member of a medical aid scheme, the normal procurement procedure must be followed. This includes obtaining written authorisation.
- 9.5 The maximum amount, which can be paid per employee for assessment and assistance/treatment in a particular financial year, is R10 000.00. This limit can only be exceeded if approval has been obtained from the HOD.

- 9.6 For budgeting and financial control purposes, an item called EAP should be created under Professional and Special Services. All EAP payments to private practitioners/institutions must be processed under this item.

10. MONITORING AND REPORTING

- ❑ Monitoring and evaluation of the programme will be on its effectiveness, based on the number of the employees rehabilitated, those that had to be referred for specialist treatment and care are rehabilitated; and those that had to be released from their duties as a result of failed rehabilitation. The cost effectiveness of the programme will also be evaluated from time to time.
- ❑ The Head of EAP unit will be responsible for monitoring the results of assessments and treatment conducted by public or private practitioners / institutions. Reports will be treated as confidential, with feedback limited to the relevant managers/supervisors and top management, should it be necessary provided the employee agrees to such an arrangement, of which should be done in writing.
- ❑ All documents and accounts will be kept for auditing and verification purposes. These documents/accounts will not be filed in the employee's personnel file.
- ❑ The Senior Manager: Policy and HRM will supply the HOD with a confidential quarterly report containing particulars on the utilisation, results and costs of the EAP. The report will not contain any personal information, except under circumstances mentioned in sub-paragraph (5.1) above.

11. EVALUATION

The EAP unit in the Office of the Premier will do impact assessment of the programme. Other relevant stakeholders, e.g., professional consultants, counselors, medical institutions, etc. may assist in the assessment of the impact of the programme.

12. EAP STRATEGY

12.1 STRATEGIC INTENT

The department values and recognises the worth and contribution of its staff and personnel towards service delivery. An Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a practical way of demonstrating that the department has a sincere interest in the wellbeing of its personnel. This is further demonstrated through implementation of Public Service

Regulation (PSR) VI E gazetted 23517 of 21 June 2002. Every employee's physical and emotional well-being is influenced by a complexity of interacting factors including:

- Proper management of and adjustment to the existing health conditions
- Use or misuse of substances such as alcohol, drugs, tobacco
- personality, temperament, and attitude
- social support from friends and family
- access to health care/health promotion resources, career/occupation resources, financial stability, healthy attachments(social relationship)
- effective family functioning
- stress management, leisure and recreation
- healthy work relationships

Personal difficulties (including physical, mental, emotional, marital, family, alcohol, drug or financial problems) may have serious effects on the work performance, personal life, and health of an employee.

The Department of Public Works is committed to maintaining a healthy work environment and recognises that many human problems which may affect work performance can be resolved if they are identified in the early stages and assistance is sought from an appropriate resource. It is recognised that the resolution of such problems will require high degree of personal motivation on the part of the employee and that the employee must participate in attaining a resolution. The employee may need help in resolving his or her problem. It is against this background that the department of Public Works has established an Employee Assistance Programme to can help employees to deal with problems that they, or may encounter in the process of executing their jobs and leading a quality work life.

EAP is one way of ensuring that employee problems, which impact negatively on their performance, are well catered for. It is a programme that motivates and support employees to can manage stressful life and work pressures.

12.2 THE STRATEGIC GOALS

The goals of the strategy is to :

- Assist employees experiencing problems that can hamper their productivity
- Assist in the identification and resolution of employee concerns, which affect or may affect performance
- Manage the assessment and referral of cases
- Intervention on the part of the employer to render assistance
- Promote and market the EAP Programme as a value proposition to quality of work life
- To build capacity to deal with problems.

12.3 TARGET GROUPS

The programme is meant for all employees in all levels who experience or had experienced problems that affect their well functioning at work. The programme is targeting employees in distress.

12.4 COMPONENTS OF THE STRATEGY

12.4.1 ASSISTANCE

If an employee presents signs of personal problems, anxiety, or substance abuse, that person may be helped by self –referral to an EAP or by being directed to get help by the supervisor. Absolute confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Employees will be encouraged to open up for their problems to be attended to.

By closely monitoring the progress of the employee through treatment and after return to work if an absence is required, the EAP reinforces the treatment and increase the likelihood of success. By providing assistance before an employee's work or absenteeism deteriorates to the point of dismissal, the EAP preserve an important part to the

employee's life and helps the employee to build on that and have a better chance at recovery. In many cases the destruction of the affected family as a result of the problem is so far along that the worker's job is the only point of stability left in a chaotic life. As the employee's job return to normal both the employer and the employee gain.

12.4.2 PROMOTION AND MARKETING

The EAP programme will provide awareness and capacity building, as well as assistance in counselling, treatment and rehabilitation. Employees will receive information in the capacity building sessions on how to avoid or cope with alcohol, drugs and stress, and how the overall program works. In all publicity regarding the EAP, strict confidentiality and professionalism must be emphasised.

For the marketing and promotion of the entire programme, resources should be made available from the budget. The money will be utilised to purchase promotional materials and for capacity building sessions. Educational materials, e.g., videos and training aids, will be the primary resources of running this sub programme.

12.4.3 CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building will include issues on how to identify signs and symptoms of behavioural change, and on how to watch for and react to early signs of trouble. These include irritability, tardiness, absenteeism, sloppy work habits, and unusual or changed behaviour that is out of character for the individual.

The capacity building sessions will be utilized to further develop the programme that it become user friendly and can be sustained as an employee programme rather than employee driven programme. The programme will conducted in isolation, but will run concurrently with other departmental programmes such as Occupational Health and

Safety, workplace health programmes on HIV/AIDS, Organisational Development and general education and training, coaching and mentorship.

12.5 ENVISAGED OUTCOMES

Through the implementation of the Employee Assistance Programme the entire workforce will benefit in the following areas:

- Cope with work related and personal problems and challenges.
- Decreased work related accidents
- Lessen absenteeism and staff turnover
- *Promote work place co-operation*
- Proper management of risks of unexpected events
- Departmental EAP manual developed
- Integration of Occupational Health, Safety, environment management and quality.
- EAP as a value proposition for service delivery improvement.

“DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORK CARES’

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EAP OFFICE

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DATE

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SENIOR MANAGER: POLICY AND HRM

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DATE

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HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

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ANNEXURE A

Research about EAP best practice

This is a study conducted by Hurstplacehome and came up with the following assumptions.

How An EAP Helps Your Organization

Fact

Common Issues

Solutions We Provide

Employees are People and Like all People They Have Physical and Emotional Vulnerabilities

Emotional Problems, Stress Reactions, Substance Abuse

Behavioral Health Management, Solution Focused Counselling, Promoting Employee Health, Drug & Alcohol Assessment Program, Recruitment and Employee Selection Consultation, Workplace Violence Prevention Program.

Employees Have Families and Partners

Domestic Violence, Marital Problems, Parenting Stress, Child Behavior Problems, Death in the Family, Elder Care, Financial Crisis, Legal Problems

Individual, Child, Couples, Family Counselling, Separation/Divorce Mediation, Financial Counselling, Legal Counselling.

Employees Are Members of a Workgroup

Team Dysfunction, Interpersonal Conflict, Poor Communication, Critical Incident Stress, Workplace Violence, Reduced Productivity or Quality, Intolerance to Shift work

Solution-Focused Counselling, Employee Education and Skills Development Seminars, Dispute Mediation, CISD Program, Workplace Violence Prevention Program, Team Building Seminars, Change Planning Productivity/Quality Training, Management Consultation, Culture Audits, Process/Procedure Improvement, Shiftwork Adjustment Program.

Employees Are Impacted By Organizational Change

Change Resistance, Restructuring Stress, Departmental Conflict, Diminished Morale, Work Refusal, Unemployment Stress Reaction, Termination Rage, Staff Retention/Recruitment Problems.

Solution-Focused Counselling, Corporate Consultation, Career Transition Counselling, Team Building Seminars, Conflict Management Training, HR Specialists/Consultation.

Employees Are Members of Sociocultural groups

Gender Conflicts, Workplace Harassment, Racial Tension and Discrimination, Grievances, Public Relations Problems

Diversity Training, Dispute Resolution, Conflict Management Training, Negotiation Skills Training, Workplace Harassment Prevention Program.

Employees Develop Illnesses and Sustain Injuries

Absenteeism, WCB claims, Long Term Disability Claims, Staffing Problems, Diminished Production and Quality

Solution-Focused Counselling, Managing the Troubled Employee Training For Supervisors, Corporate Consultation, Attendance Management, Promoting Employee Health and Well-Being Program, Disability Management.

