

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Policy Number:	Approved Date:
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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

1. OBJECTIVE

To encourage and maintain the well-being and productivity of employees by providing confidential assistance or short term counseling to those who are experiencing personal or work related problems.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 The Municipality recognises that employees may experience personal or social problems which may adversely affect job performance and/or health.

2.2 As a result of the above, the Municipality provides an Employee Assistance Programme which is a confidential assistance/advisory service designed to assist employees in dealing with their problems. Such problems may include but not be limited to personal/psychological, marital, substance dependency or work related problems. The programme is further aimed at assisting Management to improve or restore impaired job performance.

Employee Assistance Programme services include, but are not limited to counseling in these areas:

- Budgeting
- Family responsibility
- Serious illness / injury
- Career concerns
- Depression
- Divorce or separation
- Drug or alcohol abuse or other addictions
- Emotional and personal conflicts
- Family and relationship concerns
- Grief
- Managing stress and change
- Parenting
- Work performance issues

3. PARTICIPATION IN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

3.1 The Employee Assistance Programme is available to all employees of the Council and persons experiencing problems are encouraged to seek advice from their Employee Assistance Programme Co-ordinator. On occasion, members of employees' families may participate in the programme when activities are related to employee problems

- 3.2 Information pertaining to the precise nature of an employee's problem(s) will be treated confidentially and as such any records arising therefrom will be separately housed in a confidential and secure filing system. The information will not become part of, or referenced to any employee's personal file, medical file, or other file which may be accessed by any other department.
- 3.3 Participation in this programme is voluntary and utilisation of the programme will not jeopardise employees' job security and promotional opportunities.
- 3.4 The programme attempts to restore or improve employee well-being and/or job performance to acceptable levels with minimal interference in the private lives of individuals. Line Management does not usually have the qualifications or expertise to diagnose the nature of employees' personal problem(s) nor to counsel them on these problems. Referral to the Employee Assistance Programme Co-ordinator for assistance will therefore be made on the basis of job performance and/or employee well-being.
- 3.5 The Municipality will provide Supervisory, Managerial and Co-ordinator training in respect of the objectives, benefits and procedures involved in this programme.
- 3.6 To assist employees participating in the programme, such employees may utilise available sick or vacation leave when available sick leave has been exhausted when requiring admission to a treatment facility.
- 3.7 Participation in the Employee Assistant Programme does NOT replace standard disciplinary/incapacity procedures, nor does it constitute a de facto exemption from such procedures.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 Self Referral

- 4.1.1 Employees who are experiencing personal or social problems are encouraged to approach their supervisors/managers with a request to consult their Employee Assistance Programme Co-ordinator.
- 4.1.2 The supervisor/manager will not require the employee to divulge the nature of the personal problem, but will merely offer assistance in arranging an appointment at a time convenient to all parties.
- 4.1.3 As soon as possible after the initial appointment, the E.A.P. Co-ordinator will inform the employee's supervisor/manager of the following :-
- a) Whether or not the employee came for appointment.

- b) Whether or not the employee has a personal problem which requires specialised counseling or treatment.
 - c) Whether or not the employee has agreed to accept the help that was recommended, and if so;
 - d) When the employee will be required to be released from normal duty in order to receive assistance.
- 4.1.4 Supervisors/managers are required to monitor employee progress regarding attendance, punctuality, keeping appointments and job performance, and inform E.A.P. Co-ordinators of noticeable changes that occur.
 - 4.1.5 No information regarding the precise nature of the employees' personal problem(s) will be revealed to supervisors/managers without the employee's informed agreement.
 - 4.1.6 If in-patient treatment is deemed necessary, the employee will be required to utilise available sick leave and/or leave.
 - 4.1.7 Employees referred to an outside provider will be responsible for all costs associated with those outside services; although the employee's medical aid may cover some of the costs, if applicable and in terms of the fund rules.

4.2 Supervisor Referral

- 4.2.1 An employee may be referred to an E.A.P. Co-ordinator by his/her supervisor/manager and the same procedure as detailed in 4.1 above will follow.
- 4.2.2 The employee has a right to refuse the C-ordinator's recommendations regarding treatment/counselling. Should this occur, the Co-ordinator will inform the employee that in the event of any further related instances of unacceptable job performance or behaviour arising, the Municipality will be under no obligation to offer or provide assistance in resolving the problem.

5. LEAVE TO ATTEND CONSELING OR TREATMENT

Employees who attend EAP counseling sessions or treatment may use their sick leave or vacation leave, which is paid leave, or unpaid leave should the employee have no paid leave available if requested and approved.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 6.1 Confidentiality of all records will be strictly applied at all times.

- 6.2 An employee who willfully discloses or releases information in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to including termination from employment.

7. DISCONTINUATION OF TREATMENT

Should an employee decide to discontinue the recommended treatment or counselling programme, he or she must inform the E.A.P. Co-ordinator of this. The Co-ordinator should counsel further and must point out to the employee that should job performance problems arise as a result of the unresolved difficulty, the employee may face disciplinary action.

8. DEFAULT IN TREATMENT

Should the helping agency suspend or expel the employee from its treatment or counselling programme, the E.A.P. Co-ordinator will inform the employee that any further difficulties which arise regarding the job performance or behaviour will be handled as a disciplinary matter.

9. PAYMENT

Employees will utilize their Medical Aid Scheme to cover costs for EAP. Costs incurred over and above those covered by the employee's Medical Aid Scheme will be responsibility of the employee. Where a family member accesses EAP services, he/she will do so at no additional cost to the Municipality.

10. RELAPSE

- 10.1 In the event of a relapse after treatment, management must exercise discretion in deciding whether to enforce the disciplinary procedure and/or to reinstate aid in terms of these procedures. All the circumstances of the individual's case must be considered before a decision is made.
- 10.2 Should it become apparent that a relapse has occurred, a second course of treatment or counselling will be granted subject to the employee having sufficient leave/sick leave available and to him/her being responsible for the payment of such treatment/counselling, and subject to the acceptance of the person by the institution/agency offering the treatment.
- 10.3 If more than 2 years have elapsed since completing the programme, and if the employee has shown a sustained improvement in job performance, the provisions pertaining to 10.1 above will not apply.

11. GUIDELINES

- 11.1 The EAP will not waive the traditional rights of employees to the grievance procedures and usual rights of the employer to maintain discipline.

- 11.2 A response to a request for service should occur as soon as possible, preferably within one working day.
- 11.3 The first counseling session should occur within two (2) weeks unless unforeseen circumstances arise.
- 11.4 The programme normally offers up to three sessions for each new case.
- 11.5 Where employees are likely to be involved in critical incidents because of the nature of their work, the Municipality must develop a procedure for initial counseling and follow-up. The same can apply to cases that involve threats of violence or suicide.
- 11.6 EAP training sessions will be arranged for managers and supervisors.

12. **PREVENTION ACTIVITIES**

Consistent with the objective of the EAP policy, preventative programs will be held where possible to educate employees about personal problems related to life style and work environment, and the possible responses. This may involve cooperation with the Public Health Services and the safety and health committee or the safety and health representative.

13. **MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE EAP**

- 13.1 An integral part of any EAP is the monitoring process that ensures that the service continues to operate effectively.
- 13.2 The monitoring, evaluation and review process requires service providers and employees alike, to review operations of the EAP.
- 13.3 The Municipality undertakes that all parties are adhering to the principles and spirit of the agreed policy statement.
- 13.4 That adequate emphasis is given to the preventative side of problems that become apparent.
- 13.5 That the service is making contact with those most in need of assistance, and such people are receiving the benefits of the programme.
- 13.6 Under resumption of duties, following a successful completion of treatment under the programme, no person will suffer any disadvantage.
- 13.7 Information and education to promote the health and well being of staff are provided.
- 13.8 Special attention is being devoted to facets of the work environment that may contribute to personal or work related problems.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROCEDURE

(ADDENDUM TO EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME)

1. PREAMBLE

(a) It is recognised that there is a problem of alcohol and drug abuse, with or without dependence, among the Municipal employees.

(b) It is acknowledged that substance abuse, or dependence is detrimental to the Municipality and to the employees who suffer its effects. Furthermore, abuse of dependence upon, alcohol or other drugs may have inter alia, one or more of the following effects: low performance, low morale, absenteeism, impaired judgement, deteriorating interpersonal behaviour, poor health and industrial accidents.

(c) It is accepted that the Municipality has a responsibility to assist employees who abuse or who are dependent upon alcohol and/or other drugs, so that such employees may overcome their problem.

(d) If an alcohol or drug abuser, or a person who is dependent upon these substances, refuses assistance or fails to make an effort to co-operate with this assistance available to him/her, then he/she may be disciplined for continued abuse which disrupts work in the Municipality establishments.

2. DEFINITIONS

(a) Alcohol/drug abuse - means the consumption by an employee of alcohol and/or any other drug for non-medical reasons which interferes with the employee's work, or which detrimentally affects the employee's performance or ability to do work, or his/her relationships at work, regardless of whether or not the employee is dependent upon alcohol or other drugs.

(b) Alcohol/drug dependence - means the habitual reliance upon or addiction to the consumption of alcohol or other drugs for non-medical reasons, or an inability to limit such consumption and which results in any of the problems mentioned above.

(c) Alcohol/drug related offence - means any breach of an employee's terms and conditions of employment which results wholly or mainly from excessive consumption of alcohol/drugs.

(d) Under the influence - means an employee has consumed alcohol/drugs whilst on duty or performed duties whilst still under the effects of alcohol/drugs which were not necessarily consumed during the official working day.

(e) Breathalyser test - means a portable electronically calibrated breathalyser test administered by trained people and following set procedures in order to determine whether the employee has a positive reading for alcohol.

3. THE MUNICIPALITY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

(a) The Municipality will not in any manner promote the use of alcohol/drugs for non-medical reasons, by employees.

(b) The Municipality will not permit any employee to consume any drug for non-medical reasons whilst on duty, nor will it permit any employee to remain on the municipal premises if there are reasonable grounds to suspect the employee has consumed alcohol/drugs either prior to commencement of duties or whilst undertaking his/her duties.

(c) The Municipality will provide opportunities for all of its employees to be educated and informed of the hazards of alcohol and other drug abuse, and of the contents of this policy.

4. TESTING OF EMPLOYEES SUSPECTED OF BEING INTOXICATED

In order to promote the creation of an alcohol and drug free workplace and to protect all employees from the safety hazard presented by employees under the influence of alcohol/drugs, the following provisions will apply :-

(a) Employees who are in doubt about their ability to work safely may ask to be alcohol-tested before commencing duties. Should the results be positive, they will be instructed to take unpaid leave for that day, but they will not be disciplined. However should this practice be abused, appropriate action will be taken.

(b) Should an employee, supervisor or manager, have reasonable grounds to suspect that an employee is under the influence of alcohol/drugs, either upon reporting for duty or at any time during his/her shift, the employee may be requested to undergo a breathalyser test in order to ascertain the validity of these concerns. A positive reading on the alcohol tester will deem to indicate that the employee is under the influence of alcohol, irrespective of the reading.

(c) In all circumstances behavioural characteristics should be recorded, some examples being the smell of alcohol on breath, inappropriate responses, condition of eyes, impaired speech, mood changes, unsteadiness of gait.

(d) Should the employee have a positive reading or refuse to be tested, he/she will be required to leave the municipal premises and salary adjustments will be as follows:-

Less than half a shift worked - 1 day unpaid.

Between a half and full shift worked - ½ day unpaid.

(e) Should the reading be negative despite the employee's changed behaviour, he/she will be requested to provide a urine/blood sample for analysis for the presence of drugs other than alcohol, such sample to be taken by the Occupational Health and Safety clinic or a reputable company, whereat a witness must be present.

(f) The employee may refuse to undergo a breathalyser or provide the urine/blood sample but if he/she does so this fact will be noted by the tester/manager/supervisor, and may be used when giving evidence before the disciplinary enquiry.

(g) Should it appear that the employee may, as a result of his/her condition, be a danger to him/herself or others, the Municipality should where possible make efforts to ensure that the employee is able to return home safely.

(h) As soon as possible after the beginning of the next shift, the employee should be informed that a disciplinary enquiry will be held and the principle outlined below will apply :-

(i) If, at the enquiry, it emerges that the employee might be dependent upon alcohol/drugs then he/she will be accorded the opportunity of being referred to the E.A.P. Co-ordinator with a view to obtaining a more detailed assessment of his/her situation and agreeing upon the appropriate course to follow.

(ii) While the disciplinary enquiry may be adjourned pending the outcome of the assessment process the acceptance of the offer of help will not prevent appropriate disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

(iii) Should the E.A.P. Co-ordinator's assessment (corroborated by a specialised treatment or counselling facility) be that the employee is dependent upon alcohol/drugs the provisions contained in the Municipality's E.A.P. Policy document will apply.

(iv) Should the employee accept counselling or treatment, but then fail to comply with the conditions of attending such a counselling or treatment programme, the matter will be handled in terms of the Municipality's E.A.P. Policy document.

(v) Any employee who has been found to have consumed alcohol/drugs prior to reporting for duty, or whilst on duty, may be required to undergo periodic tests as part of the corrective measures initiated in terms of this agreement.

(vi) The severity of sanction for being under the influence of alcohol/drugs will be dependent upon the nature of the employee's job, suffice to say that where actions arising from alcohol/drugs endanger the safety of any employee or member of the public, then the sanction may be that of dismissal for a first time offence.