

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Polokwane Municipality recognizes the fact that personal problems can affect employees' job performance. As a result, the Municipality recognizes its responsibility to create and maintain a healthy and supportive working environment by establishing Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

2. PURPOSE

Employee Assistance Programme ensures that employees at all levels in the Municipality have the opportunity to obtain professional assistance in an atmosphere of privacy and confidentiality. EAP is aimed at providing a service that will assist employees in preventing or overcoming problems that will affect job performance. The programme offers measures aimed at fostering a healthy way of living, enhancing the quality of life of all employees, especially those in need of assistance.

3. DEFINITION

Employee Assistance Programme is defined as an employer initiated programme designed to assist in the early identification and resolution of productivity related problems associated with employees' personal concerns, which include but are not limited to marital, family, financial, health, alcohol, drug, stress, emotional, work – related and other personal concerns which may affect job performance.

4. PRINCIPLES

- (a) All the information that is gathered during the utilization of the programme shall not be disclosed to anyone, without a written consent of the employee concerned. Disclosure can only be done if an employee is a danger to himself and or others, or if the information is required in terms of law or court order. Records of employees who utilize the service will not be kept in the personnel files of the municipality.
- (b) Employee Assistance Programme will be available and accessible to all the employees, regardless of position or level in the municipality.
- (c) The decision to seek or accept assistance through EAP will not adversely affect an employee's job security or advancement opportunities. However, participation in the programme in no way

relieves the employee of the responsibility to meet acceptable work performance and attendance standards.

- (d) Time off and the necessary treatment expense will be provided to eligible employees consistent with current policy and applicable medical aid coverage.
- (e) Employees who participate in the programme will receive the same treatment as those with medical problems. There will not be preferential or adverse treatment for employees who use EAP.
- (f) Participation in the programme shall be voluntary. The decision to continue in the programme is the employee's responsibility. However, managers will not be denied the prerogative to recommend troubled employees for assistance. If troubled employees who are referred to the programme refuse to be given assistance, whereas their job performance is deteriorating, such employees are subjecting themselves to disciplinary action.
- (g) Any employee or participating party shall not use the programme for ulterior motives.
- (h) **EAP is not a replacement of a disciplinary procedure and it should not be viewed as such by employees.**

6. CONSULTATION AND REFFERAL PROCEDURE

6.1. CONSULTATION

- (a) Appointments should be made with the EAP coordinator telephonically or personally. Emergency cases will be dealt with as soon as possible, within 72 hours.
- (b) The EAP coordinator will do intake and assessment of the employee's problem during the initial consultation. Determination of a suitable plan of action will be done with the employee client. The action plan might include continuation with the case, by the EAP coordinator, or referral to an external service provider like a psychologist, social worker, etc, for further assistance.
- (c) The council will pay for two counselling sessions per employee. The employee concerned will be responsible for the payment of other sessions if they exceed two. The medical aid could be used for other sessions.
- (d) It is the responsibility of both the employee and the EAP coordinator to inform the supervisor if the employee is referred to an external service provider. This should be done without compromising confidentiality of the consultation process.

- (e) Reports and records will be kept in a lockable cabinet for a period not exceeding five years in the office of the EAP coordinator, before being destroyed.

6.2. REFERRAL

Referral to EAP can be done in three ways, i.e, self – referral, informal referral, and formal referral.

Self-referral: An employee can consult the EAP coordinator voluntarily to seek for assistance.

Informal referral: An employee might receive an advice or recommendation from a colleague, friend, manager or union representative to consult the EAP coordinator. No documentation is necessary.

Formal (mandatory) referral: Formal referrals could be done if an employee discloses a problem of substance abuse voluntarily, and if the result of a problem serious enough to warrant disciplinary action up to and including termination; when there is a drop in performance, absenteeism escalates, etc.

Under circumstances that warrant a mandatory (formal) referral, the employee's supervisor and the Human Resource Manager will together contact the EAP coordinator to discuss the situation. The supervisor and the Human Resource Manager will meet with the employee concerned. Refusal to accept referral to EAP and to follow EAP recommendations is grounds for termination.

The Human Resource Manager will be informed whether or not the employee keeps appointments and is following recommendations for addressing the problem.

6.3. TRAUMATIC EVENT DEBRIEFING PROGRAMME

This programme allows employees who have experienced a traumatic event to discuss their personal reactions in a confidential and supportive environment. Traumatic events may include the following:

- Accidents at work causing serious injury or death.
- Physical violence against an employee.
- The death or suicide of an employee's family member, friend or client.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VARIOUS ROLE PLAYERS

7.1. MANAGEMENT

Management will be responsible for supporting the programme. Management is also responsible for ensuring that there is a budget for the programme. Involvement in policymaking and review is their responsibility. Management should encourage troubled employees to access EAP. They should refer employees when there are job performance problems. They should seek consultation when necessary.

7.2. EAP COORDINATOR

- Designing and coordinating the programme.
- Assessing the needs of the employees, and offering professional and confidential service.
- Establish and maintain effective and confidential record keeping and data management reporting system.
- Market EAP services to educate employees about the availability of the programme.
- Render EAP service to all employees irrespective of their occupational level.
- Expert consultation with management and other stakeholders, and training to appropriate persons in the early identification and resolution of job performance to manage troubled employees.
- Referral of troubled employees for appropriate treatment and referral.
- Formation of linkages between work – site EAP, other service providers and community resources to maintain effective relations with the resources for treatment purposes.
- Provide follow up service to assess the effects of EAP services on the work, municipality and employee job performance.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

7.3. SUPERVISORS

Supervisors will be responsible for identifying and referring troubled employees to the EAP professional.

7.4. UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Union representatives will emphasize prevention and early identification on employees' problems. When the union knows an employee's problems, the representative shall consult with the employee concerned to encourage self-referral to EAP.

7.5. **EMPLOYEES**

Employees will have to acquaint themselves with the programme and use it to their benefit.

8. **INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

- The EAP will be established within the Labour Relations Sub – unit, in Human Resources unit.
- The Municipality shall encourage employees to contribute towards a medical aid scheme, which can make treatment more accessible and affordable to them and their dependants.

9. **MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING.**

Monitoring and evaluation of the programme will be an ongoing process. Evaluation of the following aspects will be done through questionnaires and or interviews:

- The availability and accessibility of EAP to employees.
- Employee client, union representative, supervisor satisfaction.
- The improvement of productivity of employee clients.
- Services offered by external service providers and the outcome thereof.
- Number of cases received, focusing on the source of referral and type of problems.
- Number of employee clients who completed treatment versus those who did not complete treatment.
- Number of employee clients who have been dismissed due to failed rehabilitation.

The advisory committee, the EAP coordinator, or external consultant may be used to evaluate the programme on an annual basis.