



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Why Have a Policy?

A workplace policy provides the framework for action to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and manage its impact. It:

- makes an explicit commitment to municipality's action;
- ensures consistency with appropriate national laws;
- lays down a standard of behaviour for all employees (whether infected or not);
- gives guidance to supervisors and managers;
- helps employees living with HIV/AIDS to understand what support and care they will receive, so they are more likely to come forward for voluntary testing;
- helps to stop the spread of the virus through prevention programmes;
- assists the municipality to plan for HIV/AIDS and manage its impact, so ultimately saving money.

Policies should be shaped by local needs and conditions - no single policy is relevant to all situations - but the components below can usefully be included. Having taken into account the specific needs of Fezile Dabi District Municipality, the policy outlined below is recommended as the final product.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Fezile Dabi District Municipality (Fezile Dabi) values all its employees and commits itself to promoting their well-being. It recognises that un-addressed personal, interpersonal and organisational problems can and usually lead to performance problems, attendance problems, overuse of medical/health benefits, workers compensation and disability cases, disciplinary actions, and accidents and litigation costs (financial and productivity losses to a work organisation). Most of these difficulties, once identified early and referred to appropriate assistance, can be resolved to the benefit of both the staff member and the municipality.

The establishment of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Unit demonstrates the commitment of the Municipality to wellness in the work place. The EAP ensures that members of staff have access to counselling, advice, training and support.

The explicit aim of the EAP is to improve the quality of life of all employees by providing support and helping to alleviate the impact of everyday work and personal and family problems. EAP offers new and exciting prospects to assist in the well-being of employees while at the same time increasing the effectiveness of the municipality.

Participation in the programme is voluntary and will not jeopardise job security. The programme does not intend to interfere with workers' private lives. However when a member does not perform according to the standard expected, management has a right to intervene.

The programme is a cost free worksite based programme providing confidential and professional assistance to employees of municipality and their dependants. EAP does not replace any existing procedures, but provides innovative methods of managing performance related problems. The benefits of the EAP may be summarised as follows:

- Addressing problems early prevents complications that negatively affect both work performance and life in general;
- Fostering employee well-being;
- Sustained optimal functioning of staff leads to greater productivity and improved quality of life for individuals and their families;
- Provision of an EAP encourages an organisational culture that is both task-oriented and caring.

2. DEFINITION OF THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Employee assistance programme is a worksite-based intervention programme aimed at the early identification and/or resolution of both work and personal problems that may adversely affect performance. These problems may include, but are not limited to health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal concerns which may adversely affect employee job performance.

The EAP is therefore a short term designed counselling resource that relies on referral and networking to provide greater support in minimizing the impact of everyday life on job performance and improving the employee's quality of life.

3. EAP POLICY CONTEXT

THE Fezile Dabi EAP Policy recognises the broader policy context in which it has been formulated and shall operate. The following statutes, documents and programmes have largely shaped the provisions of the EAP:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993)
- Conditions of Employment
- Disciplinary Code and Grievance Procedure
- Labour Relations Act Fezile Dabi Human Resources Policy
- Fezile Dabi HIV/AIDS Policy

4. EAP PRINCIPLES

The Fezile Dabi District Municipality believes that the success of the EAP depends on the degree to which management, employee organizations and employees uphold, support and promote the implementation and maintenance of the following EAP principles:

Confidentiality

Confidentiality underpins consultation processes in the EAP programme. Personal problems of employees utilising the programme will be treated in a confidential manner to ensure that staff have no concerns that participation in the programme will in any way affect their privacy, dignity or standing in the municipality.

The practitioners will be sensitive to the difference existing between confidentiality and shared confidentiality. The latter might be necessary among those assisting the client. Shared confidentiality occurs only if it contributes towards solving the client's problem, and refers to confidential information being

shared by professionals and persons close to the client who are involved with the client's problem-solving strategy. Shared confidentiality has to be known and approved by the client.

In the case of a formal management referral, the employee must give consent in writing that the EA Practitioner may share information or give report on his/her progress.

Confidentiality is breached only when required to do so by law court order or Government regulation, when a user of the service is likely to cause serious harm to themselves or to other people, when written permission has been given by the user of the service, or if there are any predetermined circumstances which have been identified and communicated to the employee and which are clearly stated and understood by the staff member at the start of counselling/advice.

Accessibility

All employees of the municipality and their dependants have reasonable access to the Programme either as referrals from supervisors or voluntary self-referral basis.

Neutrality

Due to the nature of some problems experienced by employees, there will be actual or perceived overlap between EAP and other processes in the municipality.

The EAP will at all times focus on the best interest of both the municipality and that of employees. Where management or labour issues are involved, the relevant mechanisms and procedures will apply in their usual manner. To this end, the following applies:

- EAP is not intended to replace or address issues of personnel selection or evaluation.
- EAP will refer relevant labour or industrial related issues to the relevant sub directorate.
- EAP will also refer appropriately issues of performance management

Voluntary participation

Participating in the programme will be voluntary. Management is encouraged to refer employees to EAP in circumstances in which their subordinates are likely to benefit from the EAP. The decision to accept assistance remains the free choice of the employee.

Free from stigmatisation

Measures will be taken to protect employees from victimization or discrimination in line with the municipality's observance of employees' rights.

Staff will be able to participate in the EAP without pressure, stigma or judgment. Use of the programme carries no negative implications for job security or future advancement. Employees making use of the EAP should not be victimized or discriminated against in any way.

Empowering environment

The programme is aimed at creating an environment, which supports the continued life-long development of all staff members and their capacities. Learning opportunities for everyone participating in the EAP will be provided.

5. VISION

To strive for a positive, motivated, healthy and hard free workforce.

6. MISSION

To establish and maintain a professional, effective, and qualitative Employee Assistance Programme aimed at supporting and developing the present and potential capacity of employees and the organization to make behavioural, psychological and environmental adjustments to ensure improved health, quality of life and productivity within Fezile Dabi

7. EAP OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the Municipality's EAP is to assist employees identify, and effectively resolve problems that prevent them from functioning optimally in general life and rendering peak performance in the workplace.

The EAP unit will pursue the following objectives:

- Provision of a professional EAP service to all employees of Fezile Dabi.
- Ensuring the service is demand-led through needs assessment and implementation plans.
- Maintaining a continuing professional development (CPD) programme for EAP practitioners to ensure professionalism and innovation.
- Providing an EAP orientation and training programme to management, and supervisors to make them aware of their responsibilities within the programme.

- Provision of an awareness and prevention programme for employees through the provision of information and education.
- Assisting employees to overcome their problems by offering counselling and referral to qualified, registered professionals or institutions if and when necessary.
- Evaluating the programme, functions, policy and procedures and, where necessary, making adjustments

8. EAP FUNCTIONS

- Promotion of EAP services to all staff of the municipality;
- Training of managers and supervisors on EAP referral procedures, i.e. Identification, confrontation and referral of a troubled employee to the unit for assistance;
- Identification of employees' behavioural problems based on job performance issues;
- Provision of expert consultation to supervisors, managers and labour organization on how to take appropriate steps in utilizing employee assistance policy and procedures;
- Confidential assessment of employees' personal problems;
- Intervention with employees regarding performance issues;
- Short term counselling and case management;
- Provision of life skills, awareness and educational programmes promoting healthy lifestyles and coping skills
- Micro- linkages with counselling, treatment and other community resources;
- Creation and maintenance of macro- linkages between the municipality and counselling, treatment and other community resources;
- Referral and follow up services;
- Programme evaluation; and
- Records keeping.

9. STAKEHOLDERS OF THE EAP

The following constitute the stakeholders for the EAP:

- Management
- Supervisors
- Employees
- Union Representatives
- Development Programmes
- EAP Practitioners and Facilitators

10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Senior Management

The Senior Management's role will be one of facilitating policy development and review, resource allocation as well as monitoring and evaluation of the EAP within its planning, performance and reporting cycles. The specific issues include the following:

- Establishing appropriate structures and mechanisms for complying with minimum standards for EAP set by the Employee Assistance Programme Association of South Africa (EAPA – SA).
- The municipality will utilise an advisory committee or other equivalent structure for this purpose. The structure to be utilized for supporting EAP and complying with the minimum standards will have terms of reference covering at least the following:
 - Advising on EAP design, development, planning and implementation
 - Supporting confidentiality EAP safeguards.
 - Provide appropriate training and orientation of supervisors on identifying and referring troubled employees.
 - Promote harmonious and collegial relationships among the different structures and levels within the municipality.
 - Assist directly with the marketing and promotion of the EAP.
 - Developing ongoing needs assessment.
 - Contribute to programme evaluation procedure
- Since the municipality has vested interest in the well being of its employees and their development, Senior Management is committed to assist employees in identifying the nature of their problems and providing means or services to resolve them.
- The Senior Management will also see to it that the role-players are briefed on / or receive basic training to fulfil their responsibilities and/ or exercise their rights.
- To endorse the programme and give it visible support. The onus is on senior management to ensure its implementation in their programmes.

Supervisors

The supervisor has a key role in the municipality's EAP. In order to ensure the effective functioning and implementation of the program, the Supervisor should therefore:

- Ensure that employees clearly understand what is expected of them in terms of job performance and behaviour.
- Make sure that they are aware of and understand the services available from EAP.
- Be alert to changes in the work performance and/or behaviour of employees.
- Recommend appropriate corrective action, which may include an offer of assistance through EAP, if problems are thought to be personal. The EAP is designed to assist the supervisor in addressing the employee's personal problems.
- Recommend EAP to employees and stress that all information is treated as confidential.
- Inform the EAP/HR office of a referral.
- Allow the employee reasonable paid time off to attend EAP intervention and/or therapeutic resources.
- Arrange for the employee to adjust working arrangements where practicable in order to facilitate the completion of and participation in the appropriate treatment/counselling program.
- Supervisors must refrain from attempting to diagnose the employee's personal problem or pass a judgment.
- Under no circumstances may an employee be prevented from receiving assistance.
- Supervisors should fulfil a supportive role towards the employee while treatment/ counselling is continuing. During and after treatment, the supervisor should assist in reintegrating the employee into the work environment.
- The supervisor should give feedback to the practitioner concerning work performance during treatment/ counselling.

Employees

- The employee is obliged to maintain satisfactory work performance and conduct on the job. If the employee recognizes the need for assistance, he/she should contact the EAP office prior to his/her work performance being adversely affected.
- Contact with either of the above will be treated confidentially.
- Participation is voluntary.
- The employee need not identify the exact nature of his/her problem to the EAP Practitioner. However, it would be helpful in order to select the most appropriate resource for referral.

- It is requested but not mandatory that the outcome of the referral be discussed briefly with the EAP Practitioner (i.e. it was helpful, satisfactory, poor etc.). This will assist in ensuring that the service is adequate for other employees requiring assistance in the future or to make alternative arrangements.
- If the referral for such a program was a formal referral, the employee will be requested to sign a release of information form notifying the EAP Office and Supervisor that the treatment has been completed satisfactorily or not, and also allowing the therapist to provide periodic progress reports to the EAP Office/Supervisor.
- With the exception of the initial assessment interview, it is possible for consultations to be made outside of normal working hours on a date and time agreed between the employee and the service provider.

EAP Practitioner

The responsibilities of the practitioner are:

- Management of the EAP in the most efficient and cost-effective way.
- Co-ordinate with employees, employee representatives and Management and make referrals to the service providers.
- Publicise the intent and purpose of the EAP Program.
- Utilise any other personnel designated by Management to accomplish the EAP goals.
- Monitor referrals and provide assistance to service providers if requested.
- Provide assistance to supervisors and management in the identification of employees with performance and behaviour related problems.
- Ensure the confidentiality of information obtained about employees and their dependants.
- Department Coordinators may not counsel but must facilitate the most appropriate access to EAP resource.
- Providing support to employees.

Prevention of abuse of services

Whilst the municipality is committed to the provision of the services in the EAP, there is also a need to prevent abuse of the programme. In this regard, employees and the other stakeholders have the responsibility of ensuring that the EAP is not abused. Specifically, the following is pertinent:

- Employees, who default on a treatment or rehabilitation course, refuse to comply with counselling or do not keep appointments will be removed from the programme.
- If a manager or supervisor interferes with or disrupts the utilization of the service by an employee and the employee is unable to resolve it directly

with the manager or supervisor, the employee has the right to take up the matter with the next higher level of authority.

- Participation in the EAP will not affect the employee's employment or career development. On the other hand, employees' participation will not protect the employees from disciplinary action for continued poor work performance or misconduct.
- EAP Practitioners should not in any way take part in other Human Resources functions such as recruitment, selections and disciplinary actions.

11. SERVICE AVAILABLE

The following services are available:

Counselling/therapeutic functions

While not exclusive, EAP using Individual, Group, and Community interventions; deals primarily with employees who experience the following:

Psychosocial Problems

- Dependence on alcohol or drugs.
- Social problems
- Communication problems
- Behaviour problems
- Impaired relationships (e.g. marital)
- Financial difficulties
- Legal problems

Mental Health Problems

- Phobias (irrational fears)
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicidal tendencies
- Dealing with AIDS / HIV and other terminal diseases
- Trauma

Work Related Problems

- Adjustment problems
- Harassment
- Ill-health retirement
- Retrenchment
- Work Relations
- Work stress

Re-integration into the Workplace during and after Treatment

The purpose of supporting an employee during his re-integration into the work situation during or after treatment is to raise the chances of success of the therapeutic input to the maximum.

Those who enter into the EAP voluntarily may choose whether they wish to make use of this function. When an employee receives assistance in terms of the formal procedure, involvement in the support function is obligatory/compulsory.

The EAP office, in liaison with the referring supervisor should coordinate the re-integration function, which takes place as follows:

- At a given point in the employee's treatment as determined by the therapist, the EAP office contacts the supervisor concerned in order to initiate support for the employee's re-integration into his work situation. At this stage, decisions are made regarding the expectations that can be set for the employee in terms of work assignments; the therapeutic objectives still to be achieved; the role of the therapist, employee, supervisor, and EAP Practitioner in realising the above objectives; how the employee's progress will be monitored and evaluated against the background of the above mentioned expectations and objectives.

The purpose of this function is not only to monitor the employee's progress, but particularly, to ensure that he/she makes sufficient progress to move out of the EAP structure.

Dealing with Regression

It may happen that during or after treatment that the employee's job performance/behaviour shows signs of deterioration. If this occurs, the following steps are to be taken:

- Regardless of whether or not the employee agrees to see the EAP office, the EAP office is to be contacted, and informed of the situation.
- The employee urgently needs counselling by someone who is familiar with the problem.
- The problem will be addressed in terms of the provisions of the EAP, and the specific circumstances of the case – either additional counselling, or if this has already failed, disciplinary action will have to be instituted / continued where applicable.

Follow-up

The EAP Practitioner will make follow-ups regarding the job performance after re-entry of an employee who has undergone treatment. Follow up services will be done also in respect of employees referred for external services, getting feedback on their progress during therapy. Follow-ups would then assist in the evaluation of the programme.

12. SERVICE UTILIZATION

Consultation

Any employee can contact the EAP Office for advice with a personal problem. The most appropriate therapy or service will be provided.

Voluntarism

Participation in the EAP is voluntary. Each employee has the right to choose whether he/she wishes to use the services provided.

Self Referral

Employees are free to decide to use EAP services. The employee contacts the supervisor or the EAP Practitioner confidentially.

12 Informal Referral

A colleague, friend, family member, or shop steward, may make an informal proposal to an employee to see the EAP Practitioner, as he/she believes that the employee has a problem, which could be addressed through the EAP. The employee may accept or reject the offer of assistance.

Formal Referral

Formal referrals take place where a supervisor or a chairperson of a disciplinary enquiry formally refers an employee to the EAP Office as a consequence of a disciplinary decision, or where the supervisor/manager believes that an employee's personal problem is affecting his/her behaviour or performance adversely. An internal referral form should be filled in and submitted to the EAP Office. The form covers issues of informed consent regarding referral and shared confidentiality. Employees being formally referred to EAP have the right to decline such referral. Such refusal will be noted and the employee will be subject

to the normal discipline should his performance and/or behaviour not be resolved.

13. PROBLEM INDICATORS

Emotional/Behaviour Problems may be indicated by the following symptoms:

- Absenteeism, frequent unplanned leave, late coming and early departures. The staff member will create various reasons for staying away from work.
- Frequent sick leave with no evidence of a letter from a medical doctor.
- Work quality or quantity deterioration. Lowered productivity: carelessness, forgetfulness, absentmindedness, and sloppy work
- Accidents
- Physical and/or appearance deterioration
- Behavioural changes
- Disruptive work behaviour
- Quarrelsome.
- Frequent change of moods. Emotional outbursts, irritability, unreliability, increased amount of time spent on the telephone or withdrawal.

14. REPORTING

Reports will be treated as confidential, with feedback limited to the relevant managers/ supervisors should it be necessary and with the concerned employee's consent to such an arrangement. No document will be put on the employee's personal file.

The EAP will supply the Director: Corporate Affairs and Human Resources Manager with a quarterly report containing particulars on utilization, results and costs of the EAP. The report will not contain any personal information, except under circumstances of shared confidentiality.

15. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

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 specialized treatment, care and rehabilitation, and those that had to be released from their duties. Policy issues and the cost effectiveness of the programme will also be evaluated from time to time.

16. AUTHORITY

Formulation Policy : Director Corporate Services
Authorisation Policy : Council
Ownership & Maintenance Manager : Deputy Director: Corporate
Services