

MTHONJANENI MUNICIPALITY



EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Mthonjaneni Local Municipality cares about the health and social well-being of its employees and recognizes that there are a number of personal problems which impact negatively to the employees' personal and work lives. Personal problems can have a detrimental effect on performance, productivity and behavior in the workplace.

2. DEFINITION

An Employee Assistance Programme is a work-site based programme designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems associated with employees impaired 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.

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1. As a result of the above, the Municipality provides an Employee Assistance Programme which is a confidential assistance and/or advisory service designed to assist employees in dealing with their problems.
- 3.2. The Employee Assistance Programme is available to all employees of the Municipality and persons experiencing problems are encouraged to seek advice from the Employee Assistance Programme Coordinator.
- 3.3. Participation in this programme is voluntary and utilisation of the programme will not jeopardise employees' 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 or to counsel them on these problems. Referral to the Employee Assistance Programme Coordinator 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 Coordinator training in respect of the objectives, benefits and procedures involved in this programme, and the impact of the programme on the organisation.
- 3.6. To assist employees participating in the programme, such employees may utilise available sick leave, or vacation leave when available sick leave has been exhausted when requiring admission to a treatment facility.
- 3.7. Participation in the Employee Assistance Programme does NOT replace standard disciplinary/incapacity procedures, nor does it constitute a *de facto* exemption from such procedures.

4. AREAS OF ASSISTANCE

4.1 The programme will provide assistance in respect of, but not limited to:

- Marital, family and relationship problems
- Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, prescription and over-the-counter medication)
- HIV/AIDS and other dreaded diseases
- Violence and trauma counselling
- Stress (social and job related)
- Sexual Harassment
- Psychological problems
- Financial management problems
- Gambling
- Rape
- Absenteeism
- Bullying

5. PRINCIPLES

a) Confidentiality

All employee records shall be kept in the strictest of confidence. 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. Disclosure of information without the express written consent from the employee is prohibited. Any breach of the confidentiality of an employee shall be dealt with in terms of the Disciplinary Code, *unless such breach is deemed legitimate in terms of the laws of South Africa.*

b) Accessibility

Mthonjaneni Local Municipality shall ensure that the programme is accessible to all employees regardless of their positions within the organisation.

c) Neutrality

The Employee Assistance Programme shall not be utilised as a disciplinary tool for Management, subject to certain conditions. By the same token, the programme cannot be utilised as a defence mechanism for misconduct on the part of employees.

d) Voluntarism

The employee shall not be forced to access the EAP, but voluntarism (self-referral) will be encouraged, since it results in the earliest intervention possible.

e) Constructive Coercion

Once training and development interventions have been exhausted in respect of an employee who is not performing up to an acceptable standard, the supervisor or manager can persuade the affected employee to consult the Employee Assistance Programme official for assistance. *Where an employee refuses this offer of assistance and a decline in the work performance continues, such employee shall not be exempted from facing disciplinary action.*

f) Consultation

The Municipality's EAP policy has been developed and will be implemented in consultation with employees at all levels.

g) Non-discrimination

Participation in the Employee Assistance Programme is voluntary and utilisation of same will not jeopardise employees' promotional opportunity.

h) Cost Implications

The municipality will, as far as possible, utilise the services of state institutions or organisations for referrals. Should an employee who is not a member of a Medical Aid Scheme be required to undergo treatment at such institution/organisation, the municipality will be responsible for payment of the first complete treatment only. In all other instances, where illnesses or conditions are covered by a Medical Aid Scheme, employees will be required to submit claims in the normal way.

Should the Medical Aid Scheme fail to cover the full treatment cost, then the municipality will be responsible for the shortfall in respect of the first complete treatment only.

Where the staff member is a contributing member of a medical aid scheme, and that staff member chooses not to be referred to a state institution, he/ she will be responsible for the payment of his/her treatment by a medical practitioner of his/her choice.

In the event of an employee defaulting in the treatment programme, either voluntarily or due to poor participation and motivation, any payments paid by the municipality on behalf of the employee will be recovered from the employee.

Employees shall utilise their sick leave days for consultation or treatment. Once this leave is exhausted, an employees' vacation leave may be used.

If an improvement in the job performance or behavior of the employee is evident after treatment, the vacation leave days which were used for consultation or treatment will be converted to special leave days.

i) Default/ Discontinuance

Should an employee decide to discontinue or be expelled from the recommended treatment or counselling programme, such employee must inform the Employee Assistance Coordinator, following which the coordinator will inform the employee that should job performance difficulties arise as a result of an unresolved problems, the employee may face disciplinary action.

j) Relapse

In the event of a relapse after treatment has been administered, it is at the discretion of Management whether to enforce disciplinary measures or to re-instate assistance. The decision will be based on the merits of each individual case.

If the employee relapses after two (2) years of sustained improvement in job performance after the initial treatment, the conditions and payment pertaining to a first time treatment will prevail.

k) Grievance Procedure

The municipality should ensure that the rights of employees with regard to the Employee Assistance Programme and the remedies available to them in the event of the breach of such rights become integrated into the existing grievance procedure.

6. PROCEDURE

Employees can access the Employee Assistance Programme in any one of the following manners:

6.1 Self-Referral

An employee, through a process of self-realisation, recognizes that a problem exists and seeks assistance by consulting the Employee Assistance Programme Official directly. Self-referrals are treated with strict confidentiality. *Employees who voluntarily seek assistance shall apprise their supervisors of appointments with the Employee assistance Programme official.*

6.2 Formal Referral

A supervisor or manager who is concerned about the decline in an employee's performance, attitude and/or behavior may refer said employee, with the employee's consent, to an Employee Assistance Programme official for assistance. The supervisor or manager is required to complete the referral form and submit same to the Employee Assistance Programme Official at least three (3) days prior to the interview.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Management

It is the responsibility of Management to display visible support to the policy. Management must ensure that the Employee Assistance Programme's consulting premises are accessible to employees. Management must be well versed with the principles of the Employee Assistance Programme.

7.2 Employee Assistance Coordinator

This official is responsible for:

- Promoting an Employee Assistance Programme throughout the municipality.
- Establishing and maintaining links with authentic referral institutions.
- Conducting counselling sessions.
- Safekeeping of confidential records as regards interviews and referrals.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the Employee Assistance Programme effectiveness.
- Training of supervisors.

7.3 Supervisors

Supervisors shall:

- Be alert and observe the performance of their subordinates with a view to identifying any changes in performance and declines in performance.
- Keep records of deteriorating job performance, absenteeism, and tardiness, failure to meet deadlines, physical appearance or any other visible behavioral change.
- Inform their subordinates about the observed changes.
- Inform their subordinates about the value of the Employee Assistance Programme.
- Refer the affected employee to the Employee Assistance Coordinator.
- Attend all training sessions and be well versed with the Employee Assistance Programme.

7.4 Employees

It is the responsibility of the affected employee to:

- Note his/her behavioral change and take the initiative of utilizing Employee Assistance Programmes.
- Ensure total co-operation in respect of appointments for consultation, treatment and avoiding relapses.
- Attend information sessions and be well versed with the Employee Assistance Programme.

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Employee Assistance Programme shall be continuously monitored and evaluated if necessary, annually by the Employee Assistance Committee and Management.