

# **MANTSOPA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**



## **POLICY ON EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

## **Mantsopa Local Municipality Employee Assistance Programme Policy**

<b><i>Next Review Date</i></b>	2010
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### **Approval of Policy**

Please note that the implementation of the policy contained in this document is subject to approval and signing off by all relevant Heads and/or Committees, including but not limited to:

- Municipal Manager; and
- Municipal Council.

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## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of the EAP is to enable the municipal management to provide all employees who develop, or have developed, socio-social problems that impair or threaten their work performance and/or general well-being, with the necessary assistance, as soon as possible, in order to restore or improve their work performance and/or well being.
- 1.2 In this regard, the municipality has put in place mechanisms to monitor and track trends that may develop so that problems can be identified early and be addressed speedily.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy and procedure applies to all Officials, irrespective of whether or not they are employed for an indefinite period, a fixed term, or on a temporary basis.

## **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 For the purposes of this policy –  
    **“Interventions”** mean initiatives that have as their objective the rendering of confidential, preventative, supportive, uplifting and rehabilitative services to Officials who experience or foresee personal problems.

## **4. Principles**

- 4.1 Only appropriately qualified, registered and skilled individuals may be used to provide support to Officials in terms of the EAP.
- 4.2 Officials must seek assistance as early as possible. Similarly, the Official's supervisor or manager should detect problems or potential problems as soon as reasonably possible. The earlier the detection, the sooner the appropriate intervention can be applied to alleviate distress and/or a decline in work performance.
- 4.3 It is not up to the manager or supervisor to diagnose the nature of the personal problem – e.g. addiction. The manager or supervisor must refer the Official to the EAP

Coordinator or other relevant person that can advise of the EAP services available and how to access them.

- 4.4 The EAP is not designed to interfere with an employee's private life.
- 4.5 Officials are encouraged to seek voluntary (self-referral), confidential assistance by utilising the EAP services offered. The EAP is strictly voluntary. It can be recommended to the Official but he/she cannot be compelled to get the help offered by the EAP.
- 4.6 Participation in the EAP will in no way be used to discriminate against or penalise the Official.
- 4.7 Participation in the EAP does not affect management's right and responsibility to maintain discipline and to take disciplinary action where appropriate.
- 4.8 The EAP is not intended to be used as a conflict resolution mechanism between Officials and/or managers. Matters of such nature should be resolved through the established procedures, e.g. grievance procedure. The EAP can, however, be used to assist Officials in dealing with the personal consequences of conflicts which might be work related (e.g. counselling for sexual harassment).

## **5. Policy Provisions**

- 5.1 The municipality will provide EAP services intended to provide assistance to Officials who experience psychosocial or personal difficulties.
- 5.2 The intervention and support mechanisms include preventative, supportive, uplifting and rehabilitative services and programmes.
- 5.3 The EAP provides assistance with a broad range of personal concerns, including, but not necessarily limited to:
  - 5.3.1 Marital, family and relationship problems
  - 5.3.2 Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, prescription medication and other addictive behaviours such as gambling)
  - 5.3.3 HIV/AIDS counselling

- 5.3.4 Workplace Violence and Trauma Counselling
  - 5.3.5 Workplace discrimination or victimisation
  - 5.3.6 Personal debt and financial management problems
  - 5.3.7 Stress (family, social, job)
  - 5.3.8 Family Violence
  - 5.3.9 Psychological problems
  - 5.3.10 Sexual Harassment
  - 5.3.11 Work related conflicts
- 5.4 Confidentiality will be strictly observed. Information will not be released to anyone without the Official's consent.
- 5.5 An Officials spouse/partner and/or children may also participate in the EAP where the Official's difficulty relates to or affects them directly.

## **6. Procedures**

### **6.1 Advisory Committee and Service Providers**

- 6.1.1 The EAP Advisory Committee will be composed of a member from Corporate Services (the EAP Coordinator), a manager, a representative of each recognised Union, and such advisors that the Committee may suggest.
- 6.1.2 The Committee will investigate and recommend to the Municipal Manager appropriate service providers that could be used in the provision of EAP services.
- 6.1.3 The Committee must have due regard to the costs of any of the services to be borne by the municipality. The Municipal Manager will consider the Committee's proposals, which may be amended and sent to the Municipal Council for approval.
- 6.1.4 Consideration should be given to using public community services as an initial first step as far as reasonably possible (e.g. FAMSA).
- 6.1.5 Any Official may consult, on a confidential basis, with the EAP Coordinator regarding the programme and assistance. Where possible, the EAP

Coordinator will provide counselling or other assistance to the Official. Where further or other assistance is required, the Coordinator will advise the Official of the list of service providers the Official can approach – including which are free of charge, which is sponsored by the municipality, which will be covered by the Official's medical aid scheme, and which the Official will be responsible for paying.

## **6.2 Rights And Responsibility**

### **6.2.1 General**

Maintaining acceptable job performance is a shared responsibility. Performance goals must be set by the manager along with the Official and achievements measured against these goals. Poor work performance resulting from socio-psychological challenges must be addressed in a professional manner by all concerned and the Official should co-operate in the performance counselling process and the measures provided in assisting to alleviate his/her personal difficulties and improve his performance.

### **6.2.2 Official's Rights and Responsibilities**

- a) The Official has the right to non-disclosure of information pertaining to his participation in the EAP, and not to have such participation recorded on his/her personnel file. Information concerning Official participation in the Official Assistance Programme will be maintained in a confidential manner.
- b) It is the responsibility of the Official to maintain satisfactory job performance. In the event that personal problems cause deterioration of work performance, the Official has a responsibility to obtain the necessary help to bring job performance to an acceptable level. The Employee Assistance Programme offers a means to obtain this help.

### **6.2.3 Manager's Responsibilities**

- a) Make Officials aware of the EAP where declining job performance is detected and the manager suspects the Official is distressed due to personal circumstances.

- b) Be understanding and supportive of Officials undergoing personal difficulties.
- c) Not require the Official to divulge the nature of the problem when requesting leave for an appointment with the service providers under the EAP. If necessary, the Official can provide verification of attendance through the Employment Assistance Programme Coordinator.
- d) Maintain a strict level of confidentiality in all cases.

#### **6.2.4 Union's Responsibilities**

- a) Be knowledgeable about the programme and the details of participation.
- b) Encourage members to use the EAP where necessary.
- c) Maintain a strict level of confidentiality in all cases.

#### **6.2.5 EAP Coordinator's Responsibilities**

- a) Oversee the EAP to ensure effective and consistent application of the policy and procedures.
- b) Provide information sessions to management and union personnel regarding the Programme.
- c) Promote the EAP in the workplace.
- d) Develop and maintain an accurate, current data bank on "helping" resources and services in the community including a brief description of services available and the cost, if any, of the service.
- e) Liaise with service providers to ensure service standards are acceptable and meet the requirements of clients.

- f) Conduct screening and preliminary assessment for Officials contacting the EAP and to provide them with full information regarding participation in the programme.
- g) Refer the Official to a professional counsellor for detailed assessment and treatment where appropriate.
- h) Follow up with the Official to ensure that the assistance was beneficial and determine if any further steps are required.
- i) Assist the Official in his/her return/adjust to the work environment where appropriate.
- j) Organise and /or facilitate, on an ongoing basis, educational programmes for Officials about the Programme's services.
- k) Maintain all information on Officials participating in the Official Assistance Programme in a confidential, secure manner.

#### **6.2.6 Advisory Committee's Responsibilities**

- a) Ensure that they understand the contents and procedures associated with the EAP.
- b) Review the established policy, practices and procedures from time to time to ensure that they are current and meet the objectives of an effective EAP.
- c) Develop and recommend changes.
- d) Develop strategies in conjunction with the EAP Coordinator to ensure that Officials are aware of the Programme.
- e) Report regularly on the activities of the committee.

### **6.3 Access, Referral And Offers Of Assistance**

- 6.3.1 Access to the Programme can either be self-initiated or employer-initiated. The decision to seek assistance through the Programme is always voluntary. Where a manager or supervisor suggests that the Official use the services of the EAP, the Official is not obliged to do so.
- 6.3.2 The contact details of the designated EAP Coordinator(s) and Committee members may be obtained from Corporate Services.

### **6.4 Self-Initiated**

- 6.4.1 Officials who recognise or agree that they are experiencing personal problems or where there is a potential for problems to arise, may call the EAP Coordinator directly.
- 6.4.2 These self-referrals are treated with strict confidentiality. The Official's supervisor will not be informed of the nature of the problem unless the Official requests or agrees to it.
- 6.4.3 The Official is responsible for obtaining approval for any required time off associated with the use of the EAP.

### **6.5 Employer-Initiated EAP**

- 6.5.1 The manager is responsible for addressing Official performance issues and provides guidance to help the Official improve performance. An Official is responsible for keeping job performance at a satisfactory level.
- 6.5.2 Where it appears that declining performance may be due to personal difficulties, the manager must recommend to the Official that he/she obtain help via the EAP. The Official is not obliged to do so but risks termination due to poor performance if it does not improve adequately in the stated period of time.

### **6.6 Referral by the EAP Coordinator**

#### **6.6.1 Assessment**

- a) The Official is responsible for making contact with the Coordinator. During the initial contact, the Coordinator will explain the Programme, including confidentiality of the programme and the exceptions, the Official's rights and responsibilities and provide full details regarding participation in the Programme.
- b) The Coordinator and the Official will discuss the matter and together attempt to arrive at a preliminary assessment of the problem. The Coordinator will counsel the Official where possible.

#### **6.6.2 Referral**

- a) If further assistance is required, the Coordinator will advise the Official of the details regarding the appropriate intervention, contact details, costs, etc. The Coordinator will assist the Official in contacting the appropriate service provider to make an appointment and take the matter further.

#### **6.6.3 Coordination and follow-up**

- a) The Coordinator will maintain an informal but planned follow-up procedure and to ensure that the services are received in a timely and effective manner.
- b) Contact with any treatment agency or the manager, will only be at the request of or with the agreement of the Official.

### **6.7 Confidentiality**

- 6.7.1 A primary principle of Official Assistance programme is to maintain confidentiality throughout every level of the programme. An Official accessing the Programme requires confidence that the nature of his/her problems is private, as is the treatment being received.
- 6.7.2 The Coordinator would not be in breach of his/her confidentiality obligations if subpoenaed to court to testify in relation to the Official's participation in the EAP where it is alleged that he/she has committed an offence.

6.7.3 The Coordinator is obliged to comply with the mandatory reporting provisions of the provincial child abuse legislation, etc, just as he/she warn intended victims of violence. There is no breach of confidentiality when disclosure is required by law.

## **7. Delegations**

This Policy must be implemented with reference to the latest delegation framework, and identify the appropriate delegations required for implementation, in writing.

## **8. Annexures**

Signed delegation (if applicable).