

INGQUZA HILL LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE
PROGRAMME**

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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

Ingquza Hill Local Municipality recognizes that its employees are its most important and valuable resource and holds the view that this resource should be well cared for and well developed.

Council accepts that as individuals, employees may experience personal or social problems which may result in impaired job performance, productivity and quality of service delivery. To create a more supportive working environment the Ingquza Hill Local Municipality has established the Employee Assistance Programme (herein referred to as EAP). Employee Assistance Programme will enable Ingquza Hill Local Municipality to provide a professional helping service to those employees who have or may develop social or psychological problems for whatever reason.

2. DEFINITION OF THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Employee Assistance Programme is a worksite based intervention programme aimed at 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, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress or other personal concerns which may adversely affect employee job performance.

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

3. EAP POLICY CONTEXT

The Ingquza Hill Local Municipality policy recognizes 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 EAP:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act
- Basic Conditions of Employment Act
- Labour relations Act
- IHLM Human Resources Policy
- HIV/AIDS Policy

4. BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

- 4.1. Improve productivity in order to reduce absenteeism, sick leave, accidents and improve the morale of the employee.
- 4.2. Focused interventions build the employees' capacity to deal with problems and allow employees to take responsibility for their own health.
- 4.3. Provide a system to enable employees to address their psycho-social lifestyle.
- 4.4. Assist line managers to deal with work performance issues.
- 4.5. Enhance the organizations image within the community as an organization which cares for its employees.
- 4.6. Addressing problems early to prevents complications that negatively affect both work performance and life in general.
- 4.7. Fostering employee well being
- 4.8. Sustained optimal functioning of staff leads to greater productivity and improved quality of life for individuals and their families.

5. POLICY PRINCIPLES OF EAP INTERVENTION

In terms of its commitment to the Ingquza Hill Local Municipality's EAP Initiative, Council accepts the basic principles which are generally internationally accepted in the support of successful EAP intervention.

- 5.1. **The broad principles** which refer to all problems which could affect job performance.
- 5.2. **The accessibility principle** committing the employer to make the service available to all employees including the contractual employees employed by the council.
- 5.3. **The principle of confidentiality** which safe guards the details that troubled employees reveal and includes the safekeeping of all records ,the non sharing of any information other than with the employee's written consent and that interviews be conducted in a place which is considered private.
- 5.4. **The principle of voluntarism** which acknowledges that the most effective form of referral is self referral.
- 5.5. **The principle of neutrality**, that the role and function of the EAP should not be affected by collective bargaining issues pursued by management and the workforce .That the EAP thus maintain a state of neutrality as defined by Section 16(5)(c) of the Labour Relations Act .

5.6. **The principle of constructive action**, that management should suggest motivating or giving employees the option to make use of EAP services in conjunction with job action.

5.7 **The principle of permanency**, by means of a mutually agreed policy statement which guarantees the survival of the programme.

6. COUNCIL'S POLICY COMMITMENT

6.1. Council undertakes through its **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** to offer employees short term diagnostic, curative and referral services for all psycho-social problems experienced by its employees .

6.2. Council warrants that the assistance and services offered by the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) will be available to all employees irrespective of position.

6.3. Council encourages voluntary employee participation in this programme

6.4 Council recommends union participation and promotion of this programme through its involvement.

6.5. Council will oversee supervisory, managerial and union representative training in respect of the objectives, benefits and procedures involved in this programme.

6.6. Council will ensure that employees participating in the programme will not be discriminated against. A request for EAP intervention shall not jeopardize an employee's position, benefits or promotional opportunities.

6.7. Council accepts that alcoholism/Drug dependence is a treatable conditions.

6.8 Participation in the Employee Assistance Programme does not replace standard disciplinary procedure nor does it constitute a de facto exemption from such procedure but assists by providing professional assistance in the management of impaired job performance where personal or social factors are the causal factors.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information regarding an employee's use of the employee assistance program will be treated as strictly confidential. No identifying information will be released to personnel with the following exceptions:

7.1. If an action is initiated by an employee and the information is relevant to the claim or defense of such action.

7.2. If required by law

7.3. If requested by a person bearing a release of information signed by employee.

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8. TIME OFF FOR EAP SESSIONS

Time-off from work to attend EAP Counseling sessions is treated the same as other absences due to illnesses or medical appointments. Arrangements should be made with the employee's supervisor in advance to schedule time away from work or make up any lost time. Employees who attend EAP 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.

9. PROCEDURES FOR THE REFERRAL AND TREATMENT OF TROUBLED EMPLOYEES BY THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

The specific core activities of the Employee Program will include:

9.1. Expert consultation and training of appropriate persons in the identification and resolution of job performance issues related to the personal concerns identified above.

9.2. Confidential, appropriate and timely assessment and resolution services including referrals for appropriate diagnosis, treatment and assistance, establishment of linkages between the workforce and community resources that provide such services and follow up assistance to employees who use those services.

9.3. Referrals made to EAP may be made by the employees themselves on a voluntary basis or by the employee manager when an employee's work performance has declined or basic code of conduct of an employee has not met acceptable standards. However the decision to accept a manager referral to the EAP and subsequent referrals for treatment are voluntary and are the personal responsibility of the employee.

9.4. IHLM Employees or members of their families requesting an appointment with the EAP should contact the nominated EAP employee. Employees seeking assistance from the EAP are encouraged to do so before job performance is impaired. Problems treated early are usually simpler to resolve.

9.5. Employees referred to an outside provider however 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.

10. TYPES OF SERVICES

Employee Assistance Program Services include assessment, counseling, referral (if indicated) and follow-up. The EAP initial appointment will be made as soon as reasonably possible after a request is made. EAP services include but are not limited to counseling in these areas:

10.1. PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS

- 10.1.1. Dependence on alcohol or drugs
- 10.1.2. Social problems
- 10.1.3. Communication problems
- 10.1.4. Behavior problems
- 10.1.5. Impaired relationships (e.g. marital)
- 10.1.6. Financial difficulties
- 10.1.7. Legal problems

10.2. MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

- 10.2.1. Phobias (irrational fears)
- 10.2.2. Stress
- 10.2.3. Anxiety
- 10.2.4. Depression
- 10.2.5. Suicidal tendencies
- 10.2.6. Dealing with AIDS /HIV and other terminal illnesses
- 10.2.7. Trauma

10.3. WORK RELATED PROBLEMS

10.3.1. Adjustment problems

10.3.2. Harassment

10.3.3. Ill health retirement

10.3.4. Retrenchment

10.3.5 Work relations

10.3.6. Work stress

11. COUNSELLORS

Professional counselors whose offices are not on the municipality property provide counseling .Some consultation may be made first by internal experts. All information discussed with the counselor will be treated strictly confidential.

12. REFERRAL

12.1. VOLUNTARY OR SELF REFERRAL

Through marketing and promotion of the programme self referral which is the ideal will be encouraged. This implies that any employee who wishes to seek professional help for a personal problem will have the right to contact the EAP directly for appointment. Should the employee require proof of attendance for his /her employer a certificate of the EAP will be supplied.

12.2. PEER REFERRAL

Any person within the workplace excluding the direct supervisors who is of the opinion that an employee could benefit from the services offered by the EAP, can effect a referral with the employee consent. This category of persons refers to: peers, union representatives or any staff member who by virtue of specific and specialist contact in the course of duty with the employee is of the opinion that referral to EAP will be beneficial to the employee.

12.3. MANDATORY REFERRAL

Managers and supervisors, who become aware that an employee's work performance is sub-standard or impaired can through a process of job action, encourage or suggest to the employee to consult the EAP. The focus of the manager or supervisor is on the employee's work performance and not the personal problem which may be the cause of poor work performance. A job action is validated by keeping a record of the employee's job performance which will also serve as the only basis whereby the employee can be counseled by his or her management. . If the employee at the time of counseling acknowledges experiencing a personal problem and accepts the suggestion that the EAP be consulted, an interview should be arranged. If the person does not wish to participate in the EAP his job performance should be continued to be monitored and the normal procedure followed.

13. PROBLEM INDICATORS

Emotional /behavior problems may be indicated by the following symptoms:

13.1. Absenteeism, frequent unplanned leave, late coming and early departures. The staff member will create various reasons for staying away from work.

13.2. Frequent sick leave with no evidence of a letter from a medical doctor.

13.3. Work quality or quantity deterioration. lowered productivity, carelessness, forgetfulness and absentmindedness

13.4. Physical appearance deterioration.

14. TREATMENT PROCESS

14.1. A professional assessment of the employee's problem is done by the EAP Practitioner. If necessary, additional input may be sought from the Occupational Health and Safety Service or Human Resources Unit.

14.2. If the employee does not agree with the assessment or feels that she /he does not wish to participate in the treatment she /he is referred back to the referral person by means of a feedback report from the EAP.

14.3. Depending on the nature and complexity of the problem the employee may also be referred to specific community resources for assistance. All such referrals will be at the employee's own expense.

14.4. If services provided by the EAP result in a positive outcome, services will be terminated and the referral person (where applicable) informed accordingly.

14.5. Should the employee not co-operate with the services offered by the EAP or should the treatment not result in a positive outcome the employee will be referred back to the referral person where applicable. In such cases job performance must continue to be monitored and normal disciplinary procedures followed.

15. EAP EDUCATION

Council recognizes that EAP education is an important component of successful EAP intervention. The education and orientation of key persons (who will act as referral agents) to the nature and function of the EAP is paramount to the ultimate effectiveness of the programme. The correct identification of the troubled employee and the steps that have to be taken to encourage the employee to seek professional help will be the primary focus of this education.

The EAP shall be responsible for on going education and personal development of individual employees and shall be responsible for ongoing preventative and educative mental health education programmes in Council.