

Policy Document

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM POLICY

Policy No: DCSB-HR-12.08	Version No: 1.1	Administered by: Chief Executive Officer
Approved by: Council	Approved on: February 2020	Agenda Item/Minute Book No or Approval Ref: 364/18
Last Reviewed: 20 December 2018	Review Date February 2022	File No: F16/624
Classification: Governance		
Strategic Plan link: Strategy 1.6.1 Demonstrate clear management commitment to high level WH&S and Risk Management performance		
References and related Policies & Procedures: <i>Local Government Act 1999</i> <i>Work Health & Safety Act 2012</i> <i>Return to Work Act 2014</i> <i>Fair Work Act 1994</i> DCSB-HR-12.10 Health, Wellbeing and Fit for Work Policy DCSB-HR-PROC-12.08 Managing Unsatisfactory Performance DCSB-HR-12.00 Performance Management Framework		

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Policy is to outline the provisions the District Council of Streaky Bay has made to support our employees and Elected Members through hardships, worries and crises in their personal or work lives.
- 1.2 Council recognises issues in employees' personal lives impact on work performance and that is important employees have access to counselling and support through an EAP.
- 1.3 The EAP provides access to counselling on a confidential basis. The EAP provides a short-term intervention strategy, and is designed to promptly address issues of immediate concern. The EAP can assist individuals who require longer-term assistance to source an appropriate provider.
- 1.4 The EAP is available to employees, Elected Members and their immediate family to cope with stress, mental illness and other issues.
- 1.5 EAP provision forms part of the District Council of Streaky Bay's broader Health, Wellbeing and Fit for Work Policy.

2. Application

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all employees of the Council, its Elected Members and their family members.
- 2.2 AccessEAP manages our EAP and is responsible for updating managers on relevant changes. The Chief Executive Officer will in turn update employee and Elected Members with regards to any relevant changes. The Chief Executive Officer will also inform union representatives of our program's provisions so they may assist their union members.

3. Definitions

Act – means *Local Government Act 1999*

Council – the District Council of Streaky Bay

EAP – means an external professions, confidential counselling service that Council provides to employees who face difficulties that affect their wellbeing, work performance, or enjoyment of the workplace.

Employee – a person directly employed by the Council to complete roles relevant to the delivery of Council's services whether they are employed in a full time, part time or casual position.

Elected Member – a person elected to the role of Councillor to represent the District of Streaky Bay Community. This includes the Mayor.

Extranet – *currently under development* – this site will provide Elected Members access to information relevant to their duties as Councillors but cannot be seen by either employees or the public.

Intranet –this site will provide Employees access to information relevant to their work at Council but cannot be seen by those outside Council.

Immediate Family– an immediate family member as defined by the *Fair Work Act 1994*, and who is currently living at the same address as an employee or Elected Member.

Manager – any employee who is responsible for scheduling the work of other employees in a supervisory role.

Senior Executive – means the Manager, District Services; Manager, Corporate Services; Manager, Community and Economic Development; or the Manager, Regulatory Services

4. Scope

- 4.1 The aim of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is to offer external professional, confidential counselling assistance to Council members who may require help to resolve personal problems that may be having an impact on the individual and their effectiveness in the workplace.
- 4.2 Council's EAP can help employees with various work-related and personal problems. Examples may include but are not limited to:
- personal worries, doubts or fears;
 - grief (death, mourning, separation);
 - work-related stress / problems with colleagues;
 - addiction (such as substance abuse, gambling, smoking);
 - domestic violence;
 - health issues;
 - financial problems; and /or
 - retirement.
- 4.3 To encourage employees to use it, Council will place leaflets on the main office counter, in lunch rooms and on notice boards, with payslips (where relevant) and during induction processes.

5. Legislative Requirements

- 5.1 Division 4 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* lists the duty of officers, workers and other persons, among other responsibilities, to take reasonable care in the health and safety of themselves and others.
- 5.2 Section 107(2) of the *Local Government Act 1999* states that the Chief Executive Officer must ensure employees are provided with safe and healthy working conditions.
- 5.3 The EAP supports the health, safety and wellbeing of employees through provision of counselling services.

6. EAP Provider Details

- 6.1 Council's current EAP provider is Access Programs. Access Programs is a not-for-profit EAP provider with offices based in Adelaide.
- 6.2 Access Programs counsellors are available on a free 24 hour hotline on 1300 66 77 00 or (08) 8215 6799.
- 6.3 Access Programs also offer a Smart Phone App: OurEAP which employees, Elected Members and their families are able to access.
- 6.4 A link to Access Programs website will be available on Council's intranet and extranet sites.
- 6.5 Although any communication from the employee or Elected Member is strictly confidential, Council advise employees to be careful what they disclose through the email as any cyber-attacks may compromise their confidentiality.
- 6.6 Each Employee, Elected Member or immediate family member are eligible for three sessions per annum

7. Referral Options

7.1 Self Referral

- 7.1.1 The EAP is designed to encourage self-referrals where the employee, Elected Member or family member has personal issues they wish to discuss in a private and confidential setting.
- 7.1.2 Upon phoning the EAP Provider, employees, Elected Members or their family members should inform the EAP provider that they are a District Council of Streaky Bay employee or Elected Member.
- 7.1.3 Family members should state they are a family member of a Council employee or Elected Member and their relationship to the employee or Elected Member.
- 7.1.4 Eligibility for service access by family members will be assessed by the EAP provider in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer should the EAP Provider not be able to establish if the caller is living at the same address.

7.2 Suggested Referral (Early Intervention)

- 7.2.1 If a manager recognises a behaviour or action in an employee that causes concern, the manager may approach the employee in a private and respectful manner to discuss the concern.
- 7.2.2 In such circumstances, the manager may refer the employee to the EAP for assistance to ensure they are receiving professional, independent support and advice to cope with any concerns.

7.3 Potentially Traumatic Events

- 7.3.1 In some circumstances individuals or groups of employees may be exposed to traumatic, violent or emergency incidents.
- 7.3.2 In these cases, on-site counselling services may be recommended and provided, in addition to the normal EAP services.
- 7.3.3 Volunteers, contractors and relevant community members may be included in this type of referral.

7.4 Formal Manager Referral

- 7.4.1 This type of referral may occur when there are concerns about work performance or the manager is especially concerned about the health and wellbeing of an employee.
- 7.4.2 Managers may use the Formal Manager Referral process to refer employees for counselling or psychological assessment following a specific and identifiable behavioural issue that has been adversely affecting workplace productivity or safety.
- 7.4.3 The manager must explain the reason for the referral and, with the employee's agreement to proceed, contact the EAP provider to book an appointment.
- 7.4.4 With permission from the employee, the manager may participate in the process by way of attendance at the first session with the EAP consultant. This 3-way meeting is for the manager to provide a clear and transparent explanation of their concerns regarding the employee's current job performance issues.
- 7.4.5 Following an appropriate number of counselling sessions between the EAP consultant and the employee and with agreement from the employee, the Formal Referral process will finish with a 3-way meeting between the EAP consultant, the employee and the referring manager to relay and review the outcomes.
- 7.4.6 The EAP program will provide assistance for personal problems affecting work performance. Notwithstanding this, serious misconduct or continued unsatisfactory work performance may result in disciplinary action as per the Managing Unsatisfactory Performance Guideline.

7.5 Time Off and Leave Requirements

- 7.5.1 Where possible appointments should be attended "out of work hours" (e.g. flexitime, lunch times, leave etc).
- 7.5.2 However, with permission from the manager/supervisor, appointments can be made in paid work time during periods that have minimal impact on the workplace.

- 7.5.3 When attending appointments during work time, employees must inform their manager/supervisor of the reason for their absence so appropriate measures may be put in place.
- 7.5.4 Employees are not obligated to disclose the nature of the counselling services sought.
- 7.5.6 Where the employee does not wish to inform their manager/supervisor or workplace that they are accessing EAP, they should schedule the sessions in their own time.

7.6 Charges

- 7.6.1 The EAP service is provided at no cost to all Council employees, Elected Members and their family members.
- 7.6.2 In some instances, a counsellor may recommend that an employee, Elected Member or family member is referred to a general practitioner, medical specialist or other specialist service.
- 7.6.3 In these cases, any costs involved are to be met by the employee, Elected Member or immediate family member.

7.7 Travel

- 7.7.1 Any costs of travel to the EAP service are the responsibility of the employee, Elected Member or family member accessing the service.
- 7.7.2 The exception to this is where an employee's referral to the EAP service is a Formal Manager Referral. In this situation, the payment of the travel costs may be covered by the Council at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

7.8 Cancellations

- 7.8.1 The EAP provider requires a minimum of 24 hours' notice of cancellation.
- 7.8.2 If less than 24 hours' notice is given a cancellation fee will be applied and the employee, Elected Member or family member will lose one counselling session.
- 7.8.3 It is the employee's, Elected Member's or family member's responsibility to rearrange a session should it not be convenient.
- 7.8.4 The EAP provider will take into account any emergency situations that may have contributed to the cancellation.

8. Feedback and Evaluation

- 8.1 The EAP provider is required to provide all clients with evaluation forms following their use of the service and individuals are encouraged to complete them.

- 8.2 In addition, employees who are dissatisfied with the service provided by the counsellor or the EAP provider are strongly encouraged to report this to the Chief Executive Officer as well as to the EAP provider themselves.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

9.1 Employees

It is the responsibility of employees to:

- seek the assistance of the EAP where they feel there is a need;
- be open to the suggestion of a referral to the EAP where the suggestion is clearly in the best interest of the employee; and
- seek approval from their immediate manager when leave is being requested for an appointment during work hours.

9.2 Elected Members

It is the responsibility of an Elected Member to:

- seek the assistance of the EAP where they feel there is a need;
- be open to the suggestion of a referral to the EAP where the suggestion is clearly in the best interest of the Elected Member

9.3 Managers

It is the responsibility of the immediate manager to:

- promote the EAP regularly to ensure all staff are aware of the services provided and how to access them;
- suggest the services of the EAP to employees where there are indications of a personal or work related problem;
- contact the EAP for urgent counselling assistance in the event of potentially traumatic event; and
- respect the privacy of an employee who has requested to attend an appointment with the EAP during working hours.

9.4 Senior Executive

It is the responsibility of Senior Executives to:

- promote the EAP service within their area of responsibility.

9.5 Chief Executive Officer

It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer to:

- oversee the management of the Council's EAP contract; and
- ensure communication of relevant de-identified EAP summary data for the Council is made available to the senior executive team.
- provide adequate resources for the implementation and monitoring of the program.

10. Reporting

- 10.1 The EAP provider will provide separate quarterly reports containing relevant information about the use of the EAP Program to the Chief Executive Officer.
- 10.2 In addition, the EAP provider will provide an aggregated report containing specified statistics as well as organisational issues and trends.
- 10.3 A representative of the EAP provider will meet with the Chief Executive Officer at least annually to review reports and service quality provided under the contract.
- 10.4 Bi-annual and annual reports of summary data will be forwarded by the Manager, Corporate Services and forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer.

11. Further Assistance

- 11.1 For further information, employee should contact their supervisor. Elected Members may contact the Chief Executive Officer

12. Emergency Contacts

- 1) Lifeline: 131 114
- 2) Kids Helpline (5-25 years of age): 1800 551 800
- 3) ACIS (assessment & Crisis Intervention Services): 131 465
- 4) Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636
- 5) Reach Out Australia – youth support: www.reachout.com
- 6) Sane Australia – mental health support: www.sane.org or 1800 18SANE (7263)
- 7) Headspace – mental health initiative: www.headspace.com or 1800 063 267