



“People’s power in action”

MOQHAKA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

POLICY FOR

Employee Wellness

Programme



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EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME (EWP) POLICY

1. PREAMBLE

The Moqhaka Local Municipality recognizes that problems of a personal nature can have adverse effect on an employee's job, health and feelings of wellness. Therefore, an Employee Wellness Programme (EWP) Policy has been established to address problems in the workplace, improve productivity, service delivery and improve the general health and wellness of all employees.

2. VISION

Quality Health and Comprehensive Wellness for all in the workplace through the provision of a quality and lifelong Wellness Programme.

3. MISSION

To operate an efficient, effective, sustainable and Comprehensive Employee Wellness Programme that positively reinforces employee Wellbeing and work towards the development and support of all employees in a professional and confidential manner.

4. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Employee Wellness Programme recognizes that short-term personal and psychological related problems may adversely affect an employee's wellbeing and ability to function on the job. Involvement in the programme will not jeopardize an employee's job security, compensation, promotional opportunities and/or reputation. If there is any victimization or discrimination by the employer or colleagues as a result of involvement in the programme, the matter will be brought to the attention of the Employee Wellness Programme Officer, and dealt with accordingly. The Employee Wellness Programme is available to all employees of the municipality and their immediate families.

It is the explicit aim of the Employee Wellness Programme to improve the quality of life of all employees by providing support and assistance to alleviate the impact of everyday work, personal and family challenges. Employee Wellness offers new and exciting prospects to assist in the well being of employees. At the same time it increases the effectiveness of the Municipality and maximizes service delivery.

5. OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 Equipping the Municipality with tools necessary to assist and improve employee performance.
- 5.2 Develop and daily apply an EAP POLICY suitable to the Council needs.
- 5.3 Analyze and reduce the impact of absenteeism.
- 5.4 Alert and train the management team to recognize and appropriately respond to a troubled employee.
- 5.5 Comply with critical legislation governing absenteeism and the Wellness Rights in the Municipality.
- 5.6 Correctly follow disciplinary procedures that comply with the Labour Relation Act and Code of Good Practice.
- 5.7 Maintain and practice effectively case management by keeping required and defined confidentiality rules.
- 5.8 Alert and train employees of the assistance available to them.

6. PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS

- 6.1 The purpose and functions of the Employee Wellness Programme is to:
 - Offer confidential assistance to employees and their immediate families who are affected or who have the potential to be adversely affected in the performance of the functions by personal problems therefore;
 - Enhance productivity; and
 - Enhance social functioning.
- 6.2 The programme is designed to provide employees and their immediate families with professional assistance in dealing with a broad range of human relations problems. This is done by identifying and resolving productivity problems associated with employees who are impaired by personal concerns, including but not limited to: The following Confidential and Professional Counseling with education is given on the following situations.
 - Abusive relationships;
 - Childcare and eldercare issues;

- Emotional or behavioral disorders
- Family and marital discord;
- Family violence;
- HIV and AIDS;
- Depression and suicidal tendencies;
- Insubordinate behavior;
- Memory problems and forgetfulness;
- Mental disorder due to medication;
- Sexual problems;
- Communication problems;
- Physical abuse;
- Divorce;
- Anxiety and unresolved grief;
- Single parenting;
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) due to work-related accidents;
- Sleep problems;
- Adjustment problems;
- Personality problems;
- Confidence problems;
- Physical working environment;
- Legal problems;
- Marital, family and relationship problems;
- Personal debt and financial management problems;
- Psychological problems;
- Stress (family, social, job);
- Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, prescription medication) and other addictive behavior such as gambling; and
- Work-related problems such as job burnout, poor relationship and poor work performance.

- The Employee Wellness Programme further:-

- Assist managers and supervisors to deal appropriately with the difficulties/challenges that confront employees in the workplace.
- Assist employees to seek professional help for the challenges that impact on their work and interpersonal relationships at work.
- Provide appropriate mechanisms of intervention and confidential counseling for employees who seek to address challenges that they face in the workplace.
- Promote co-operation, motivation and improve employee morale in order to improve productivity and workplace efficiency.
- Reduce absenteeism, staff turnover, interpersonal conflicts, grievances and work related accidents in the workplace.
- Provide employees with life skills, awareness and educational programmes that promote healthy lifestyles and coping skills.
- Referral to appropriate professionals for specialized management where needed.

7. PRINCIPLES OF THE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME

7.1 Confidentiality

A primary principle of the Employee Wellness Programme is to maintain confidentiality throughout every level of the programme. An employee accessing the Employee Wellness Programme needs confidence in the privacy of this relationship. The Employee Wellness Programme recognizes the employee's right to privacy.

The Municipality EAP official is trained and qualified to handle the Programme with a full compliance to the Principles.

7.2 Protection

Any employee who seeks assistance will not jeopardize his or her job security, compensation, promotional opportunities and/or reputation. No information obtained from, or about an employee as a result of his/her participation in the Employee Wellness Programme shall be made available to be used for any purpose. To this end employee's right to privacy and confidentiality shall be protected.

All records and discussions regarding an employee's work or personal problems will be handled in a confidential manner. Case records are to be kept by the clinician. General feedback reports are to be kept by the Employee Wellness Programme Officer. Breach of confidentiality is regarded in a serious light. Disciplinary action may be taken against an employee who breaches confidentiality. Employee Wellness Programme case records and general feedback reports should be kept for at least six (6) years.

An Employee Wellness Officer may be required to divulge information under the following conditions, for example:

- Where public life and the safety of other employees and/or individuals are endangered (obligation to warn the intended victims);
- Fraud and Child abuse.

Written consent from the employee concerned is required in situations other than those mentioned above, where confidentiality needs to be breached. An Employee Wellness Officer who is subpoenaed to surrender records, reports or to testify in a court not in breach of his or her confidentiality obligations.

Confidentiality should not be confused with anonymity.

All persons involved with the Employee Wellness Programme (e.g. Professionals, Managers, Supervisors, employees, etc.) are bound by conditions of strict confidentiality.

7.3 Discipline

The Employee Wellness Programme is not a substitute for the discipline of employees. Rather, the programme may be used before, or in conjunction with disciplinary actions where appropriate. The Employee Wellness Programme does not alter management's responsibility to maintain discipline or the right to take disciplinary measures as per the policies within the Department.

The Employee Wellness Programme is not designed to assist in "conflict resolution" between employees, managers and/or supervisors. These matters should be resolved through established procedures. The Employee Wellness Programme may however assist employees, managers, and/or supervisors to deal with personal consequences of conflicts which may be work related.

No one should manipulate the Employee Wellness Programme by:

- Trying to avoid disciplinary action; and
- By justifying inappropriate work conduct or insubordination.

7.4 Accessibility

Depending on the identification, the Employee Wellness Programme is open to:

- All employees; and
- Their immediate family members of Moqhaka Local Municipality:
 - Spouse or partner;
 - Dependant children or children below the age of 18

7.5 Voluntarism

The Employee Wellness Programme encourages employees to voluntarily seek help (self-referral) for personal problems. The Employee Wellness Programme is strictly voluntary.

Employees who voluntarily seek help from the programme are taking responsibility for their problems. Voluntarism should therefore be encouraged.

Employees cannot be forced to go to the Employee Wellness Programme, even though the Municipality acknowledges that it is a strong motivating lever, as the consequences of not seeking help could ultimately result in disciplinary actions.

8. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 Job Performance

8.1.1 If a supervisor and/or manager experience problems with the job performance of an employee it should be addressed by intervening and addressing the reasons for non-performance. The Employee Wellness Programme may be used to support the employee and supervisor and/or manager in addressing reasons for non-performance. However, normal good management principles and disciplinary action (if necessary) should be applied if non-performance continues.

8.2 Employee's rights and responsibilities

- Personal information concerning employee participation in the Employee Wellness Programme maintained in a confidential manner. No information related to a employee's participation in the programme is entered into the personnel file.
- Participation in the Employee Wellness Programme shall not jeopardize an employee's job or prejudice any opportunity for promotion or advancement.
- Leave and time off should be granted in accordance with the Municipality's standard policies and procedures for professional assessment, counseling and treatment.
- It is the responsibility of the employee to maintain satisfactory job performance. In the event that personal problems cause deterioration of work performance, the employee has a responsibility to obtain the necessary help to bring job performance up to an acceptable level. The Employee Wellness Programme offers a means to obtain this help.

8.2 Manager's and supervisors' responsibilities

- Address work performance problems through normal supervisory procedures.
- Be consistent and treat employees fairly.
- Make employees aware of the agreed job performance standards, Labour Relations Policy and/or Employee Wellness Programme in instances where declining job performance has been determined.

- Do not attempt to diagnose personal problems of the employee or offer a personal opinion.
- Ensure early identification, management and referral of troubled employees.
- Provide follow-up and support to employees upon return to work, if appropriate.
- Do not require the employee to divulge the nature of the problem when requesting leave or time off for an appointment with Employee Wellness Programme Professional/s. If necessary, the employee can provide verification of attendance through the Employee Wellness Programme Officer
- Maintain a strict level of confidentiality with all cases.

8.3 EWP Officer's responsibilities

- To correctly position the EWP within the Municipality in order to optimize its benefit.
- Ensure continued promotion and awareness of the Employee Wellness Programme within the Municipality and all its divisions and sites.
- Develop action plans in conjunction with the relevant components in the Municipality, for the implementation and acceptance of the programme within the workplace.
- Coordinate and maintain a strong working alliance between supervisors, staff representatives, employees and the Employee Wellness Programme.
- Interpret all the utilization statistics and design and implement appropriate proactive intervention action plans.
- Coordinate the training of supervisors and managers in the identification, management and referral of employees.
- Ensure that the Employee Wellness Programme continuous to meet the needs of the employees within all divisions/departments/sites of the organization and that the Employee Wellness Programme develops over time to reflect the changing needs of the Municipality.

- Facilitate the regular review of the Employee Wellness Programme services to enable evaluation in terms of efficiency, professionalism and outcome.
- Be aware of organizational issues and themes, which may affect the Employee Wellness Programme (e.g. restructuring of the organization is pending) and their implications for the workplace.
- Monitor and coordinate the Employee Wellness Programme budget to ensure value for money.
- Submit written reports on the progress and activities of the Employee Wellness Programme as required.

9. EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME GUIDELINES

- problems
Wellness
- 9.1 Employees or their immediate families are encouraged to approach the Employee Wellness Unit if they realize that they have personal that could be addressed through the assistance of the Employee Programme.
- 9.2 Managers, supervisors, co-workers and family members are urged to encourage others to use the programme, but an individual's participation is voluntary.
- 9.3 The Employee Wellness Programme is a Municipality benefit. There is no charge to employee for making use of the programme. Employees will be responsible for the long-term treatment such as rehabilitation. The Employee Wellness Programme will make every effort to assist those needing help.
- 9.4 If costs are to be incurred for rehabilitation, these costs will be the responsibility of the employee. The Employee Wellness Programme Officer will notify the employee or immediate family member in advance if it is anticipated that the referrals will incur additional costs.
- 9.5 Employees and their immediate families will be eligible for face to face consultation after an initial needs assessments has been conducted by the Employee Wellness Professional. The assessment will determine the appropriate interventions, which may include a maximum of six (6) face-to-face consultations per case, in some instances.
- 9.6 Prevention of Abuse of EWP
- Employees and participating parties as well as management should not abuse the programme. An employee, who defaults, refuses to comply with counseling does not keep appointments, may be removed from the programme and the costs of therapy or treatment incurred by the

Municipality will be recovered from the concerned employee. Participation in the EWP will not affect the employee's employment or career development. On the other hand, employee's participation in the programme will not protect the employee from disciplinary action for continued poor work performance or misconduct. Supervisors and managers should not, under any circumstances prevent employees from utilizing the service of EWP.

9.7 Early identification of potential challenges

Early identification of the following symptoms by the manager/supervisor/colleagues/family or friends can be of importance. Such symptoms might be:

- Absenteeism: Mondays and Fridays, poor timekeeping, unplanned leave, long tea and lunch breaks
- Frequent sick leave with no sick note
- Irregular work performance, carelessness, forgetfulness
- Emotional outbursts, aggression, over reaction to criticism
- Social withdrawal
- Missing deadlines and appointments
- Frequent accidents or injury reports
- Rigid resistance to change

10. THE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME REFERRAL PROCEDURE

10.1 Access to the Employee Wellness Programme can either be self-initiated or employer initiated. The decision to seek assistance through the Employee Wellness Programme is always voluntary.

10.2 The contact details of the Employee Wellness Officer can be obtained from the employee Wellness Unit.

10.3 Internal referrals:
There are three (3) internal systems:

- Voluntary referral;
- Informal referral; and
- Formal manager and/or supervisor referral.

10.3.1 Voluntary referral (self initiated)

An employee recognizes that a problem exists and seeks assistance by calling the Employee Wellness Programme Officer directly. This may have resulted from a process of self-realization or from a family member, friend or co-worker sharing concern for the employee and informally suggesting the use of the Employee Wellness Programme. The employee has the right to seek assistance or information for his / her concern through self-motivation or self-recognition.

Procedure for voluntary referral:

The employee in this category can contact the Employee Wellness Unit to arrange for an appointment. The employee needs to notify in advance his or her immediate manager and / or supervisor of his or her whereabouts.

10.3.2 Informal referral (employer initiated)

An employee may bring a personal or emotional issue to the supervisor or manager's attention (either explicitly or implicitly). The supervisor and / or manager is not equipped to handle the situation appropriately and must encourage employees to get appropriate professional support to resolve the issue/s. These referrals are treated with strict confidentiality. The employee's manager or supervisor will not be informed of the nature of the problem unless the employee requests this to happen. The employee is responsible for obtaining approval for any required time-off associated with the use of the Employee Wellness Programme.

Procedure for informal referral:

- Ask the employee what help or assistance you as a supervisor or manager can render to assist him / her.
- Ask the employee what help or support he / she currently has with their issue.
- Remind him / her of the Employee Wellness Programme and its benefits and why it may be appropriate for him / her to call. The manager or supervisor is not required to call the Employee Wellness Unit or Service Provider, but should ask the employee to tell the Employee Wellness Coordinator / Counselor that their supervisor or manager has recommended the service.

10.3.3 Formal manager / supervisor referral (employer initiated)

The manager or supervisor is responsible to address with the employee deteriorating work performance, motivation or behavioral relationship and provide guidance to help the employee improve work performance. By means of the formal referral, the employee is encouraged to seek help with and resolve the issue so that it will not continue to undermine performance.

An employee accepts responsibility for keeping job performance at a pre-established acceptable level. If job performance does not improve or shows continuing deterioration, then the manager or supervisor may initiate a formal offer of assistance.

This is a referral where a personal and / or work related problem has affected job performance and disciplinary action may be pending. With reference to this form of referral, the Employee Wellness Programme does not aim to replace discipline but it is a supportive method of correcting poor performance at the workplace.

Procedure for formal referral:

- Before speaking to the employee, the supervisor or manager must discuss first with the Officer EWP regarding the appropriateness of making a formal referral and how it links with the organization's policies and procedures.
- The supervisor or manager should also discuss the pros and cons of making formal referral. The Officer will provide guidelines on how to proceed with the formal referral.
- Once it has been determined that a formal referral would be an appropriate intervention, the manager / supervisor must set aside time to have a private interview with the employee.
- The manager / supervisor must explain to the employee that a formal referral will be made. Discuss the reasons for the formal referral and agree with the employee that the formal referral is acceptable.
- The manager / supervisor must explain the feedback process to the employee. It is important to explain that the referral will receive limited feedback i.e. the referrer will not be entitled to get any content feedback, unless the employee consents to the sharing of this information.

- The manager / supervisor should call the Employee Wellness Unit / Service Provider to make the formal referral.
- The Counselor who answers the phone will note the supervisor's or manager's details and information about the employee and the formal referral.
- A case opened under the employee's name. The supervisor's or manager's details will be captured as the referrer's details on the same case.
- The referral should be faxed to the Officer and marked clearly for the attention of the counselor, the supervisor or manager spoke to earlier.
- A case number will be given to the supervisor or manager as a reference number.
- The manager / supervisor should then inform the employee that the formal referral has been made. Provide the employee with the case number, which must be quoted when the employee makes contact with the Employee Wellness Unit / Service Provider.
- The manager / supervisor should explain to the employee that he / she is given seven (7) days in which to make contact with the Employee Wellness Unit. The employee's decision to make contact with the Employee Wellness Unit centre / Service Provider remains voluntary.
- If the employee calls the Unit or Service Provider, the referral number must be quoted. An assessment will be done and the case will be handed over to the case manager. The case manager will arrange counseling for the employee and advise the supervisor or manager that the employee has contacted the Unit / Service Provider.
- If the employee does not call within seven days, the case manager will contact the supervisor or manager to inform him / her therefore. The case will then be closed.
- Once the therapy process is complete, the case manager will contact the supervisor or manager to provide him / her with the process information about the intervention that was undertaken with the employee and a report will be forwarded to the supervisor or manager.

10.4 External referrals

- Unions may also recommend informal referral of employees who are faced with challenges, however Employee Wellness does not replace the responsibilities of the Unions.

10.5 Take note:

- Remember contacting the Employee Wellness Unit remains a voluntary act on the part of the employee.
- Using the formal referral cannot be used against the employee for any disciplinary measures.
- The informal and formal referral does not replace the requirements and responsibilities for sound management practices and principles to be demonstrated.

11. STAKEHOLDERS

The following constitute the stakeholders for the EWP:

- Employer / Counsel
- Management
- Supervisors
- Employees
- Union Representatives
- Employee Wellness Practitioners

12. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The directives in this Policy derive their mandate from the following:

- The Constitution of South Africa
- The Public Services Act, 1994
- The Labour Relations Act, 1995
- The Employment of Educators Act, 1998
- The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1998
- The Employment Equity Act, 1995
- The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993
- The Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Disease Act, 1993
- The Domestic Violence Act, 1998
- The Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependency Act
- The Constitution and Principles of the Employee Assistance Professional Association Board (EAPA-SA)
- The Code of Conduct for the Public Service

13. DEFINITIONS

“Case Manager” – a professionally qualified person who will be assigned to manage the situation and progress of specific cases of individuals who are participating in the Programme

“Employee Wellness Programme” (EWP) – a planned, systematic programme designed to provide professional assistance to all employees and their immediate families who may be experiencing among others alcohol, drug, emotional or personal crises or problems (for example health, marital, family, stress, financial, traumatic, other personal concerns and/or legal) which interfere with their job performance.

“Employee Wellness Programme Managers/Practitioners/Coordinators” – employee(s) in the Employee Wellness Unit will play a role in liaising with the other departments and in co-coordinating project activities from within the Municipality.

“Employee Wellness Programme Professional” – a professionally trained person, performing EWP specific related tasks, for example therapy, counseling, marketing and evaluating.

“Eligible Employees” – shall mean all employees where the Municipality act as employer.

“Immediate Families” – shall mean the spouse or partner and all children who are dependant on the employee or are below the age of 18.

“Services” – shall mean the provision of an Employee Wellness Programme.

“Unit” – shall mean Employee Wellness Sub-Directorate.

“Health” – total physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease. (WHO:1948)

“Wellness” – is inclusive of seven (7) dimensions of health:

- physical health
 - intellectual health
 - emotional health
 - social health
 - spiritual health
 - environmental health
 - occupational health
- (Payne & Hahn: 2000)

14. AUTHORITY

Authorization : Council

**Ownership & Maintenance Manager : Director: Corporate
Services**

