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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE POLICY

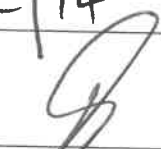
Policy Adoption Date:	13 DECEMBER 2018
Resolution Number:	C/05/12/14
Authorised Signature:	

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1. PREAMBLE

Nquthu Municipality is committed to the health and well-being of its employees and recognizes that a variety of personal problems can disrupt their personal and work lives. The municipality shall offer employee a broad form of support services to deal with issues including but not limited to physical, mental, emotional, marital, family, financial and abuse. It is in the best interest of the employee and employer to deal with personal problems that affect job performance within the policy framework.

2. DEFINITIONS

- **Alcoholism** means the chronic abuse of alcohol, where the employee is unable to control the condition by his/her own ability to resist such abuse.
- **Chronic Illness** means illness that is of an ongoing nature and where there is no prognosis for a complete cure.
- **Counselling** means therapeutic intervention by a trained professional such as a social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist.
- **Crisis** means a stressful life experience that upset the normal functioning of an individual or family threatens stability and ability to cope.
- **EAP** refers to Employee Assistance Programme.
- **EWP** refers to Employee Wellness Programme.
- **Family Violence** means any physical or psychological abuse that occurs within the family environment.
- **Intervention** means therapeutic and professional guidance to any employee in order to overcome his/her problem
- **Referral** is any means by which an employee is encouraged to seek professional intervention and includes self-referral and informal referral.
- **Significant Others** means a person with whom someone has an established romantic or sexual relationship, a spouse or romantic partner.
- **Trauma** means any event resulting in extreme emotional reactions in a person or an event which is generally considered to be outside the range of ordinary human experiences;
- **Troubled employee** means an employee suffering any personal or work related problem, resulting in a lack of optimal economic and social functioning

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To offer confidential assistance to employees who have the potential to be adversely affected by personal problems and work related problems.
- 3.2 To lay a foundation for sustainable, participatory and penetrating EAP and EWP.
- 3.3 To promote the mental, social health and wellbeing of all employees
- 3.4 To improve employee morale and stimulate better performance.
- 3.5 To create a working environment that is conducive for the effective and efficient delivery of services.

4. APPLICABILITY

- 4.1 This Policy is applicable to all employees, management and Councillors.

5. POLICY PRINCIPLES

Participation in an EAP shall be guided by the following principles:

- 5.1 The EAP plays a neutral role in the employment relationship.
- 5.2 All employees, management and Councillors have access to EAP.
- 5.3 An employee, management and Councillor in need of EAP services can voluntarily seek assistance and/ or may be referred by their immediate supervisor to the EAP.
- 5.4 All employees, managers and Councillors who participate in EAP must be treated equally with dignity and respect.
- 5.5 Job security will not be jeopardised as a consequence of seeking EAP services, except where mandated by law.
- 5.6 All avenues to assist the affected employee must be exhausted before considering disciplinary action.
- 5.7 Any information shared during consultations of EAP services shall be kept confidentially and not be disclosed to anyone including management without the participant's (employee, manager, councillor) written consent except where the disclosure is required in terms of the law or court order.

6. POLICY PROVISIONS

- 6.1 EAP is a work based intervention aimed at assisting the organisation in the early identification and resolution of employees, managers and councillors personal and work-related problems, which may adversely affect their level of performance and productivity.
- 6.2 Participation or choosing not to participate in EAP, will neither adversely affect an employees' job security and promotional opportunities, nor excuse and employee from adherence to the municipality's policies and procedures concerning job performance.
- 6.3 Participation in the EAP does not replace Council's Disciplinary/ Grievance Procedures nor does it constitute exemption from these procedures.
- 6.4 The supervisor or manager shall be responsible for identifying the problem with the employee when job performance falls below standard.
- 6.5 The supervisor shall not be responsible for diagnosing the nature of a personal problem and the EAP shall not be used to interfere with an employee's private and social life.
- 6.6 Consistent with the objectives of this policy, preventative programs will be held where possible to educate employees, managers and councillors about personal problems related to life style and work environment and possible resolutions.
- 6.7 The Human Resources Manager shall be the nodal point for managing EAP in the Municipality.
- 6.8 The Human Resources Manager shall, from time to time and based on case by case experience, provide guidelines to both line managers and appointed EAP professionals on referral procedures for each type of case requiring assistance.
- 6.9 The Municipality shall ensure that there are financial resources for the implementation of EAP.

7. EAP Interventions

EAP support and intervention shall be done at three levels, namely:

- 7.1. **Primary intervention**, focusing on prevention, health promotion, education and risk assessment.
- 7.2. **Secondary intervention**, focusing on early identification and management and / or resolution of problems or concerns.
- 7.3. **Tertiary intervention**, focusing on treatment, rehabilitation, care and support of employees experiencing personal or work-related problems.

8. EAP ASSISTANCE SCOPE

The Employee Assistance Programme shall provide assistance in a broad range of personal concerns, including, but not limited to:

8.1 Psychological Problems

- Addictive behaviour (gambling)
- Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, prescription medication)
- Marital, family and relationship problems
- Personal debt and financial management problems
- Stress (family, social)

8.2 Mental Health Problems

- Depression
- Anxiety problems
- Suicide tendencies
- Trauma
- Violent crime consequences
- Terminal / chronic illness counselling (incl. HIV/ AIDS)

8.3 Abuse

- Family violence
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual harassment

8.4 Workplace Problems

- Workplace discrimination or victimisation
- Adjustment problems
- Work relations
- Work stress
- Harassment

9. EAP Services and method of provision

The Municipality shall, on the discretion of the Municipal Manager provide all or part of the EAP services utilising internal staff of the Municipality, or outsource the provision of the EAP services in part, or as a whole, covering the following:

- 9.1. **Managed sessions, creating awareness and education about the EAP service, as an introduction to employees, and promotion of EAP at various work sites through employee forums**
- 9.2. **Training of supervisors and managers and equipping them with the skill to identify negative job performance issues related to either work or personal life, and the knowledge to refer them to relevant wellness practitioner**
- 9.3. **A direct, multilingual, confidential, unlimited access, 7 days a week to clinical and life management services through professional, qualified, registered clinicians and specialists.**
- 9.4. **Provision of wellness clinic services on agreed-upon basis**
- 9.5. **Development and implementation of a health calendar, with wellness days and events incorporated into it.**

- 9.6. A legal wellbeing service to assist employees with consumer affairs, social benefits and legal matters
- 9.7. A financial wellbeing service focussing mainly on financial literacy and debt management while maintaining sound mental and social health
- 9.8. Advice on recreational and sporting activities, incorporating physical fitness, and on work gyms, if required.
- 9.9. Support to employees battling substance abuse through support groups
- 9.10. Facilitation of annual voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) campaigns for HIV/AIDS, as well as referrals, peer educator support and training
- 9.11. Annual review report to provide an overall review of the service utilisation data and to discuss organisational trend informed by continuous assessment and analysis of wellness data, and ongoing feedback.

10. EAP PARTICIPATION

Types of EAP participation include:

- a) Self-initiated participation
- b) Employer initiated participation

10.1. SELF INITIATED EAP PARTICIPATION

- a) An employee, manager or councillor who recognizes that a problem exists and seeks assistance may engage the Employee Assistance Programme Practitioner directly.
- b) The realisation of the problem may have resulted from a process of self-assessment or from a family member, friend, co-worker or supervisor sharing concern for the employee and informally suggesting the use of the EAP.
- c) The participant's supervisor shall not necessarily be informed of the nature of the problem unless the employee requests this to happen.
- d) The participant shall be responsible for obtaining approval for any required time off associated with the use of the EAP.

10.2. EMPLOYER INITIATED PARTICIPATION

- a) A supervisor shall be responsible for addressing the employee's/ manager's/ councillor's deteriorating work performance and providing guidance to help improve work performance.
- b) An employee/ manager/ councillor shall accept responsibility for keeping job performance at an established acceptable level.
- c) If job performance does not improve or shows continuing deterioration, then the supervisor shall initiate a formal offer of assistance and it shall not be mandatory/obligatory to accept this offer.
- d) The offer of assistance can either be formal or informal. Any offer of assistance must be documented.
- e) Prior to initiating a formal offer of assistance, the supervisor /manager shall consult with the EAP Practitioner concerning the appropriateness of the offer.

10.2.1. INFORMAL OFFER OF ASSISTANCE

- a) The supervisor/manager shall ensure that the employee receives an informal offer of assistance prior to initiating a formal offer of assistance.
- b) Colleagues, peers, union and / or any staff member who by virtue of specific and specialist contact with the affected person is of the opinion that a referral to EAP will be beneficial, may make an informal referral.

10.2.2. FORMAL OFFER OF ASSISTANCE

- a) Certain workplace behaviour could result in an employer-initiated formal offer of assistance without there being previous informal offers.
- b) The employee/ manager/ councillor reserves the right to refuse the offer.
- c) A formal offer of assistance shall be delivered confidentially to the employee, with a confidential copy to the Employee Assistance Programme practitioner and a copy retained in a confidential HR master personnel file.
- d) The focus of the supervisor should be on work performance and not on personal problems that may have caused the poor performance.

11. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 11.1. An integral part of an Employee Assistance Program is the monitoring process which ensures that the service continues to operate effectively.
- 11.2. The monitoring, evaluation and review process requires Service Providers and employees alike to review operations of the EAP:
 - That the service is making contact with those most in need of assistance, and such employees are receiving the benefits of the program.
 - Information dissemination, awareness creation and education to promote the health and well-being of employees.
 - Ensure adequate emphasis is given to the preventative side of problems that become apparent.
 - Ensure a balance between reactive interventions, proactive interventions and development of employees in terms of this policy provisions.

12. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Municipal Manager or his / her nominee accept overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the policy.