

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POLICY FOR THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

The success of any organisation is to a large degree dependent on managers' ability to manage a diverse workforce effectively. It is imperative that managers should learn how to manage that diversity effectively. Fundamental to the concept of managing diversity is the realisation that human resources problems extend far beyond the physical diversity of race, gender and culture. Understanding staff differences is not enough: management needs to come to terms with the best way to manage diversity. Unless all staff members understand, accept and respect their differences, they will have difficulty in managing diversity.

Successful management of diversity requires all staff members to engage in productive communication aimed at promoting good interpersonal relationships and harmony in the Department. A good working environment in which everyone has a true sense of belonging and which removes the barriers that hinder fulfillment of human potential needs to be created in the Department. The challenge facing the Department at present is not only "how do staff members accept and respect their differences?", but "how do they create a conducive working environment that is supportive to everyone?".

The Department needs to take a proactive approach to head off possible problems associated with a diverse workforce. Hence it is essential that an Employee Assistance Programme be put into place to promote interpersonal relationships, improve productivity and address conflicting ideas.

An Employee Assistance Programme has the explicit aim of improving the quality of life of all employees by providing support and helping to alleviate the impact of everyday work and personal problems. It offers new and exciting prospects to

5. STATUTORY PROVISIONS AIMED AT ESTABLISHING A CONDUCTIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR EMPLOYEES

The following represent some of the key principles, policies, goals, norms, values and standards that should govern the public administration.

5.1 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS (FEBRUARY 1997)

5.1.1 The founding provisions of the Constitution state:

Chapter 10, Section 195 (1) stipulates that Public Administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution, including the following principles:

A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.
Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.
Public Administration must be development oriented.
Public Administration must be accountable.
Good human resource management and career development practices that maximise human potential must be cultivated.

5.2 THE PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATIONS OF 1999

5.2.1 On performance management and development

"Departments shall manage performance in a consultative, supportive and non-discriminatory manner in order to enhance organisational efficiency and effectiveness, accountability for the use of resources and the achievement of results."

5.2.2 On managing unsatisfactory performance

"In case of unsatisfactory performance, an executing authority shall provide systematic remedial or developmental support to assist the employee to improve her or his performance."

5.2.3 On the relationships among employees

"An employee

- co-operates fully with other employees to advance the public interest;
- is committed to the optimal development, motivation and utilisation of her or his staff and the promotion of sound labour and interpersonal relations; and
- deals fairly, professionally and equitably with other employees, irrespective of race, gender, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability religion, political persuasion, conscience, belief, culture or language."

5.3 THE WHITE PAPER ON TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE (NOVEMBER 1995)

5.3.1 On managing change and diversity

"The managers will need to be skilled in handling the complex processes of change taking place around them and will require continuous refreshing and updating in such management skills. One of the dimensions of change concerns the question of diversity. Diversity could become a major source of strength for the service, but in the short term, it is also likely to pose problems. The increasing diversity of the public service needs to be managed effectively to maximise the benefits and minimise the problems."

5.4 WHITE PAPER ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

"The goal of affirmative action in the Public Service is to speed up the creation of a representative and equitable Public Service and to build an environment that supports and enables those who have been historically disadvantaged by unfair discrimination to fulfill their maximum potential within it so that the Public Service may derive the maximum benefit of their diverse skills and talents to improve service delivery."

6. DESCRIPTION OF TERMS OR CONCEPTS WHICH ARE CENTRAL AND APPLICABLE TO THIS POLICY

The following represent several key terms or concepts, which are considered crucial to the formulation or implementation of the Employee Assistance Policy and programmes within the Department.

Chemical dependency - psychological and or/physical dependency on alcohol and/or other drugs.

Client - individual/group/family member utilising the Employee Assistance Programme owing to personal or work related problems.

Consultation - process of interaction with another professional (or supervisor) in order to verify or confirm specific information.

Counselling - therapeutic intervention by a trained professional, i.e. a social worker, a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

Critical incident - incident causing a crisis to the individual or family.

EAP professional - a professionally trained person, performing Employee Assistance Programme specific related tasks, i.e. therapy, counselling, marketing, evaluating.

Employee - a person legally employed by an employer, whether part-time, full-time or temporarily.

Employer - anybody having legal status and providing employment to people and providing payment for services rendered.

External agency - an agency providing psychosocial services to an employer and his employees and their dependents.

Intervention - therapeutic and professional guidance to an employee in order to overcome his/her problem.

Manager - person in a position of supervisory power with added status and authority.

Mentoring - refers to a developmental relationship between a junior person and a senior where a senior is often out of the direct line of authority over or a protégée.

Supervisor - a person in a position of authority and who oversees the performance of subordinate staff.

Therapy - assessment and treatment of a troubled employee.

Training - educating and teaching employees through means of dictate lecturing, modelling, interaction and role-playing.

Treatment - conversation with a troubled employee by exploring his/her feelings and guiding him/her through a process of recovery.

Troubled employee - an employee suffering any personal or work related problem, resulting in a lack of optimal economic and social functioning.

7. PROGRAMMES

The Employee Assistance Programme shall be vigorously pursued and implemented by means of the following programmes and activities:

7.1 Mentoring programmes

Mentoring programmes will be introduced in the Department. Monitoring will form part of an integrated system of performance management. Monitoring programmes will focus on the development of employees. Supervisors will become direct mentors to all subordinates. Subordinates will also be linked to mentors who are seniors but not their direct supervisors. Senior mentors will be the ones providing general guidance. Mentoring should be regarded as a two way process. It should be regarded as having beneficial effects for both mentor and protégée.

7.2 Coaching programme

A coaching programme will run in the form of teaching, consultation and educational supervision. It will take place vertically and horizontally. Vertical coaching programmes will take place between the supervisor and the subordinate. Horizontal coaching programmes will take place between the subordinate and another subordinate in the same directorate or division.

7.3 Counselling programme

Employees will be provided with counselling and advice services on problems associated with their job performance and personal problems. All employees will have reasonable access to counselling services either as referrals from their supervisors or on a personal option basis. The Special Programme Officer will offer

counselling services on a short-term basis not longer than six weeks, after which the employee or client will be referred to a specialist for further management, if the situation cannot be resolved. Those employees who do not feel comfortable with counselling services in the Department, will be linked to other counselling facilities outside the Department.

Counselling services will be offered to every staff member with problems that affect productivity, those nearing retirement, the bereaved, the sick, substance abusers and absentees.

7.4 Managing conflict

Conflict that arises among subordinates will be dealt with by the immediate supervisor and conflict between the supervisor and the subordinate will be dealt with by the uppermost senior person. The Special Programme officer will serve in an advisory capacity.

7.5 Reasonable job accommodation

Special provision of reasonable job accommodation will be provided to people with disabilities employed in the Department. The Department will take the following steps when employing persons with disabilities:

- Provide a disabled person with appropriate devices that will assist and ensure effective adjustment in the work situation or to the instruments to be used on the job.
- Provide a disabled person with appropriate specialised training and with personal assistance, when warranted.
- Create conditions which enlarge the range of employment options for people with disabilities so as to provide them with real possibilities of job security and occupational choice or promotion.
- Ensure that the evaluation of performance and the productivity of disabled employees are in equitable comparison to persons without physical disabilities.

7.6 Staff development programmes

Employees will be given the opportunity to apply for bursaries in order to equip themselves through formal study with more knowledge and better skills to perform their present and possible future duties well. On-the-job training, workshops and seminars will be organised for employees to develop their skills and to build capacity.

8. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is the foundation of this programme. Problems will be treated strictly confidentially. The Employee Assistance Programme is not about personal selection or evaluation. It is about the well-being of employees, the relationship between the employer and the employee in an endeavour to enhance and maximise productivity.

9. EAP AND RECORD KEEPING

The records of clients will be maintained for the following reasons:

- . administrative matters,
- . minutes of counselling sessions, and
- . employees' or clients' details and background information.

The information within these records will be regarded as confidential, and will not be noted in any organisational record or the client's or the employee's personal file. Information from the EAP may be released only with the written permission of the client or employee in response to state law / regulations in terms of a court or legal order.

10. STAKEHOLDERS OF THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

- Special Programme Officer
- Employees
- Supervisors
- Senior Management

11. EVALUATION

The cost effectiveness of the programme will be evaluated from time to time.

Evaluation of the programme will be of its effectiveness, based on:

- the number of working relationships improved,
- the number of conflicts resolved,
- the number of employees rehabilitated,
- those that had to be released from their duties as a result of failed rehabilitation



Signed at Pretoria on this day 2 of May 2001


DIRECTOR-GENERAL