

Policy Directive: compliance is mandatory

Employee Assistance Program Policy Directive

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Summary

SA Health is committed to promoting and maintaining employee health and wellbeing. As part of this commitment SA Health will support employees and their immediate family members experiencing personal or work related problems by providing access to free, confidential, professional counselling services through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

The EAP aims to address personal or work related problems which may affect the work performance, safety, health or wellbeing of employees by providing a 24 hour, seven day emergency service to all SA Health employees and their immediate families as well as a 24/7 toll free person to person contact number.

Keywords

Employee Assistance Program Policy Directive, EAP, wellbeing, employee counselling services, traumatic events, critical incident

Policy history

Is this a new policy? *N*
 Does this policy amend or update an existing policy? *Y*
 Does this policy replace an existing policy? *Y*
 If so, which policies? Employee Assistance Program Directive

Applies to

All SA Health Portfolio

Staff impacted

All Staff, Management, Admin, Students; Volunteers

EPAS compatible

NA

Registered with Divisional Policy

Yes

Contact Officer

Policy doc reference no.

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Version control and change history

Version	Date from	Date to	Amendment
1.0	19/08/2010	09/10/2016	Original version
2.0	10/10/2016	10/10/2021	Amended version



SA Health Employee Assistance Program Policy Directive

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SA Health

Document control information

Document owner	Executive Director People and Culture, System Performance and Service Delivery, Department for Health and Ageing
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Document history

Date	Author	Version	Change reference
20/06/2016	Senior Organisational Development Consultant, People and Culture	V.2	Formally reviewed in line with 1-5 year scheduled timeline for review.
19/08/2010	Workforce Division	V.1	PE Approved version.

Endorsements

Date	Endorsed by

Approvals

Date	Endorsed by
10/10/16	Portfolio Executive

SA Health Employee Assistance Policy Directive

1. Objective

SA Health is committed to promoting and maintaining employee health and wellbeing. As part of this commitment SA Health will support employees and their immediate family members experiencing personal or work related problems by providing access to free, confidential, professional counselling services through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

The EAP aims to address personal or work related problems which may affect the work performance, safety, health or wellbeing of employees by:

- Providing a 24 hour, seven day emergency service to all SA Health employees and their immediate families as well as a 24/7 toll free person to person contact number
- Contributing to the prevention of psychological injury and illness and maintenance of psychological wellbeing of employees and their immediate family members
- Contributing to the maintenance of the general health and wellbeing of employees and their immediate family members
- Contributing to the identification of required improvements to SA Health systems, policies, procedures, programs and practices impacting on the areas of psychological wellbeing.

2. Scope

This Employee Assistance Program Policy applies to all SA Health employees and their immediate family members.

3. Principles

EAP has been defined by the International Employee Assistance Professionals Association as “a program designed to assist work organisations in addressing productivity issues and assisting clients in identifying and resolving personal concerns, including but not limited to health, relationship, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress or other personal issues that may affect job performance.”

The following principles underpin SA Health EAP:

- The EAP impacts positively on individual employee wellbeing and is perceived by employees as a desirable workplace resource.
- The EAP may result in various operational benefits for employers including reduced turnover and absenteeism, and higher employee productivity and morale.
- The EAP forms part of the organisation’s response to individuals experiencing psychological stress in the workplace, a leading driver for workers’ compensation claims.
- In line with its duty of care, SA Health engages the services of experts in the field to provide the best possible independent and confidential EAP services for our employees
- A centrally procured EAP in SA Health allows for:
 - consistent services supporting SA Health’s overarching strategic goals and priorities whilst meeting local needs
 - complete service coverage

- consistency in service specifications, contracts, monitoring and evaluation methods and,
- complete service monitoring and reporting systems for reporting to peak committees or external regulatory bodies.
- The EAP is communicated and promoted across SA Health in various forms with the assistance of Media and Communications, for example, the SA Health intranet and LHN and SAAS intranets, inclusion in the SA Health induction manual and local orientation programs, adhoc CE Checks to support change and SA Health initiatives.
- The EAP is supported by DHA and also by local EAP Coordinators in each LHN and SAAS.
- Data from the EAP inputs into strategic and operational planning processes whilst also providing a response to meeting the organisation's health, safety, wellbeing and productivity goals.
- The uptake of the EAP is monitored, and the program is evaluated to ensure it is effective in meeting performance standards and the needs of the organisation.
- The EAP provider will maintain the confidentiality of all records and discussions.
- Self-referral or referral to the EAP through a manager, will not affect job security, promotion, or any other privilege of the employee.

4. Detail

4.1 Eligibility

- The EAP is available to all employees and their immediate family. Eligibility for service access by family members (see definition in section 16) will be assessed by the EAP provider in consultation with the relevant EAP Coordinator.
- For the purposes of this policy, volunteers will be regarded as employees.
- Contractors and students are not normally eligible for EAP services, however, in circumstances where they are exposed to potentially traumatic events which also impact on SA Health employees, they may be offered access to the EAP.
- SA Health will meet the cost of up to four (4) counselling sessions per employee per issue per annum (12 months). Extensions beyond (4) counselling sessions will be subject to assessment of need by the relevant EAP Coordinator in consultation with the EAP provider. However, if employees are referred by the EAP provider to another specialist agency they will be required to meet the cost of the specialist agency services themselves.
- It is expected that an employee will make every effort to successfully complete counselling within a reasonable time period.
- The counselling sessions will be with one of the EAP contracted providers.

4.2 EAP Providers

SA Health has contracted a Panel to provide the EAP services. These organisations are professional, accredited providers, independent of SA Health, who engage qualified psychologists or social workers to offer a wide range of professional counselling services. A list of the providers engaged across SA Health can be found on the EAP pages of the SA Health Intranet. LHNs/Services/DHA will engage providers from the Panel to provide EAP services.

4.3 Contacting the EAP

Appointments are made by the employee contacting the provider(s) directly and require only the minimum of information to make a booking at the most suitable location. If the problem is urgent, this should be indicated by the employee when booking the appointment.

4.3.1 Self-Referral

The EAP is designed to encourage self-referrals where the employee or family member has personal issues which they wish to discuss in a private and confidential setting.

Upon phoning the appropriate EAP Provider for the LHN/Service/DHA, employees should inform them that they are an SA Health employee and state their LHN/Service/DHA. Family members should state that they are a family member of an SA Health employee and their relationship to the employee. Eligibility for service access by family members will be assessed by the EAP provider in consultation with the local EAP Coordinator, in line with policy requirements.

An employee can also contact the local SA Health EAP Coordinator for further information on EAP. Details for providers and EAP Coordinators can be found on the EAP pages of the SA Health Intranet.

4.3.2 Suggested Referral (Early Intervention)

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

4.3.3 Potentially Traumatic Events

In some circumstances individuals or groups of employees may be exposed to traumatic or violent incidents such as physical and verbal assaults by patients or members of the public. In these cases, on-site counselling services may be recommended and provided, in addition to the normal EAP services. Volunteers and contractors may be included in this type of referral.

4.3.4 Formal Manager Referral

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.

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. The manager explains the reason for the referral and, with the employee's agreement to proceed, contacts the EAP provider to book an appointment.

With permission from the employee, the manager participates in the process through 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. 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.

The program will provide assistance for personal problems affecting work performance. Notwithstanding this, serious misconduct or continued unsatisfactory work performance may still result in disciplinary action.

Further information on the Formal Manager Referral process is available in an *Employee Assistance Program - Fact Sheet for Managers* available on the SA Health intranet.

4.4 Time Off and Leave Requirements

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

When attending appointments during work time, employees must inform their manager/supervisor of the reason for their absence so that appropriate measures can be put in place. Employees are not obligated to disclose the nature of the counselling services sought.

Where the employee does not wish to inform their manager/supervisor or workplace that they are accessing EAP, they can schedule the sessions in their own time.

4.5 Charges

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

4.6 Travel

Any costs of travel to the EAP service are the responsibility of the employee or family member accessing the service. 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 employer at the discretion of the LHN/Service/DHA EAP Coordinator.

4.7 Cancellations

EAP providers require a minimum of 24 hours notice of cancellation. If less than 24 hours notice is given a cancellation fee will be applied and employees will lose one counselling session. It is the employee's responsibility to rearrange a session should it not be convenient. The EAP provider will take into account any emergency situations that may have contributed to the cancellation.

4.8 Feedback and evaluation

EAP providers are required to provide all clients with evaluation forms following their use of the service and individuals are encouraged to complete them. In addition, employees who are dissatisfied with the service provided by the counsellor or the EAP provider are strongly encouraged to report this to their local EAP Coordinator as well as to the EAP provider themselves.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 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
- Seek approval from their immediate manager when leave is being requested for an appointment during work hours.

5.2 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
- Respect the privacy of an employee who has requested to attend an appointment with the EAP during working hours.

5.3 EAP Coordinators

It is the responsibility of the EAP Coordinators in each LHN/Service/DHA to:

- Manage and monitor the planning, coordination and service delivery within their LHN/Service
- Be the contact point within their LHN/Service/DHA for the EAP providers including contract management of EAP services for their designated areas
- Authorise services to immediate family members in line with the policy
- Authorise any additional EAP services to employees or their immediate family members as appropriate
- Receive and review quarterly reports from EAP providers
- Provide input into reports as required
- Provide reports to executives and other relevant committees
- Provide advice to managers, executives and staff about the use of the EAP and the services available through the program
- Liaise with the central coordinator of EAP on any issues, questions, concerns that may arise.
- Attend quarterly EAP Coordinator meetings.
- Verify EAP invoices
- Actively promote the benefits of the EAP service.

5.4 Senior Organisational Development Consultant, DHA

It is the responsibility of the Senior Organisational Development Consultant in DHA to:

- Manage the SA Health EAP Contract
 - Contract administration will include formal monitoring, evaluation, and liaison on agreed performance standards and performance measures.
 - A contract management plan has been developed outlining the above points including reporting and performance measurement requirements of the provider.
 - Evaluate the SA Health EAP provider's contracts.
 - Complete contract evaluation reports.
- Monitor uptake of EAP services and identify opportunities for improvement.

5.5 Manager, Organisational Development, DHA

It is the responsibility of the Manager, Organisational Development to:

- Oversee the management of the SA Health EAP Contract
- Ensure communication of relevant de-identified EAP summary data for SA Health to senior executive

5.6 Executive

It is the responsibility of Executives to:

- Promote the EAP service within their area of responsibility.

5.7 Chief Executive

It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive SA Health to:

- Provide adequate resources for the implementation and monitoring of the program.

6. Reporting

EAP providers will provide separate quarterly reports containing relevant information about the use of the EAP Program in each LHN/Service/DHA.

In addition, EAP providers will provide an aggregated SA Health report for all LHN/Health Services serviced by that provider containing specified statistics as well as organisational issues and trends.

A representative of the EAP provider will meet with the EAP Coordinators 3 times per year to review reports and service quality provided under the contract.

Bi-annual or annual reports of summary data are collated by the central EAP Coordinator and forwarded to the following:

- Executive Director, People and Culture
- Manager, Organisational Development
- EAP Coordinators

7. EPAS

N/A

8. Exemption

No exemption allowed for this policy directive.

9. Associated Policy Directives / Policy Guidelines

N/A

10. References, Resources and Related Documents

10.1 Related Policies

SA Health Performance Review and Development Policy Directive
Work Health and Safety Policy Directive

10.2 Department of Premier and Cabinet

Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector

10.3 Related Legislation

SA Anti-Discrimination Act
Work Health & Safety Act 2012
SA Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (1998)
SA Freedom of Information Act (1991)
Return to Work Act (2014)

10.4 Additional References

Employee Assistance Professionals Association of Australasia Inc
www.eapaa.org.au

10.5 Resources

Employee Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions
Employee Assistance Program Fact Sheet for Managers

11. Other

11.1 Confidentiality

A vital feature of the SA Health EAP is the high level of confidentiality and respect for an individual's privacy. Managers and supervisors do not need to know that employees are using the EAP services. Should an employee advise their manager or supervisor that they are attending the EAP the manager or supervisor is required to observe strictest confidentiality and to support the employee. Employees do not need to discuss the reason for the visit with anyone.

Confidentiality also means that no one, including SA Health, will receive information from the EAP provider concerning an employee's situation. Conversations and any information shared between an employee and a counsellor will be in strictest confidence and will not be communicated further except in the following circumstances:

- consent by the client
- risk to safety of the client or others
- statutory obligations (for example mandatory reporting)
- court order or subpoena.

EAP providers will provide de-identified data to SA Health for reporting purposes only and to ensure EAP is running effectively.

12. National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care has developed ten National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (the Standards).

The Standards provide a nationally consistent and uniform set of measures of safety and quality for application across a wide variety of health care services. This Guideline contributes to the below listed standard:

									
National Standard 1 Governance for Safety and Quality in Health Care	National Standard 2 Partnering with Consumers	National Standard 3 Preventing & Controlling Healthcare associated infections	National Standard 4 Medication Safety	National Standard 5 Patient Identification & Procedure Matching	National Standard 6 Clinical Handover	National Standard 7 Blood and Blood Products	National Standard 8 Preventing & Managing Pressure Injuries	National Standard 9 Recognising & Responding to Clinical Deterioration	National Standard 10 Preventing Falls & Harm from Falls
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>									

13. Risk Management

Management of EAP services falls within People and Culture, System Performance and Service Delivery. A risk management plan for the Employee Assistance program has been developed, and is based on the Australian Standards on Risk Management AS/NZS 4360:2004, and the State Procurement Board's Risk Management Guidelines.

14. Evaluation

SA Health will assess and monitor the operation of the EAP to ensure that:

- the principles and spirit of the EAP are being adhered to by all parties
- emphasis is placed on workplace preventative initiatives to address problems that become apparent
- complete confidentiality is maintained at all times
- access to the EAP is available and maintained.

Compliance with the policy directive is assessed and monitored through regular reporting of EAP services including key performance indicators, the EAP Contract Management Plan, EAP Provider customer satisfaction surveys, and feedback from SA Health groups, committees and EAP providers.

15. Attachments

N/A

16. Definitions

Counselling Service

Advice or guidance, especially as solicited from a knowledgeable or suitably accredited professional. Counselling denotes a professional relationship between a trained counsellor and a client. This relationship is usually person-to-person, although it may sometimes involve more than two people. It is designed to help employees or their family members to understand and clarify their views of their physical or psychological environment, and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through resolution of problems of an emotional or interpersonal nature.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

An employment-based health service program designed to assist in the identification and resolution of a broad range of employee personal concerns that may affect job performance. The assistance may be provided within the organization or by referral to outside resources (International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans, 2005).

The EAP offers assistance for problems such as:

- work stress
- interpersonal conflict
- depression
- marriage and family problems
- domestic violence
- alcohol, tobacco and other drug problems
- emotional stress or trauma
- relationship difficulties
- financial problems
- grief and bereavement
- gambling worries
- career issues
- work related problems
- critical incidents/potentially traumatic events
- career transition and job seeking

EAP Coordinator

Refers to an employee of SA Health with the delegated authority to authorise expenditure for SA Health EAP services to Employees and immediate family members.

Employee

An individual who is compensated for services performed to SA Health and whose duties are under the control of the employer. For the purposes of EAP, volunteers will be regarded as Employees. Contractors are not normally eligible for EAP Services, however, in circumstances where they are exposed to Potentially Traumatic Events which also impact on SA Health Employees, then they may be offered counselling and support services.

Immediate Family

A family member in relation to an employee is defined as:

- (a) the partner, father or mother of the relevant person;
- (b) a sister, brother or child of the relevant person;
- (c) any other person who is dependent on the person's care
- (d) any other person who, in the opinion of the EAP Coordinator, should be treated for the purposes of this definition as one of the relevant person's relations described in (a) (b) (c) or (d) above. Access to counselling services in these circumstances is linked to the impact on the welfare and work performance of the employee as outlined in the policy and is subject to those conditions.

Incident

An event or circumstance which led to, or could have, unintended and / or unnecessary harm to a person, and / or a complaint, loss or damage (National Standards for Mental Health Services, 2010).

Potentially Traumatic Events (PTEs)

PTEs involve exposure to an event involving threat, actual or perceived, to the life or physical safety of the individual, their loved ones or those around them. They can be experienced on a single occasion or repeatedly (The Australian Centre for Post Traumatic Mental Health, 2014).

Psychological Assessment

A psychological assessment is conducted by a psychologist to gather information about how people think, feel, behave and react. The focus of a psychological assessment will vary depending on the purpose. Generally psychological assessments include a range of ways for gathering information and may include interview, observation, consultation with other professionals and formal psychological testing. Psychological testing involves the administration, scoring and interpreting of psychological tests. (Australian Psychological Society)

Service Provider

A service provider is a person or organisation with professional qualifications who receives remuneration for providing EAP services.