

## **Public Service Commission**

### **Employee Assistance Program Policy and Procedures**

#### **Preamble**

The Government of NL has an interest in promoting the personal well-being and productivity of employees throughout the public service. It is recognized that personal, family and work-related problems can often be most effectively managed through early identification, intervention and support provided by a professional counselling service.

#### **Policy Statement**

The Public Service Commission will administer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Employees and their immediate family members experiencing mental health or work-related issues affecting their well-being or job performance, can access professional and confidential counselling supports.

#### **Scope**

This policy shall apply to all employees of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, including those scheduled to the Public Service Commission Act as well as other entities where a Memorandum of Agreements (MOU) are established.

#### **Mandate**

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is mandate is to:

- Provide confidential, professional assessment, referral and follow-up services to assist employees as well as their immediate family members experiencing mental health or work-related issues.
- Enhance employee mental health and wellness and improve workplace productivity.
- Provide support for employees and or departments exposed to traumatic workplace incidents.
- Support employees and departments during work related adjustment.

## **Procedure**

Employee assistance supports are arranged by a Registered Counsellor employed by the Public Service Commission (EAP Coordinator). Referrals are made to external service providers/consultants contracted by the Employee Assistance and Respectful Workplace Division. EAP Coordinators can also provide immediate counselling and or assessment services during the initial appointment if necessary, and will identify and refer the employee to an external counselling agency/service provider.

Referral to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) may be by self-referral, workplace assisted or management initiated / formal referral.

## **Types of Referrals**

### **1. Self Referral**

A self-referral is made by the employee on their own behalf. All employees can seek assistance on a voluntary basis by contacting EAP.

### **2. Workplace Assisted Referral**

Where the manager and/or supervisor may identify an individual or work group in need of support and counselling, he/she may recommend contact with EAP. The manager or supervisor is not provided with any information regarding contact unless the employee/s provides consent.

### **3. Formal Referral**

A formal referral to EAP normally occurs at a point when work performance issues have been identified by an employee's manager or supervisor. The employee is provided with a formal letter outlining the issues of concern within the workplace and offered the option of EAP support to assist in addressing the concern. Although an employee is formally referred to EAP, participation in counselling services remains voluntary. The employee maintains the right to confidentiality throughout their formal referral to EAP.

When a formal referral has been made, the coordinator will provide confirmation about whether the employee is participating by accepting counselling services with a contracted provider. If this information is requested from the manager or human resources representative, EAP can confirm or deny participation of the employee. The manager is responsible for maintaining contact with the EAP Coordinator to confirm whether or not the employee is participating in services. Managers are also responsible for offering the employee support throughout this process. If required,

the EAP Coordinator will maintain contact with the employee and contracted provider to provide additional support.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

When an employee's work performance is unsatisfactory, the supervisor's first response should be to provide the employee with feedback on performance and to clarify what is expected.

If the unsatisfactory job performance persists, the supervisor or manager shall consult with Treasury Broad Secretariat (TBS) to review the employee's performance before making a formal referral to the Employee Assistance Program. Bargaining unit employees have the right to have union representation at any meeting where there is a human resources and or departmental manager present to discuss concerns related to unsatisfactory work performance.

When a formal referral to EAP is made, the employee should be advised of the following:

- The nature of the unsatisfactory work performance and or patterns that have been identified by management.
- The consequences of continuing the present unsatisfactory work pattern may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- What constitutes a formal referral to the Employee Assistance Program and what is expected.
- The employee is informed that they are required to keep the initial consultation appointment and to participate in the program. The employee is also informed that participation in the EAP program is voluntary, however, highly recommended by management.
- The Employee Assistance Program does not make recommendations on whether disciplinary measures are necessary nor remove the option for management to seek resolution internally.

### **Confidentiality**

EAP maintains confidentiality with respect to all matters associated with the professional services provided to employees. In accordance with the Personal Health Information Act (PHIA), Coordinators will not disclose information provided in the

course of a counselling consultation, coaching, mediation or group intervention unless required to do so by law. All persons working with participants in the EAP program, (e.g. medical personnel administrators, coordinators, counsellors and support staff) are prohibited from disclosing any information unless consent is provided by the employee.

The general expectation that EAP coordinators will keep information confidential does not apply whereby there is a professional duty or obligation to disclose information, or where there is serious, imminent, or foreseeable harm to a client, employee, or others. All limits to confidentiality will be discussed with the employee at the earliest possible opportunity.

EAP files are handled with a high degree of confidentiality. Names are not be used on employee files or on the progress notes contained in them. EAP files and working notes shall be retained in a secure database and shall be destroyed according to the records, retention, and disposal schedule as per the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Records Management guidelines. Personal EAP files can be made available upon the written request of the client.

When an employee is referred by the EAP Coordinator to an appointed external service provider, sufficient information shall be released to the provider in order to ensure an appropriate referral is made and services are accessed in a timely manner.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Employee Assistance Program will:

- Consistently apply the mandate of the Program by providing access to assessment and counselling support for GNL employees and their immediate family members.
- Provide an initial consultation with employee who requests assistance through EAP, as well as explain confidentiality and the services offered within the program.
- Provide assessment and counselling services refer to an appropriate contracted service provider as required.
- Support employees, managers and departments that have experienced a traumatic event in the workplace.
- Receive and process invoices from service providers while adhering to EAP funding guidelines and practices.

## Definition and Acronyms

<b>Employee Assistance Program (EAP)</b>	A short term employee benefit program which provides confidential, professional assistance for a wide range of personal and workplace issues to help employees and their immediate family to achieve good mental health.
<b>Employee</b>	Any full, temporary, part time, contractual service employee or paid student working for GNL, those scheduled to the PSC Act, or those employees covered by MOU's. Retired employees are covered up to 12 calendar months following their last day of employment.
<b>Immediate Family Member</b>	A family member living in the same household as the employee and is 25 years of age or younger. Also includes the employee's spouse/partner.
<b>Formal Referral</b>	A formal referral process whereby a manager or Human Resources representative can refer an employee to the Employee Assistance Program to support that employee in addressing behaviours impacting work performance.
<b>Eligibility</b>	The program is available to all GNL employees and their immediate family members. Employees may also be eligible for funding for workplace trauma support, which will be assessed and determined by the EAP Coordinator and funding guidelines
<b>Confidentiality</b>	Client confidentiality means that personal health information given to a health care provider will not be disclosed to others unless the client has given <b>consent or whereby risk to harm or others is assessed</b>
<b>Trauma Response Protocol</b>	A protocol designed to respond to and support individuals and/or groups following a critical event/ trauma in the workplace

