



# BOULIA SHIRE COUNCIL

## Employee Assistance Program Policy

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<b>Legislation:</b>	n/a

## **OBJECTIVE:**

To outline the level of support and assistance provided to employees through Council's Employee Assistance Program.

## **SCOPE:**

This Policy applies to all employees.

## **DEFINITIONS:**

**Employee Assistance Program** An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is an external professional, confidential counselling service that the organisation provides to employees and immediate family members who face difficulties that affect their wellbeing, work performance, or enjoyment of the workplace.

## **POLICY:**

Boulia Shire Council values the importance of its employees in the success of its business. In common with every other employer, Boulia Shire Council will have some employees who experience personal or work related problems which may be affecting their quality of life, and in some cases this may have an adverse affect on their work performance. Left unresolved, these problems may not only be detrimental to the individual's health, wellbeing and performance, but also have the potential to jeopardise the safety of fellow employees and members of the public.

To ensure that support is available for employees experiencing difficulties, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available whereby employees and their immediate family members can access an external counselling service. Boulia Shire Council will engage a service provider to provide this service. The overall objective is to achieve early identification, referral and resolution of personal and work-related problems before they become serious.

### **Employee Assistance Program Services**

#### *Short term Counselling*

This program is available to all Boulia Shire Council employees and family members of the employee. Council offers a program consisting of four sessions with the provider. If it is determined that further assistance is required then a referral to main stream counselling will be provided.

#### *Specialist Assistance*

If the nature of the problem is such that further professional help is considered desirable, the service provider will refer the employee to an appropriate agency.

## **Referrals**

There are three methods of referral to the Employee Assistance Program for counselling.

### Self Referral

A self referral is made when an employee has personal or work related problems which he/she wants to discuss in a private and confidential setting without anyone in Council being involved in any way. Appointments may be made by contacting the service provider directly.

### Suggested Referrals

Occurs when someone else recognises that an employee is distressed or going through a difficult time and suggests using the EAP. This might be a colleague, a Supervisor/Manager, family member or doctor.

### Management Referral

Although EAP is designed to encourage self referral, there may be occasions when Supervisors/Managers recommend an employee seek counselling to assist with personal issues when work performance has declined below the agreed standard. Employees retain the right to refuse the offer of counselling assistance. Any employee who exhibits unsatisfactory job performance will not be prejudiced because of personal problems, without first being given the opportunity to seek assistance and then to improve his/her work performance to a satisfactory level. Referral to the EAP is only one option for dealing with sub-standard performance.

## **Leave to Attend Counselling**

The service provider will be available during work time. The arrangements for taking time off during business hours will be the same as exist between Supervisors and employees for any form of absence from the workplace. The Supervisor does not need to be informed of the nature of the problem.

## **Confidentiality**

The strictest client confidentiality will be maintained by the service provider, except where the client gives written permission to release information or where obliged to release due to the application of any legislation.

Information on the uptake of services provided to Council will be statistical in nature and will not lead to any individuals being identified. The service provider will produce two reports per year which are sighted only by the Human Resources Manager and Chief Executive Officer to enable monitoring of the service provision and to track the organisational issues within Council.

## **Complaints**

If anyone experiences difficulties with accessing or using the service, the concerned person may contact a Human Resources representative. Concerns and any issues discussed will be kept strictly confidential.

## **Promotion, Education and Training**

Promotion of the EAP is undertaken by the Human Resources Section by:

- Provision of resources for the promotion, education and training
- Distribution of pamphlets/flyers to employees
- Written information included in induction packages for new employees
- Posters in the workplace
- Information sessions

## **Responsibilities**

Employees are responsible for recognising when personal or work related issues may be affecting their health and/or work performance and knowing how to access the EAP to prevent the problems from reaching crisis point.

It is the responsibility of the Human Resources Section to:

- Oversee the EAP contractual agreement
- Coordinate the promotion, education and training of employees in relation to the EAP service
- Oversee the implementation of the program
- Deal with employee concerns in relation to the provision of EAP
- Assist Supervisors/Managers with the process of informal and formal referral.