

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME POLICY



THEMBISILE HANI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME POLICY

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Policy Number:	Approved Date:
Effective Date:	Review Date: as when necessary

Notwithstanding the review date herein, this policy shall remain effective until such time approved otherwise by Council and may be reviewed on an earlier date if necessary.

Why Have a Policy?

The purpose of this policy is to provide a standard Employee Assistance Programme for all employees. Because employees are vital to the work of THEMBISILE HANI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

1. OBJECTIVE.

To encourage and maintain the well-being and productivity of employees by providing confidential assistance or short term counseling to those who are experiencing personal or work-related problems.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 The Municipality is concerned with the health, safety, welfare and job satisfaction of employees.

2.2 It is recognized that most human problems can be treated or resolved provided that each is identified in its early stages. This is true whether the problem is one of physical illness, mental or

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emotional stress, marital or family conflicts, chemical dependency, financial problems or other concerns. These are serious problems, which may have a profound impact upon the lives of those employees affected, their families, fellow employees and their job performance.

- 2.3 The intent of the EAP is therefore to ensure the wellbeing of the employee and appropriate job performance.

3. PARTICIPATION IN THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

- 3.1 All employees are eligible to participate in the program. On occasion, members of employee's families may participate in the program when activities are related to employee problems.
- 3.2 Participation in the program is voluntary. Choosing to participate, or not to participate, will neither adversely affect an employee's job security and promotional opportunities, nor excuse and employee from adherence to Municipality policies and procedures concerning job performance and basic conduct.
- 3.3 Contact with the Employee Assistance Program shall be confidential, except through written authorization by the employee, or in cases of an abused person, an unexplained, unusual or suspicious death, or a threat to one's own life or that of another, as prescribed by law.
- 3.4 Employee Assistance Program records will be retained within the offices of the Employee Assistance Program, and will not become part of, or referenced to any employee's personal file, medical file, or other file which may be accessed by any other department. Visits to the Employee Assistance Program by an employee may be made during work hours while the employee is on Employer time but must be coordinated through the employee's supervisor.

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4. PROCEDURE

The specific core activities of the Employee Assistance Program will include:

- 4.1 Expert consultation and training of appropriate persons in the identification and resolution of job performance issues related to the personal concerns identified above.
- 4.2 Confidential, appropriate and timely problem assessment and resolution services including referrals for appropriate diagnosis, treatment and assistance, establishment of linkages between the workforce and community resources that provide such services, and follow-up assistance to employees who use those services.
- 4.3 Referrals made to EAP may be made by the employees themselves on a voluntary basis, or by the employee's manager when an employee's work performance has declined or basic code of conduct of an employee has not met acceptable standards as defined by Thembisile policies. However, the decision to accept a manager referral to the Employee Assistance Program and subsequent referrals for treatment are voluntary, and are the personal responsibility of the employee.
- 4.4 Thembisile employees or members of their families requesting an appointment with the Employee Assistance Program should contact the nominated EAP employee. Employees seeking assistance from the Employee Assistance Program are encouraged to do so before job performance is impaired. Problems treated early are usually simpler to resolve.
- 4.5 Employees referred to an outside provider however, will be responsible for all costs associated with those outside services; although the employee's medical aid may cover some of the costs, if applicable and in terms of the fund rules.

5. TYPES OF SERVICES

Employee Assistance Program services include assessment, counseling, referral (if indicated) and follow-up. The Employee Assistance Program initial appointment will be made as soon as reasonably possible after a request is made. Employee Assistance Program services include, but are not limited to counseling in these areas:

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- a) Budgeting
- b) Family responsibility
- c) Serious illness / injury.
- d) Career concerns
- e) Depression
- f) Divorce or separation
- g) Drug or alcohol abuse or other addictions
- h) Emotional and personal conflicts
- i) Family and relationship concerns
- j) Grief
- k) Managing stress and change
- l) Parenting
- m) Work performance issues.

6. COUNSELORS.

Professional counselors whose offices are not on Municipality property provide counseling. Some consultation may be made first by internal experts. All information discussed with the counselor will be treated strictly confidential.

7. LEAVE TO ATTEND COUNSELING OR TREATMENT

Employees who attend EAP counseling sessions or treatment may use their sick leave or vacation leave which is paid leave or unpaid leave should the employee have no paid leave available if requested and approved.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information regarding an employee's use of the Employee Assistance Program will be treated as strictly confidential. No identifying information will be released to personnel, with the following exceptions:

8.1 If an action is initiated by an employee and the information is relevant to the claim or defense in such action.

8.2 If required by law.

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- 8.3 If requested by a person bearing a release of information signed by the employee, and;
- 8.4 If an employee has been referred mandatory to the Employee Assistance Program, the Municipality will be told:
- a) Whether the employee came to their appointment.
 - b) The date an employee begins treatment.
 - c) If an employee will be able to work while in treatment.
 - d) An employee's compliance status with regard to his/her recommended treatment, including on a monthly basis.
 - e) The date an employee completes all treatment requirements.
 - f) If an employee is subject to testing, the dates of the return-to-duty test and schedule of any follow up tests, or
 - g) Date the Employee Assistance Program coordinates the tests if required.

Under any of these circumstances, only those who need to know whether or not any employee successfully completed treatment or other related information will have access to it. An employee who willfully discloses or releases information in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to including termination from employment.

9. GUIDELINES

- 9.1 The employee's participation in the Employee Assistance Program will not be a factor and/or create discrimination in job security or promotional opportunities and will not become part of personal records.
- 9.2 Employees participating in the Employee Assistance Program will be entitled to all the benefits given under current contracts, agreements and/or Policy. Costs incurred over and above those covered by the employee's benefit package will be the responsibility of the employee. Where a family member accesses Employee Assistance Program services, he/she will do so at no

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additional cost to the Municipality, provided that the services rendered will be for in-house assistance.

- 9.3 The Employee Assistance Program will not waive the traditional rights of employees to the grievance procedures and usual rights of the employer to maintain discipline.
- 9.4 A response to a request for service should occur as soon as possible, preferably within one working day.
- 9.5 The first counseling session should occur within two weeks unless unforeseen circumstances arise.
- 9.6 The program normally offers up to three sessions for each new case.
- 9.7 Where employees are likely to be involved in critical incidents because of the nature of their work, the Municipality must develop a procedure for initial counseling and follow-up. The same can apply to cases that involve threats of violence or suicide.
- 9.8 Employee Assistance Program training sessions for managers and supervisors should cover, at minimum:
 - a) The administrative role with respect to Employee Assistance Program, the confidentiality aspects, and the procedure for accessing the program;
 - b) The administrative role with respect to Employee Assistance Program and referrals.
 - c) The concept and methods that allow for early detection of problems that interfere with job performance;
 - d) Constructive methods to deal with employees experiencing performance problems due to personal or behavioral problems; and
 - e) Support approaches to assist the employee.

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10. PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

Consistent with the objective of the Employee Assistance Program policy, preventative programs will be held where possible to educate employees about personal problems related to life style and work environment, and the possible responses. This may involve cooperation with the Public Health Services and the safety and health committee or the safety and health representative.

11. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

11.1 An integral part of any Employee Assistance Program is the monitoring process that 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 Employee Assistance Program.

11.3 The Municipality undertakes that all parties are adhering to the principles and spirit of the agreed policy statement.

11.4 That adequate emphasis is given to the preventative side of problems that become apparent.

11.5 That the service is making contact with those most in need of assistance, and such people are receiving the benefits of the program.

11.6 Under resumption of duties, following a successful completion of treatment under the program, no person will suffer any disadvantage.

11.7 Information and education to promote the health and well-being of staff are being provided.

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11.8 Special attention is being devoted to facets of the work environment that may contribute to personal or work related problems.

12. COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to all Municipal employees using the full range of communication methods available to the municipality.

13. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed and amended on an annual basis or each time any Act or Conditions of Service or other agreements deem it necessary. All proposed amendments will serve before the Local Labour forum for resolution and the Council for approval.

14. BUDGET AND RESOURCES

The financial and resource implication/s related to the implementation of this policy should be qualified and quantified.

15. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Municipal Manager or his/her delegate assignee accepts overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the policy.

16. PENALTIES

Non-compliance of any of the stipulations contained in the Policy will be viewed as misconduct and will be dealt with in terms of the municipality's Disciplinary Code.

17. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Any dispute arising from this policy due to ambiguous wording or Phrasing must be referred to the conciliation and arbitration for adjudication. resolutions of the arbitration must be incorporated into the policy