



Policy

16. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Version 03

File Reference No: 22.112.5

Strategic Outcome: Good government

Date of Adoption: 21/06/2017

Date for Review: 08/06/2021

Responsible Officer: Enterprise and Risk Manager

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Berrigan Shire Council in its commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment has recognised the need to provide adequate support for staff experiencing personal or work related problems by providing an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Council will enlist the services of an EAP provider to provide professional counselling services for its workforce.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the provision of the EAP program and define the parameters by which the EAP program is offered.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to paid employees of the Berrigan Shire Council, registered volunteers of Council's S355 Committees of Management, and current elected councillors.

4. OBJECTIVE

This policy is designed to assist the Council meet the following Delivery Plan objectives:

2.2.2 Council operations support ethical, transparent and accountably corporate governance.

5. DEFINITIONS

Organisational Referral is when Council has identified a need, such as following an incident, and will arrange for EAP access.

Self-Referral is where the employee has identified a problem which they wish to discuss in a private and confidential setting without anyone in the organisation being involved in any way.



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Suggested Referral is when the option of accessing the EAP is made, usually by a Supervisor or Manager, or even a work colleague.

6. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 EAP Provider

The Council will contract a regionally located provider to manage the EAP, independent of Council. The focus will be on providing professional counselling services that meet both the employee's and Council's needs.

Information regarding the EAP Provider is available from Council's Payroll/HR Officer.

6.2 EAP Procedure

The EAP offers assistance for problems such as:

- Relationship difficulties
- Divorce and separation
- Harassment and discrimination
- Conflict
- Alcohol and drug problems
- Work related problems
- Grief and bereavement
- Financial difficulties
- Stress and fatigue
- Emotional difficulties

The EAP is free of charge up to a maximum of three visits in one calendar year, to all Berrigan Shire Council paid employees, registered volunteers of Council's S355 Committees of Management, and current elected members of Council. Any additional visits will be at the cost of the individual.

Use of the EAP can be through self-referral, suggested referral or organisational referral. Where the referral is either suggested or organisational, use of the EAP is at the discretion of the individual and is completely voluntary.

The EAP provider will make arrangements to meet with the individual usually at a location close to their place of residence, or at the provider's premises, however on occasion an alternative venue may need to be arranged. Under these circumstances travelling will be charged according to the EAP agreement between the Council and the provider.

Where a counsellor may suggest referral to a specialist agency, any costs associated with the referral are to be met by the individual.



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6.2.1 Leave requirements for paid employees

Where an employee wishes to utilise the EAP service, normal leave procedures will apply. If the referral to the EAP is a suggested or organisational referral, arrangements regarding leave or leave with pay will be made with the affected employee/s.

6.2.2 Confidentiality

A vital feature of the EAP is the confidentiality and respect for an individual's privacy. No one needs to know that an individual is utilising the services of the EAP. Should an individual confide in or advise somebody within Council that they are attending the EAP, he/she is required to observe strict confidentiality and where possible offer support.

Confidentiality also means that nobody, include the Council will receive information from the EAP provider concerning an individual situation. Conversations and any information shared with a counsellor will be confidential and will not be communicated further unless written authorisation is given.

6.2.3 Council Contact

The EAP is facilitated by the Human Resource Officer. Information, direction, support and advice on the EAP service can be obtained by contacting the Human Resource Officer, Council's Contact Officers or by making direct contact with the EAP Provider.

Contact details of the current EAP Provider are displayed on all noticeboards.

7. RELATED LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Additional publications to be read in conjunction with this policy include:

- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- Local Government (State) Award 2010
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Internal Reporting Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Discrimination, Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Policy
- Privacy Management Plan