

POLICY ON THE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS/ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

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DEFINITIONS

“Case manager” – a professionally qualified person who will be assigned to manage the situation and progress of specific cases of individuals who are participating in the programme.

“Employee Wellness/Assistance Programme” (EW/AP) – a planned, systematic programme designed to provide professional assistance to all employees and their immediate families who may be experiencing among other ‘difficulties’ such as alcohol, drug, emotional or personal crisis, health, marital, family, stress, trauma and/or legal problems, which interfere with their job performance.

“Employee Wellness/Assistance Programme managers/Practitioners/Coordinators” – employee(s) in the Employee Wellness/Assistance Unit who will play a proactive role in liaising with other departments and in co-ordinating project activities from within the department.

“Employee Wellness/Assistance Programme Professional” – a professionally trained person, performing WEP specific and related tasks, for example, psychotherapy, counselling, marketing and evaluation.

“Eligible Employees” – shall mean all employees (temporary and permanent) employed by the University of Fort Hare.

“immediate Families” – shall mean the spouse or partner and all children who are dependent on the employee.

“Services” – shall mean the provision of an Employee Wellness Programme.

“Unit” – shall mean Employee Wellness Sub- Directorate.

Employee Wellness and Employee Assistance shall have a corresponding meaning

1. **POLICY STATEMENT**

The University of Fort Hare values all its employees and commits itself to promoting their well-being. It recognises that un-addressed personal, interpersonal and organisational problems can and usually lead to Performance problems, Attendance problems, Overuse of medical/health benefits, Workers

compensation and disability cases, Disciplinary actions, and Accidents and litigation costs (financial and productivity losses to a work organisation). Most of these difficulties, once identified early and referred to appropriate assistance, can be resolved to the benefit of both the staff member and the University. The establishment of the **Employee** Wellness/Assistance Programme (EW/AP) Unit demonstrates the commitment of the University to **wellness** in the work place. The EW/AP ensures that members of staff have access to counselling, advice, training and support. The explicit aim of the EW/AP is to improve the quality of life of all employees by providing support and helping to alleviate the impact of everyday work and personal and family problems. EW/AP offers new and exciting prospects to assist in the well being of employees while at the same time increasing the effectiveness of the University. Participation in the programme is voluntary and will not jeopardise job security. The programme does not intend to interfere with workers' private lives; however when a member does not perform according to the standard expected, management has a right to intervene. The programme is a cost free worksite based programme providing confidential and professional assistance to employees of the University of Fort Hare and their dependants. EW/AP does not replace any existing procedures, but provides innovative methods of managing performance related problems. The benefits of the EW/AP may be summarised as follows:

- Addressing problems early prevents complications that negatively affect both work performance and life in general.
- Fostering **employee** well-being
- Sustained optimal functioning of staff leads to greater productivity and improved quality of life for individuals and their families.
- Provision of an EW/AP encourages an organisational culture that is both task-oriented and caring.

2. DEFINITION OF THE **EMPLOYEE WELLNESS /ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

Employee Wellness/Assistance Programme is a worksite-based intervention programme aimed at the early identification and/or resolution of both work and personal problems that may adversely affect performance. These problems may include, but are not limited to health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal concerns which may adversely affect **employee** job performance. The EW/AP is therefore a short term designed counselling resource that relies on referral and networking to provide greater support in minimizing the impact of everyday life on job performance and improving the **employee's** quality of life.

3. EW/AP **POLICY CONTEXT**

The University of Fort Hare's EW/AP **Policy** recognises the broader **policy** context in which it has been formulated and shall operate. The following statutes, documents and programmes have largely shaped the provisions of the EW/AP:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993)
- UFH Conditions of Employment
- Employee Relations Policy
- Labour Relations Act
- University of Fort Hare Human Resources **procedures**
- University of Fort Hare HIV/AIDS **Policy**

4. EW/AP PRINCIPLES

The University of Fort Hare believes that the success of the EW/AP depends on the degree to which Management, **employee** organisations and employees uphold, support and promote the implementation and maintenance of the following EW/AP principles:

4.1. Confidentiality

Confidentiality underpins consultation processes in the EW/AP programme. Personal problems of employees utilising the programme will be treated in a confidential manner to ensure that staff have no concerns that participation in the programme will in any way affect their privacy, dignity or standing in the University.

The practitioners will be sensitive to the difference existing between confidentiality and shared confidentiality. The latter might be necessary among those assisting the client. Shared confidentiality occurs only if it contributes towards solving the client's problem, and refers to confidential information being shared by professionals and persons close to the client who are involved with the client's problem-solving strategy. Shared confidentiality has to be known and approved by the client. In the case of a formal management referral, the **employee** must give consent in writing that the EW/A Practitioner may share information or give report on his/her progress. Confidentiality is breached only when required to do so by law court order or Government regulation, when a user of the service is likely to cause serious harm to themselves or to other people, when written permission has been given by the user of the service, or if there are any predetermined circumstances which have been identified and communicated to the **employee** and which are clearly stated and understood by the staff member at the start of counselling/advice.

4.2. Accessibility

All employees of the University of Fort Hare and their dependants have reasonable access to the Programme either as referrals from supervisors or voluntary self-referral basis.

4.3. Neutrality

Due to the nature of some problems experienced by employees, there will be actual or perceived overlap between EWP and other processes in the University. The EW/AP will at all times focus on the best interest of both the University and that of employees. Where management or labour issues are involved, the relevant mechanisms and procedures will apply in their usual manner. To this end, the following applies:

- EW/AP is not intended to replace or address issues of personnel selection or evaluation.
- EW/AP will refer relevant labour or industrial related issues to the relevant sub directorate.
- EW/AP will also refer appropriately issues of performance management

4.4. Voluntary participation

Participating in the programme will be voluntary. Management is encouraged to refer employees to EWP in circumstances in which their subordinates are likely to benefit from the EW/AP. The decision to accept assistance remains the free choice of the **employee**.

4.5. Free from stigmatisation

Measures will be taken to protect employees from victimization or discrimination in line with the University's observance of employees' rights. Staff will be able to participate in the EW/AP without pressure, stigma or judgement. Use of the programme carries no negative implications for job security or future advancement. Employees making use of the EW/AP should not be victimized or discriminated against in any way.

4.6. Empowering environment

The programme is aimed at creating an environment, which supports the continued life-long development of all staff members and their capacities. Learning opportunities for everyone participating in the EW/AP will be provided.

5. STAKEHOLDERS OF THE EW/AP

The following constitute the stakeholders for the EW/AP:

- Management
- Supervisors
- Employees
- Union Representatives
- Development Programmes
- EW/AP Practitioners and Facilitators

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1. The Senior Management

The Senior Management's role will be one of facilitating **policy** development and review, resource allocation as well as monitoring and evaluation of the EW/AP within its planning, performance and reporting cycles. The specific issues include the following:

- Establishing appropriate structures and mechanisms for complying with minimum standards for EW/AP set by the **Employee**
- Assistance Programme Association of South Africa (EAPA – SA).

The University will utilise an advisory committee or other equivalent structure for this purpose. The structure to be utilised for supporting EW/AP and complying with the minimum standards will have terms of reference covering at least the following:

- Advising on EW/AP design, development, planning and implementation
- Supporting confidentiality EW/AP safeguards.
- Provide appropriate training and orientation of supervisors on identifying and referring troubled employees.
- Promote harmonious and collegial relationships among the different structures and levels within the University.
- Assist directly with the marketing and promotion of the EW/AP.
 1. Developing on going needs assessment.
 2. Contribute to programme evaluation procedure

Since the University of Fort Hare has vested interest in the well being of its employees and their development, Senior Management is committed to assist employees in identifying the nature of their problems and providing means or services to resolve them. The Senior Management will also see to it that the role-players are briefed on / or receive basic training to fulfil their responsibilities and/or exercise their rights.

- To endorse the programme and give it visible support. The onus is on senior management to ensure its implementation in their programmes.

6.2. Supervisors

The supervisor has a key role in the University's EW/AP. In order to ensure the effective functioning and implementation of the program, the Supervisor should therefore:

- Ensure that employees clearly understand what is expected of them in terms of job performance and behaviour.
- Make sure that they are aware of and understand the services available from EW/AP.
- Be alert to changes in the work performance and/or behaviour of employees.
- Recommend appropriate corrective action, which may include an offer of assistance through EW/AP, if problems are thought to be personal. The EW/AP is designed to assist the supervisor in addressing the **employee's** personal problems.
- Recommend EW/AP to employees and stress that all information is treated as confidential.
- Inform the EW/AP office of a referral.
- Allow the **employee** reasonable paid time off to attend EW/AP intervention and/or therapeutic resources.
- Arrange for the **employee** to adjust working arrangements where practicable in order to facilitate the completion of and participation in the appropriate treatment/counselling program.
- Refrain from attempting to diagnose the **employee's** personal problem or pass a judgement, as well as prevent employee from receiving assistance.
- Supervisors should fulfil a supportive role towards the **employee** while treatment/ counselling is continuing. During and after treatment, the supervisor should assist in reintegrating the **employee** into the work environment.
- The supervisor should give feedback to the practitioner concerning work performance during treatment/ counselling.

6.3. Employees

- The **employee** is obliged to maintain satisfactory work performance and conduct on the job. If the **employee** recognises the need for assistance, he/she should contact the EW/AP office prior to his/her work performance being adversely affected.
- Contact with either of the above will be treated confidentially.
- Participation is voluntary.
- The **employee** need not identify the exact nature of his/her problem to the EW/AP Practitioner. However, it would be helpful in order to select the most appropriate resource for referral.
- It is requested but not mandatory that the outcome of the referral be discussed briefly with the EW/AP Practitioner (i.e. it was helpful, satisfactory, poor etc.). This will assist in ensuring that the

service is adequate for other employees requiring assistance in the future or to make alternative arrangements.

- If the referral for such a program was a formal referral, the **employee** will be requested to sign a release of information form notifying the EW/AP Office and Supervisor that the treatment has been completed satisfactorily or not, and also allowing the therapist to provide periodic progress reports to the EW/AP Office/Supervisor.
- With the exception of the initial assessment interview, it is possible for consultations to be made outside of normal working hours on a date and time agreed between the **employee** and the service provider.

6.4. EW/AP Practitioner

The responsibilities of the practitioner are:

- Management of the EW/AP in the most efficient and cost-effective way.
- Co-ordinate with employees, **employee** representatives and Management and make referrals to the service providers.
- Publicise the intent and purpose of the EW/AP Program.
- Utilise any other personnel designated by Management to accomplish the EW/AP goals.
- Monitor referrals and provide assistance to service providers if requested.
- Provide assistance to supervisors and management in the identification of employees with performance and behaviour related problems.
- Act as Chairperson for the EW/AP Committee.
- Ensure the confidentiality of information obtained about employees and their dependants.
- Department Co-ordinators may not counsel but must facilitate the most appropriate access to EW/AP resource.
- Providing support to employees.

6.5. Prevention of abuse of services

Whilst the University is committed to the provision of the services in the EW/AP, there is also a need to prevent abuse of the programme. In this regard, employees and the other stakeholders have the responsibility of ensuring that the EW/AP is not abused. Specifically, the following is pertinent:

- Employees, who default on a treatment or rehabilitation course, refuse to comply with counselling or do not keep appointments will be removed from the programme.
- If a manager or supervisor interferes with or disrupts the utilization of the service by an **employee** and the **employee** is unable to resolve it directly with the manager or supervisor, the **employee** has the right to take up the matter with the next higher level of authority.

- Participation in the EW/AP will not affect the employer's employment or career development. On the other hand, employees' participation will not protect the employees from disciplinary action for continued poor work performance or misconduct.
- EW/AP Practitioners should not in any way take part in other Human Resources functions such as recruitment, selections and disciplinary actions.

7. SERVICE AVAILABLE

The following services are available:

7.1. COUNSELLING / THERAPEUTIC FUNCTIONS

While not exclusive, EW/AP using Individual, Group, and Community interventions; deals primarily with employees who experience the following:

Psychosocial Problems

- Dependence on alcohol or drugs.
- Social problems
- Communication problems
- Behaviour problems
- Impaired relationships (e.g. marital)
- Financial difficulties
- Legal problems

Mental Health Problems

- Phobias (irrational fears)
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicidal tendencies
- Dealing with AIDS / HIV and other terminal diseases
- Trauma

Work Related Problems

- Adjustment problems
- Harassment
- Ill-health retirement
- Retrenchment
- Work Relations

- Work stress

7.2. RE-INTEGRATION INTO THE WORKPLACE DURING OR AFTER TREATMENT

The purpose of supporting an **employee** during his re-integration into the work situation during or after treatment is to raise the chances of success of the therapeutic input to the maximum. Those who enter into the EW/AP voluntarily may choose whether they wish to make use of this function. When an **employee** receives assistance in terms of the formal procedure, involvement in the support function is

obligatory/compulsory. The EW/AP office, in liaison with the referring supervisor should co-ordinate the re-integration function, which takes place as follows: -

- At a given point in the **employee's** treatment as determined by the therapist, the EW/AP office contacts the supervisor concerned in order to initiate support for the **employee's** re-integration into his work situation. At this stage, decisions are made regarding the expectations that can be set for the **employee** in terms of work assignments; the therapeutic objectives still to be achieved; the role of the therapist, **employee**, supervisor, and EW/AP Practitioner in realising the above objectives; how the **employee's** progress will be monitored and evaluated against the background of the above mentioned expectations and objectives.

The purpose of this function is not only to monitor the **employee's** progress, but particularly, to ensure that he/she makes sufficient progress to move out of the EW/AP structure.

7.3. DEALING WITH REGRESSION

It may happen that during or after treatment that the **employee's** job performance / behaviour shows signs of deterioration. If this occurs, the following steps are to be taken:

- Regardless of whether or not the **employee** agrees to see the EW/AP office, the EWP office is to be contacted, and informed of the situation.
- The **employee** urgently needs counselling by someone who is familiar with the problem.
- The problem will be addressed in terms of the provisions of the EW/AP, and the specific circumstances of the case – either additional counselling, or if this has already failed, disciplinary action will have to be instituted / continued where applicable.

7.4. FOLLOW-UP

The EW/AP Practitioner will make follow-ups regarding the job performance after re-entry of an **employee** who has undergone treatment. Follow up services will be done also in respect of employees referred for external services, getting feedback on their progress during therapy. Follow-ups would then assist in the evaluation of the programme.

8. SERVICE UTILIZATION

8.1. CONSULTATION

Any **employee** can contact the EW/AP Office for advice with a personal problem. The most appropriate therapy or service will be provided.

8.2. VOLUNTARISM

Participation in the EW/AP is voluntary. Each **employee** has the right to choose whether he/she wishes to use the services provided.

8.3. SELF REFERRAL

Employees are free to decide to use EW/AP services. The **employee** contacts the supervisor or the EW/AP Practitioner confidentially.

8.4. INFORMAL REFERRAL

A colleague, friend, family member, or shop steward, may make an informal proposal to an **employee** to see the EW/AP Practitioner, as he/she believes that the **employee** has a problem, which could be addressed through the EW/AP. The **employee** may accept or reject the offer of assistance.

8.5. FORMAL REFERRAL

Formal referrals take place where a supervisor or a chairperson of a disciplinary enquiry formally refers an **employee** to the EW/AP Office as a consequence of a disciplinary decision, or where the supervisor /manager believes that an **employee**'s personal problem is affecting his/her behaviour or performance adversely. An internal referral form should be filled in and submitted to the EW/AP Office. The form covers issues of informed consent regarding referral and shared confidentiality. Employees being formally referred to EW/AP have the right to decline such referral. Such refusal will be noted and the **employee** will be subject to the normal discipline should his performance and/or behaviour not be resolved.

8.6 PROBLEM INDICATORS

Emotional / Behaviour Problems may be indicated by the following symptoms:

- Absenteeism, frequent unplanned leave, late coming and early departures. The staff member will create various reasons for staying away from work.

- Frequent sick leave with no evidence of a letter from a medical doctor.
- Work quality or quantity deterioration. Lowered productivity, carelessness, forgetfulness, absentmindedness, and sloppy work
- Accidents
- Physical and/or appearance deterioration
- Behavioural changes
- Disruptive work behaviour
- Quarrelsome.
- Frequent change of moods. Emotional outbursts, irritability, unreliability, increased amount of time spent on the telephone or withdrawal.

9. REPORTING

Reports will be treated as confidential, with feedback limited to the relevant managers/ supervisors should it be necessary and with the concerned **employee's** consent to such an arrangement. No document will be put on the **employee's** personal file. The EW/AP will supply the Executive Director Human Resources with a quarterly report containing particulars on utilization, results and costs of the EW/AP. The report will not contain any personal information, except under circumstances of shared confidentiality.

10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

Monitoring and evaluation of the programme will be on its effectiveness, based on the number of the employees rehabilitated, those that had to be referred for specialized treatment, care and rehabilitation, and those that had to be released from their duties. **Policy** issues and the cost effectiveness of the programme will also be evaluated from time to time.