



Employee Assistance Program Policy

1. Background

As part of the commitment to ensuring a healthy workforce, the WA Country Health Service (WACHS) provides an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for all employees and their immediate families.

2. Policy Statement

The WACHS recognises that employees may, from time to time, have concerns, which may or may not be work related, but which can have an adverse effect on their performance at work and general wellbeing. Failure to address these concerns can also jeopardise the wellbeing, safety and work performance of fellow employees.

The EAP is a free confidential program that includes counselling services (Employee/Employer Initiated), mediation services and critical incident response and debriefing, which support employees in times of need and immediately following a critical incident or traumatic episode. The EAP is provided by a panel of external providers. It is available to all WACHS employees and their immediate families to help resolve personal and work related concerns. This service does not require departmental approval.

There may be circumstances where the employee being counselled requires their family members to also be involved in the counselling process to resolve the issue. In these situations, WACHS may cover the related costs for immediate family involvement. The counselling services are aimed to provide a series of short term counselling services to assist in the employee's situation.

All consultations and client records are highly confidential. All services provided through the Employee Assistance Program will be provided by suitably qualified persons who are bound by professional codes of ethics relating to counselling practice.

Details of the providers of the Employee Assistance Program for each region and the Central Office are available on the WACHS [Human Resources Intranet page](#).

Support and counselling can be provided for a wide range of concerns, including:

- managing stress
- anxiety and depression
- work and career related concerns
- alcohol and drug related concerns
- financial difficulties
- bereavement and grief

- life-stage changes
- marital / relationship related concerns
- workplace conflict
- impact of organisational change
- violence or traumatic incidents in the workplace; and
- medical / health related concerns.

In addition to counselling services, the following may also be available, depending on the facilities offered by the EAP Provider:

- For Managers – Manager Helpline that provides coaching and support to managers to assist them in their people management responsibilities.
- For Employees – on-line access to a range of topics and areas of interest such as wellness information sheets, research papers and links to other resources.

2.1 REFERRAL

There are two methods of referral to the EAP for counselling:

2.1 (a) Self-referral

Employees may contact an EAP provider directly without involving WACHS management or other persons.

Self-referral may occur where an employee recognises that they are experiencing difficulties with personal or work related concerns, or where a supervisor, co-worker, family member, Doctor, friend etc, has observed the need and suggested to the employee that the EAP service may be beneficial.

2.1 (b) Formal management referral

In consultation with Local Human Resources and the employee, a manager/supervisor may formally refer an employee to the EAP for assistance if their work performance has declined and remains below an acceptable level and/or they have breached WACHS established rules and conduct. Where a formal referral is made, feedback will be provided to the manager/supervisor on attendance at and/or the outcome of the counselling.

2.2 SESSIONS

The majority of appointments will be made during standard office hours i.e. 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday. Where the service provider is available for out of hours sessions, the employee may request to attend counselling at those times. Depending on the facilities offered by the EAP session may be face-to-face (preferable and most prevalent option), via telephone or over the internet.

An employee who wishes to use the EAP during working hours, must make arrangements with their supervisor or manager prior to attending the appointment.

Employees may take paid or unpaid leave to attend the appointment. Leave that may be utilised shall be either personal leave, annual leave, flexible hours or other as agreed between the employee and manager.

After the first session, further sessions may be suggested by the counsellor or may be requested by the employee/family member. Most people attend for 3 sessions or less however WACHS allows for up to 6 sessions for a person. Where more than six sessions are required for a person, the EAP Provider will seek approval from Local Human Resources to continue the sessions. If at any time, an employee/family member is referred to alternative counselling, any costs will be borne by the employee.

3. Definitions

Immediate Family	people that the employee calls 'family' <u>and</u> who live in the employee's home. This includes defacto relationships and step children
Employee Assistance	Is an intervention aimed at the early identification and/or resolution of both work and personal concerns that may adversely affect performance.
Counselling	A professional confidential advisory or guidance service
Crisis	A sudden stressful state, which tends to make a person feel helpless, powerless and overwhelmed. For many people it is accompanied by extreme fear and inability to think clearly

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Director Human Resources and Regional Manager Human Resources

- Oversee the EAP contractual agreement.
- Provide resources for the promotion, education and training in relation to the EAP.

OSH Coordinator and HR Consultants / Senior HR Officers

- Oversee the implementation of the program.
- Address staff concerns in relation to the provision of EAP.
- Coordinate the promotion, education and training of staff in relation to the EAP service.
- Assist managers and supervisors with the process of informal and formal referral.

Line Manager

- Ensure EAP services are offered to staff who are experiencing difficulties with personal or work related concerns.
- Recognise when people management issues are arising and know how to access EAP Manager Helpline to assist with the prevention of the matter.

Staff member

- The staff member recognises when personal or work-related concerns may be affecting their health and/or work performance and know how to access the EAP to prevent the concerns from reaching crisis point.
- Advise immediate family members that they are eligible to attend the EAP.

All Staff

- All staff are required to work within policies and guidelines to make sure that WACHS is a safe, equitable and positive place to be.

5. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

6. Records Management

All WACHS corporate records must be stored in the approved Electronic Documents and Records Management System.

7. Evaluation

Monitoring of compliance with this document is to be carried out by Local Human Resources every 12 months using the following means / tools:

- EAP Provider reports
- WACHS employee EAP Satisfaction Surveys where available

7.1 COMPLAINTS AND EAP SATISFACTION SURVEY

If anyone experiences difficulties accessing or using the EAP, they may contact their manager or Local Human Resources. Concerns and any issues discussed will be maintained confidentially.

Employees are also encouraged to complete the WACHS EAP Satisfaction Survey. This is separate from any survey that the EAP Providers may request clients to complete. The WACHS survey assists Local Human Resources to monitor the safety and effectiveness of the EAP Providers.

8. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards - 1.1](#)

9. Legislation

- *The Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*
- *Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984*, as amended
- *Public Sector Management Act 1994*
- Public Sector Management (Redeployment and Redundancy) Regulations 1994
- Discipline (as per relevant award/agreement)

10. References

[WACHS Employee Assistance Program Satisfaction Survey](#)

11. Related Forms

N/A.

12. Related Policy Documents

N/A

13. Related WA Health System Policies

N/A

14. Policy Framework

[Employment](#)

**This document can be made available in alternative formats
on request for a person with a disability**

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