



Bojanala Platinum District Municipality

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE POLICY

2006



BOJANALA PLATINUM DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

DIRECTORATE: CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Policy

1. *PURPOSE*

Bojanala Platinum District Municipality (BPDM) is committed to providing support services to its employees and dependents. The purpose of this policy is to outline the policies, principles and procedures of BPDM's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the services available to BPDM employees

2. *SCOPE*

This document outlines the policies and related procedures as they apply to all employees of BPDM. It states the responsibilities for ongoing program development, implementation, maintenance, monitoring, and evaluation as well as for initiation of a trauma response service.

3. *AUTHORITY*

The Human Resources Manager is responsible to the Director: Corporate Support Services for the administration of this policy.

4. *RESPONSIBILITY*

The formulation and review of policies and procedures related to the Employee Assistance Program is the responsibility of the Director: Corporate Support Services. The Manager: Human Resources will act as the Program Administrator and be responsible for the general administration of the EAP, including acting as liaison with the external Service Provider, overseeing the administration of the program, ensuring policy and budget guidelines are followed, monitoring and approving budget expenditures, acting as a contact for general enquiries, and evaluating the program on an annual basis in consultation with the Service Provider.

The external Service Provider will deliver program services as outlined in the contract specifications in a manner which supports the spirit in which this program has been developed.

The EAP Advisory Committee is responsible for overseeing program implementation, evaluation of the policy and related procedures, and periodic review of procedures and recommendation for changes.

5. *DEFINITIONS*

Service Provider: The consultants retained by BPDM to coordinate the delivery of EAP services.

Client: Any employee or dependent who avails of services provided through the EAP.

Dependent: A spouse or child of an employee. A spouse is defined as a person married through an ecclesiastical or civil ceremony to an employee or, where not legally married, a person who cohabits with an employee in a conjugal relationship, which is recognized as such in the community in which they reside, for a period of at least twelve (12) months. The term conjugal relationship is deemed to include partners of the same sex.

A child is defined as dependent unmarried children (including legally adopted children) up to the age of 21; or up to the age of 25 if a full-time student at an accredited school, college or university; or over the age of 21 by reason of mental or physical disability.

Traumatic/Critical Incident: A traumatic incident is any work-related incident that is out of the ordinary and that has the power, because of its own nature or because of the circumstances in which it occurs, to cause an extremely strong emotional reaction from, and/or psychological distress in, healthy, normal people. Examples may include: mass casualty incidents; the serious injury or death of a co-worker; a death, serious injury or accident directly affecting one or more staff members; extreme threats or acts of violence (e.g., shooting, hostage taking, armed robbery); involvement in emergency situations which may pose a threat to the personal safety of employees or involve them in severe and out of the ordinary circumstances; events that attract extremely unusual or critical news media coverage; an incident in which the circumstances were so unusual or the sights and sounds so distressing as to produce a high level of immediate or delayed emotional reaction.

6. *THE PROGRAM*

BPDM's administration and employee groups will work together to establish a voluntary and confidential counselling, advisory and information service, based on the concept of "work and well-being," which recognizes the value of employees and promotes a pro-employee policy of assistance. It is in the interest of the employer, as well as the employee and his or her family, to have access to

professional assistance at the earliest possible moment. The EAP will be established to:

- assist employees in preventing and/or remedying personal and family problems from adversely affecting their well-being or potentially resulting in reduced work performance.
- maintain and improve the general well-being of employees through activities designed for promoting healthy lifestyles.
- promote improvements in the work place that increase the opportunity for employee well-being and enhanced work performance.
- provide immediate, short-term crisis intervention in the event of a traumatic incident.

7 .*SERVICES*

Counselling/Advisory Services

Trauma Response Support Services: Any employee of BPDM may contact the Service Provider and/or the BPDM to report a traumatic incident. The Provider will give immediate telephone support and guidance in how to deal with the emotions of the affected staff, as well as provide BPDM with educational handouts for distribution to staff. If it is deemed necessary by the service intake counsellor, the Provider will send a professional counsellor to the work site within two hours of the incident to provide on-site counselling.

8. *ELIGIBILITY*

Counselling/Advisory Services: All employees of BPDM and their dependents are eligible for the program and are encouraged to take advantage of the services associated with it. In the event of redundancies, employees are eligible for benefits under the program for a period of time as determined at termination.

Trauma Response Services: BPDM employees only are eligible under this policy for brief counselling sessions when affected by a traumatic incident. These sessions are conducted in a group environment within 72 hours from the time a traumatic event has occurred. If an employee feels the need for individual follow-up counselling, he or she may access the Counselling/Advisory services of the Employee Assistance Program.

9. *REFERRAL TO THE PROGRAM*

Referral to the EAP is voluntary; it is always by private choice, but it may be encouraged by a colleague or supervisory personnel.

9.1 **Types of Referral**

Self-Referral: Any employee, or eligible family member who is experiencing personal problems and wishes to seek help through the EAP may contact the Service Provider directly.

Assisted Referral: If supervisor or colleague believes that a coworker **may** be experiencing personal problems, the EAP should be explained to the employee and an informal suggestion made that the employee consider obtaining assistance through the program. The employee's participation in the program, however, remains voluntary.

Referral Procedure

Counselling/Advisory Services: The employee or dependant will contact the Service Provider directly and will be required to provide his/her name, company name, and nature of the problem. Based on the nature of the problem, professional counselling may be provided by phone and/or an appointment arranged with a local counsellor.

If long-term or specialized counselling is required, employees or dependants will be assisted with a referral to a community resource with counselling maintained by the Service Provider through the transition period. The employee or dependant would be responsible for any fees not covered by provincial or employer benefit plans at the point where services are provided through the community resource.

Trauma Response Services: Should a traumatic incident occur, any employee can call the direct phone number of the Service Provider and request the initiation of a trauma response procedure. If in doubt, any employee can call the HR Manager, for assistance.

10. ***CONFIDENTIALITY***

Employees and their dependents (the client) may make contact with the Service Provider and undertake counselling knowing that information will be kept in the strictest confidence. Neither BPDM nor its representatives will have access to personal information regarding any client or situation. Statistical information only will be provided to BPDM by the Service Provider.

The Service Provider will maintain only those records necessary to carry out its responsibilities to the client and for the statistical needs of the program. Should the Service Provider's contract terminate, custody of all client files will remain with that Service Provider.

Confidentiality is provided within the following guidelines:

Consent to Release: No personal information will be released by the Service Provider, nor will the Provider request information, unless requested to do so by the client, and a written, informed and voluntary consent is provided. This is explained to the client during the first counselling session and a form will be provided for such consent as deemed necessary. The client's consent may be withdrawn at any time by notifying the Service Provider in writing.

When a client consents in writing to the release of information by the Service Provider, he or she will be required to be specific as to the nature of the information to be provided or requested and the individual(s) with whom it will be shared. A client may have access to his or her personal records by providing the Service Provider with written notice.

Limits of Confidentiality: The Service Provider may be required to disclose information without the written consent of the client in these situations:

- as a result of being subpoenaed by a court of law.
- when communicating suspected violations of relevant Child Welfare legislation.
- when it is perceived that a client poses a risk to himself or herself, or others.
- sharing client information within the Service Provider organization in order to ensure the quality of service provided.
- information provided during an organizational audit in order to evaluate the services provided to clients. The auditors will not be employees of the Service Provider

11. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SERVICE PROVIDER

The Provider will guide, counsel and assist clients who seek assistance under the program by providing appropriate information regarding available options and resources which might alleviate any difficulties, determine the appropriate plan of action, and provide clients with professional counselling services through:

Intake: The Service Provider will receive requests for assistance from employees, and/or dependents and make a preliminary assessment of the problem(s).

Referral: If necessary, and with the consent of the client, an appropriate community service will be located and a referral made.

Education: Promotional material and training sessions will be promoted, developed and delivered for managers, union representatives, and employees as they relate to program delivery and EAP issues.

Administration: The Provider will work with the EAP Advisory Committee to develop program activities and ensure the policy and procedures of the program are followed, establish and maintain liaison with community agencies which provide services to the general public, and provide appropriate reports and statistics needed to evaluate the program.

The Provider will act in a professional and responsible manner consistent with appropriate ethical standards and guidelines ensuring that services provided conform to the highest professional standards in the field.

12. THE EAP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The EAP Advisory Committee (the Committee) is established to review policies of the program on a regular basis and to monitor program activities.

Membership: The Committee includes representatives from Management, Trade Unions and Service Provider.

Responsibilities: The Committee will: review and make recommendations for changes to the policies and procedures of the EAP; recommend standards for the reporting of regular statistics related to the provision of services; evaluate and recommend changes in operations and procedures of the program, including recommending changes to contract specifications and/or method of program delivery; ensure the policies and procedures of the EAP are followed and that a strict level of confidentiality is maintained; and develop strategies and support activities for the implementation and acceptance of the program within BPDM.

13. LEAVE

Employees will be permitted to access the Service Provider during regular work hours. However, regular counselling sessions should be scheduled, where possible, outside of working hours. If it is necessary to access services within the regular work day, leave must be arranged by the employee with the supervisor.

Sick leave provisions outlined in the respective Collective Agreements and the Terms and Conditions of Employment of bargaining/ non-bargaining staff may be

used if periods of leave from work are necessary for counselling purposes. In the event that an employee requests an extended leave for treatment purposes, application for that leave will follow the normal request route in accordance with the respective Collective Agreements and the Terms and Conditions of Employment of bargaining/non-bargaining staff.

14. EAP AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION POLICY

Participation in this EAP will not be used for disciplinary purposes nor in any way restrict or jeopardize the participating employee's opportunity for advancement or other work related alternatives.