

University of Newcastle Key Risk Area: KRA 2.9

Guidelines for the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

1. Purpose

- The University of Newcastle, in its commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment has recognised the need to provide timely and adequate support for workers experiencing work-related or personal issues that may be impacting health, wellbeing or job performance.
- The University has contracted the services of [NewPsych](#) to provide confidential, professional counselling services for all workers and their immediate family members.

2. Scope

This document applies to all Colleges, Divisions, and Organisational units of the University of Newcastle and its controlled entities.

3. Definitions

In the context of this document, the following definitions apply:

- **Critical Incident:** any event occurring in the workplace, or arising out of the course of work, that has the potential to cause trauma to workers that have experienced or witnessed that event.
- **EAP:** Employee Assistance Program.
- **Immediate Family:** Refers to spouse, partners (including same sex and de-facto), children under the age of 25 living at home (including adopted, foster).
- **Leader/Supervisor:** Any member of the University responsible for supervising workers and/or undergraduate or postgraduate students and/or leading research projects.
- **Workers:** Workers include anyone who performs paid work for the University as well as conjoints.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Vice-Chancellor, University Executive Committee, and members of University Council

- Exercise due diligence by ensuring adequate resources are in place so that the requirements of this procedure are met.

4.2 Leaders/Supervisors

- Must support and encourage the use of the program.
- Be open to answer questions from Workers and refer their team members to the EAP when appropriate.
- Be vigilant in spotting Workers who may face issues and refer them to EAP when appropriate.
- Leaders/Supervisors can reach out to EAP to seek advice on how to approach Workers they are concerned about by telephoning the Managers Assist Service on 02 4926 5005.

4.3 Health and Safety (H&S) Team

- The University, in conjunction with NewPsych, will review the operation of the EAP. The Work Health and Safety Team, will undertake ongoing assessment and monitoring of the EAP program against the terms of the contract to ensure that:
 - the principles and spirit of the EAP are being adhered to by all parties;
 - complete confidentiality is maintained;
 - access to the EAP is available and maintained as per agreed service standards;
 - contractual obligations including service deliverables are being met and, will liaise with the provider if any concerns are raised; and
 - work with procurement team to ensure a comprehensive tender process.

4.4 Workers

- Attend EAP appointments as scheduled and participate constructively; and
- Support and encourage other Workers to access EAP where appropriate.

5. Eligibility

- The EAP is available to all University Workers and their immediate families.
- Workers and immediate family members are entitled to up to six funded sessions each in a calendar year i.e. January to December.

- Where workers have used their six EAP sessions for the calendar year and wish to continue seeing the EAP counsellor, it will be at their own cost. Workers may also wish to speak with their general practitioner in regards to long-term strategies or a [GP Mental Health Treatment Plan](#).

6. What can EAP Assist With

Often, the longer an issue remains unresolved, the more aspects of life are affected by it. Early help with a minor issue may prevent it developing into a major one. Assistance may include but is not limited to:

- Conflict with others
- Coping with change
- Relationships
- Marital and family problems
- Children and adolescents' mental health
- Anxiety, stress and depression
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Grief and loss
- Crisis or trauma response
- Financial and legal
- Support for Leaders and Supervisors

7. Confidentiality

- A vital feature of an EAP is the high level of confidentiality and respect for an individual's privacy. No one needs to know when Workers are utilising EAP. Should a Worker decide to advise their supervisor that they are attending the EAP, the supervisor is required to observe strictest confidentiality and to support the Worker in accessing the service. Workers do not need to discuss the reason for their visit with anyone unless they want to.
- Confidentiality also means that no one, including the University, will receive information from the counsellor concerning a Workers specific situation. Conversations and any information a Worker shares with a counsellor will be in strictest confidence and will not be communicated with the University unless the Worker has provided written authorisation.
- When making appointments, Workers may be asked for information regarding their organisation and College/Division. This information may be used towards high level reporting on trends and utilisation rates but not in a way that will allow individual identification.

8. Access

- Self-Referrals

EAP is designed to encourage self-referrals where the Worker has identified issues which they want to discuss in a private and confidential setting without anyone in the organisation being involved in any way.

Arrangements for an appointment can be made directly by telephoning NewPsych on 4926 5005, emailing reception@newpsych.com.au or sending a message via the [portal](#) on the NewPsych webpage. While the head office is located in Newcastle, NewPsych has satellite offices in all University locations and appointments are arranged via the Newcastle Office.

There is a triage process when booking EAP appointments to ensure clients receive the appropriate level of support. Workers will be asked some questions to better understand the urgency of their situation. While the reception team will do their best to get Workers an appointment as soon as possible, it may not be at their preferred time or with their preferred counsellor initially.

Workers can either select face to face sessions, telephone or video conferencing during work hours or there is a 24-hour telephone counselling service in case of emergencies.

EAP is a short-term, solution-focused process. Workers are encouraged to see their general practitioner for more long-term counselling strategies.

- Suggested Referral (Early Intervention Strategy)

Although EAP is designed to encourage self-referral, there will be occasions where it becomes necessary for supervisors to assist Workers by offering the option of counselling. Workers retain the right to either use or refuse the offer of counselling assistance.

- Organisational Referral "By the University"

This type of referral may occur when work performance has declined below an acceptable level and disciplinary action would normally result. The organisational referral may be offered as a supportive mechanism as part of a Performance Improvement Plan but remains a voluntary option.

9. Cancellation of Appointments

- If Worker/Family Member cancels their appointment with less than 24 hours' notice this will be counted as one of their UON-funded sessions.

10. Time off Work and Leave Requirements

- Workers can attend EAP appointments in their own time or in work time using some form of accrued leave such as flex leave or personal leave. Where a leave request is logged, workers are not required to put EAP in the description; 'medical' or 'personal appointment' is acceptable.

- Workers do not need to discuss their attendance with anyone from work and no one from work will be advised by the EAP provider that a worker has attended.

11. University Contact

- [Sarah Williamson](#), Health and Safety Advisor, Injury Management can be contacted by telephone or email to discuss any concerns regarding the provider, to receive feedback or for assistance with arranging urgent appointments. Workers can contact Sarah without disclosing their details and any personal information shared with her will be treated with confidentiality and respect for an individual's privacy.

12. Use of Alternate Provider

Where staff wish to access EAP outside of the contracted provider, they should contact Sarah Williamson to discuss the matter confidentially. In extraordinary circumstances 6 funded sessions with a provider of choice may be granted. The following are considered extraordinary:

- The contract provider not being able to provide a service due to a conflict of interest;
- The contract provider not having a clinician with the required area of expertise;
- A worker with a terminal illness that needs a specific counsellor; or
- Where a worker is involved in a significant University process.

13. Accessing EAP After Cessation of Employment

Workers who exit the University following Organisational Change or Medical Retirement can continue to utilise their yearly funded 6 EAP for up to three months following their cessation date.

Workers who resign from the University will no longer be able to access EAP sessions.

14. Managers Assist Service

UON recognises the need to support Managers and Supervisors engaging with Workers who are facing mental health challenges and the University's Manager Assist Service provides timely, confidential assistance with issues as they arise.

Managers and Supervisors can access timely consultation with NewPsych regarding psychological issues affecting the workplace. Managers and Supervisors have access to this professional and confidential service for issues which may include assisting Workers whose performance at work is affected by emotional or psychological factors, dealing with emotional issues at work (e.g. suicidal or emotionally distressed Workers), providing performance feedback to Workers, preventing and managing the impact of post-trauma stress following a critical incident.

To access the service call 02 4926 5005 or email reception@newpsych.com.au and advise that you need to utilise the Manager Assist Service.

Further online resources can be found [here](#).

15. Organisational Change Support

The University's EAP provider can be booked to come on site to provide face to face support to Workers during organisational change. Areas should contact their [HR Business Partner](#) to arrange this service. Please note, there is no central funding for this support and the individual area will be responsible for associated costs.

16. Critical Incident Response

The University's EAP provider can support areas with critical incident response services. Some examples of a critical or traumatic incident include serious workplace accidents, death of a Worker, acts of violence or natural disasters directly affecting Workers.

Reactions to critical incidents can differ widely, depending upon how involved people are in the event, their personal history (if something similar has happened to them before) and personal health and stress levels before the event occurred. Via their HR Business Partners, Managers and Supervisors can engage EAP to develop a plan to best inform and support Workers following a critical incident. Please note, there is no central funding for this support and the individual area will be responsible for associated costs.

17. Bespoke Services

The EAP Provider has the capacity to deliver customised training programs to areas addressing issues such as workplace stress, managing interpersonal conflict, time management, work-life balances, taming the inner critic and resilience through change. Bespoke services are not centrally funded and the individual areas will be responsible for associated costs.

18. Attachments

Nil

19. References

Nil

Document Summary Table

Guidelines for EAP - KRA 2.9					
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