

Key Risk Area (KRA)

KRA 2.9 Guidelines for Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

1. Purpose

This document provides guidance in relation to the University of Newcastle (University) commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment, and recognition of 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.

2. Scope

This Guideline applies to all health, safety and wellbeing activities of staff, students, visitors (including volunteers and contractors), Council members, and other persons interacting with the University of Newcastle (workers); the operations of staff of University aligned Research Centres and controlled entities; and all activities conducted by or on behalf of the University of Newcastle on and outside of the University's campuses.

3. Guidelines

3.1. Eligibility for Services

The Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) is available to all workers and their immediate families. Workers are entitled to up to six (6) funded EAP sessions each in a calendar year i.e. January to December.

Immediate family are entitled to up to three (3) funded EAP sessions in a calendar year i.e. January to December, as a head-start to self-funded ongoing care where required.

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

3.2. EAP Assistance

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 via the EAP 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

3.3. Confidentiality

A vital feature of an EAP is the high level of confidentiality and respect for an individual's privacy. No-one is notified when a worker or their immediate family utilise the EAP. Should a worker decide to advise their Leader/Supervisor that they are attending the EAP, the Leader/Supervisor is required to observe the 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 EAP counsellor concerning a worker or their immediate family's specific situation. Conversations and any information a worker or their immediate family shares with an EAP counsellor will be held in the strictest confidence and will not be communicated with the University unless the worker or their immediate family has provided written authorisation.

When making appointments, workers or their immediate family may be asked for information regarding the worker's 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.

3.4. Referrals

Self-Referrals: The EAP is designed to encourage self-referrals where the worker or their immediate family has identified issues which they want to discuss in a private and confidential setting without anyone from the University being involved in any way.

Arrangements for an appointment can be made directly by contacting the [EAP Provider](#). While the head office is located in Newcastle, the provider 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 or their immediate family will be asked some questions to better understand the urgency of their situation. While the reception team will do their best to provide an appointment as soon as possible, it may not be at the preferred time or with the preferred counsellor initially.

Workers or their immediate family can either select face to face sessions, telephone or video conferencing during work hours, or there is a 24-hour/7-day crisis telephone counselling service in case of emergencies.

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

Suggested Referral (Early Intervention Strategy): Although the EAP is designed to encourage self-referral, there will be occasions where it becomes necessary for Leaders/Supervisors to assist workers by offering the option of counselling to them or their immediate family. Workers and their immediate family 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 a worker's work performance has fallen 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 it remains a voluntary option.

3.5. Cancellation of Appointments

If a worker or their immediate family cancels their appointment with less than 24 hours' notice, this will be counted as one of their University-funded EAP sessions.

3.6. 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 annual 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 or their immediate family has attended.

3.7. University Contact

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

3.8. Use of an alternate provider

Where a worker wishes to access EAP outside of the contracted EAP provider, they should contact the [Health and Safety Advisor - Injury Management or the Associated Director, Health, Safety and Wellbeing](#) to discuss the matter confidentially. In extraordinary circumstances, University-funded sessions with another provider may be granted. The following are considered extraordinary circumstances:

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

3.9. Leader Assist Services

The University recognises the need to support Leaders/Supervisors engaging with workers who are facing mental health challenges. The EAP's Leader Assist Service provides timely, confidential assistance with such issues as they arise.

Leaders/Supervisors can access timely consultation with NewPsych regarding psychological issues affecting the workplace. Leaders/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, and preventing and managing the impact of post-trauma stress following a critical incident.

To access the service, contact the [EAP Provider](#) and advise that utilisation of the Leader Assist Service is required.

3.10. 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. Business areas should contact the appropriate HR Business Partner to arrange this service. There is no central funding for this support and the individual area will be responsible for associated costs.

3.11. Critical Incident Response

The University's EAP provider can support areas with critical incident response services. Some examples of a critical incident include serious workplace accidents, death of a worker, acts or threats of violence or self-harm 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. Leaders/Supervisors can engage the EAP provider via the appropriate HR Business Partner to develop a plan to best inform and support workers following a critical incident. There is no central funding for this support and the individual area will be responsible for associated costs.

3.12. Accessing EAP Services after Cessation of Employment

Workers who exit the University following organisational change or medical retirement can continue to utilise any remaining balance of their University funded EAP sessions for up to three months following their cessation date.

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

3.13. 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 balance, taming the inner critic and resilience through change.

There is no central funding for this support and the individual area will be responsible for associated costs.

4. Definitions

In the context of the Health and Safety Management System Framework:

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
Employer	Means the University of Newcastle (the University).
Executive Committee	Consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Pro Vice-Chancellors, the Chief Operating Officer, Chief People and Culture Officer and the Chief Financial Officer, the University Secretary and the President of Academic Senate.
Immediate Family	A worker's spouse, partner (including same sex and de-facto partner) and any children under the age of 25 who are living at home with the worker (including adopted and foster children).
Leader / Supervisor	Any member of the University who is responsible for supervising staff and/or undergraduate or postgraduate students and/or for leading research projects.
Worker	Includes an employee, conjoint, student on work experience, contractor, sub-contractor, and volunteer. A person is a worker if the person carries out work in any capacity for the University or another person conducting a business or undertaking, including work as: (a) an employee, or (b) a contractor or subcontractor, or (c) an employee of a contractor or subcontractor, or (d) an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking, or (e) an outworker, or (f) an apprentice or trainee, or (g) a student gaining work experience, or (h) a volunteer, or (i) a person of a prescribed class.

5. Responsibilities

A comprehensive list of health, safety and wellbeing responsibilities is provided in Guideline [HSG 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities](#).

Specific responsibilities under this Guideline include:

Leaders and Supervisors

- Support and encourage the use of the EAP;
- Be open to answer questions from workers and refer to the EAP when appropriate;
- Be vigilant in identifying workers who may face issues and refer them to EAP when appropriate; and
- Reach out to the EAP to seek advice on how to approach workers they are concerned about by utilising the Leader Assist Service.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team

- Conduct review the operation of the EAP and 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; and contractual obligations including service deliverables are being met (and will liaise with the EAP provider if any concerns are identified or raised).

Workers

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

6. References & Related Documents

The following documentation is referenced in, or applicable to this Guideline:

[HSG 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities](#)

7. Amendment History

Version	Date of Issue	Approval	Section(s) Modified	Details of Amendment
1	December 2020	Director, People and Workforce Strategy	-	Original version.
2	October 2023	CPCO	All	1. All sections reviewed for legal compliance 2. Updated content in all sections 3. Added new/renamed Related Documents 4. Added Amendment History 5. Amended document control header and footer

8. Appendices

Nil