
DEPARTMENT: ALL DEPARTMENTS

TITLE: **EMPLOYEE/FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

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GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY: EMPLOYEE/ FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Town of Amherst wishes to recognize that almost any human problem can be successfully treated provided it is identified in its early stages and referral is made to an appropriate agency. This is true whether the problem is one of physical illness, finances, marital or family distress, alcoholism, drug illness, legal problems or other concerns. These problems can have a potentially serious impact upon the lives of employees and those of their families thus impacting on their job performance. The Town policy is to ensure that all fulltime employees have equal access to an Employee/ Family Assistance Program. The Town of Amherst further recognizes that this program must be a voluntary program that employees feel free to access at their own choice. There will be no mandatory referral to EFAP. *(Note: There can be a mandatory referral to other services for assessment as provided for under collective agreements. These ARE NOT part of the Employee/Family Assistance Program.)*

This program is not intended to replace any programs already in place but to enhance those by having an approved EFAP provider in place to which employees can be directed.

As the Town is responsible for paying for the EAFP Program, it retains the right to accept or reject the content of the program and/or provider based on the dollars available for the provision of the program.

The Town will work within the language and intent of any collective agreements. Nothing in this policy is to be interpreted as constituting a waiver of the Town's right to take disciplinary action, nor any bargaining unit's right to grieve, within the framework of the respective collective agreements.

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OBJECTIVES

- (1) Establish guidelines for assisting staff and/or family members who are experiencing personal problems that may affect their personal lives and /or work performance;
- (2) Educate supervisors, E.F.A.P. Coordinator, and union officials as to their role in implementing this policy.
- (3) Inform all employees and their families about the program;
- (4) Ensure that **confidentially is held in the highest regard.**
- (5) Focus on the prevention of personal problems and the voluntary use of the service.

DEFINITIONS

- E.F.A.P. – Employee/Family Assistance Program
- E.F.A.P. Counsellor – This can mean individual Counsellor or the Counselling Service Provider
- Family Members – For the purposes of this policy “family members” means the employee’s spouse and unmarried Dependent Children as defined below.

1. Spouse shall mean a person of the opposite sex; who is legally married to the employee, or who is not legally married to the employee but has continuously resided with employee for no less than one full year having been represented as husband and wife (common-law).

2. Children shall mean the employee’s natural, adopted or stepchildren who are dependent upon the employee for financial care and support. Such children must be:

- a) unmarried;
- b) unemployed; and
- c) less than 21 years of age; or, if 21 years of age but less than 26 years of age, they must be attending an accredited educational institution, college or university on a full-time basis.

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The children of the employee's common-law spouse shall be covered provided the children are living with the Employee.

Unmarried, unemployed children 21 years of age or older shall qualify, if they are dependent upon the employee by reason of a mental or physical disability and became totally disabled prior to attaining age 21, and who have been continuously disabled since that time. Unmarried, unemployed children who became totally disabled while attending an accredited educational institution, college or university on a full-time basis prior to their attaining age 26 and have been continuously so disabled since that time shall also qualify as a Dependent.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Employee
 - a) The employee is expected to maintain job performance and attendance at an acceptable level.
 - b) The employee is encouraged to seek assistance on his/her own without risking his/her job security when he/she encounters problems, which have or could have an impact on his/her work performance
2. The Supervisor
 - a) The role of the supervisor both in terms of responsibility and expertise is to be limited to the area of job performance. Although the supervisor is not to become involved in the personal problems of employees or their treatment, the supervisor shall, when reviewing any job performance problem with an employee, make the employee aware of the Employee/ Family Assistance Program and its availability on a voluntary and confidential basis.
3. The Union Steward or Representative
 - a) Under certain circumstances an employee may be more inclined to seek assistance from a union steward or representative. The steward or representative is in a key position to assist an employee in securing whatever help is needed, while helping maintain the guarantee that an employee who seeks counselling or assistance will not jeopardize his/her job.

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- b) The union steward or representative must scrupulously avoid trying to make a diagnosis or telling the employee what he/she believes is affecting his/her work performance but there should be no hesitation in suggesting that the employee seek assistance from the E.F.A.P. Counsellor.
4. Human Resource Department/ E.A.F.P. Coordinator
- a) The administration and operation of the Program shall be coordinated through the Human Resources Department of the Town of Amherst, who is the body responsible for administration of the Program, and the Town recognizes that sufficient time will be required for this additional responsibility.
- b) The Human Resource Department/ E.A.F.P. Coordinator in collaboration with the Union Stewards/Representatives/Supervisors and E.F.A.P. Counsellor, shall provide programs to:
- i) educate employees about the Employee Family Assistance Program
 - ii) educate and inform supervisors about the procedures and responsibilities in the Policy.
- c) The Human Resource Department may provide articles or brief columns for internal communication in the form of bulletin board notices, pay statement inserts and/or Town newsletters on subjects that will be helpful in the field of human relations and the management of personal affairs.
- d) The Human Resource Department shall establish liaison with community services and provincial and national groups fostering concerns related to the E.F.A.P.
- e) Files kept by the Human Resource Department will relate to usage statistics and payment of invoices to the Counsellor.

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5. The Employee Family Assistance Counsellor/Counselling Service Provider

- a) The Employee Family Assistance Counsellor will establish contacts and act as a liaison person with local community organizations, or resources that are concerned with matters related to the program.
- b) The Counsellor will interview on confidential basis employees who call for appointments and will either counsel them privately or direct the person towards sources of assistance in the community.
- c) The Counsellor will not be called in to present evidence regarding an employee at a grievance or arbitration hearing by either his Bargaining Unit or by the Employer.
- d) Any files that the Counsellor keeps will be strictly confidential and information may be released only with the written consent of the employee.

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PROCEDURE

1. Employees are encouraged to voluntarily consult the Employee Family Assistance Counsellor for private, confidential counselling if they or a member of their family is experiencing personal difficulties which are causing or may cause work performance problems for the employee. A wallet card is given to employees as well as a fridge sticker with a 1-880-#. Family members can also use this service.)

2. To gain access to the confidential counselling service an employee may simply call the Counsellor directly. Where an appointment is necessary, the employee will endeavor to see Counsellors on lunch hours and after working hours whenever possible. This further guarantees privacy to the employee in that absence from work is not required. (Average counselling sessions are of a 1 -hour duration.) In the event that absence from work is necessary for an employee to attend a counselling session through the E.F.A.P , appropriate sick leave arrangements must be made with the supervisor.

3. If an extended period of time from work is required for treatment, the Town's existing policy for sick leave would apply.