

SESLHD PROCEDURE COVER SHEET



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District

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KEY TERMS	Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Critical Incident, Manager Assist, Converge
SUMMARY	Information for employees and managers regarding the EAP service offerings and how to access the EAP services.

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS DOCUMENT IS MANDATORY

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**Work Health and Safety –
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)****SESLHDPR/416****1. POLICY STATEMENT**

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) is committed to providing an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which supports and enhances the wellbeing of our people, and positively impacts on organisational resilience and productivity, morale and psychological wellbeing.

2. BACKGROUND

The EAP is a workplace early intervention program to help staff effectively address personal or work related difficulties, and offer support for general life improvement, direction and wellbeing.

The EAP provides confidential, impartial, professional counselling and coaching, and includes:

- Manager Assist phone coaching service
- Lifestyle, Money, Conflict and Career Assist phone coaching
- Critical Incident Responses and Team Wellbeing services, to alleviate the possibility of employees experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, after exposure to a traumatic event or series of emotionally challenging events in the workplace.

The engagement of staff in the EAP support activities, will improve employee resilience, engagement and problem-solving abilities, and psychological wellbeing throughout the organisation, leading to improved productivity, efficiencies and safe patient outcomes.

The provision of effective EAP services:

- is consistent with the organisation's responsibility and obligations for duty of care
- enables SESLHD facilities to meet the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards 2.2, and Work Health and Safety legal obligations
- demonstrates the employer's commitment to the wellbeing of employees
- results in significant individual, organisational and patient benefits including:
 - reduced absenteeism associated with personal problems
 - improved employee functioning, performance and morale
 - improved interpersonal relations with work colleagues and patients
 - reduced problems associated with distraction and loss of focus
 - reduction in psychological injury claims
 - Improved employee engagement, operational performance and productivity benefits.

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3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Employees will:

Take responsibility for their own psychological wellbeing by accessing the EAP service as needed.

3.2 Health Safety and Wellbeing will:

Oversee the administration and effectiveness of the EAP contract with the external provider, by monitoring and reviewing any arising service and quality issues, providing reports to the SESLHD executives, conducting regular discussions with the EAP provider to recommend improvements, changes or additional services as needed, and periodically renewing the tender as it becomes due.

3.3 Line Managers will:

Ensure staff are aware of the EAP service, promote and recommend contact with EAP where it is considered of value or assistance.

3.4 District Managers/Service Managers will:

Promote, approve and coordinate additional services or resources as appropriate, such as critical incident responses where staff are exposed to work-related traumatic events.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 CONFIDENTIALITY

All contacts and discussions between an employee and an EAP counsellor are treated in confidence. Relevant privacy legislation, including the *Health Records Information Privacy Act 2002* and the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* apply.

Written authority of the employee is to be obtained before any information, including details of the contact is to be provided to any party.

Notwithstanding the above, EAP counsellors are also bound by public accountability obligations to notify cases of serious criminal offences, where there is an identified risk to the safety of individuals, where there is a legal obligation to notify suspected abuse and neglect of children and where there is an obligation to release due to application of any legislation.

Problems in a person's private life, which are not affecting work performance, are not the business of an employer.

4.2 SERVICE PROVISION

Confidential and free counselling services are available to all employees of SESLHD, and their immediate family members. The services are provided by a specialist EAP provider (see Appendix A – current EAP service provider).

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Employees have the choice of face to face or phone counselling.

Face to face appointments can be made at Prince of Wales, St George or Sutherland Hospitals, a Sydney city or suburban location, or in a range of locations around Australia.

If long-term or specialised counselling is required, a referral to outside professional assistance will be made.

4.3 APPOINTMENTS

Appointments are made by employees contacting the EAP provider by phone (see Appendix A). This number is answered 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and also provides assistance in crisis situations.

Staff have access to up to four appointments per year, with the understanding that they are entitled to attend the initial counselling appointment in work time (usually one to one-and-a-half hours)

Further details for EAP service are available on <https://www.convergeinternational.com.au>

4.4 REFERRAL**4.4.1 Self-referral**

Employees usually seek counselling on their own initiative and self-referral is encouraged. The active and on-going promotion of EAP services, through avenues such as printed material, posters, distribution of pamphlets, newsletters and staff briefings aims to ensure a high level of awareness and serve as the main impetus for self-referral.

In addition, colleagues, union delegates and managers may inform employees about the availability of EAP services, encourage attendance and provide contact details.

4.4.2 Line Manager initiated referral

Line managers may also refer workers when they identify an issue which may impact on workers wellbeing.

EAP counselling services may also be suggested to workers as an option for personal support to help manage stresses associated with the resolution of conflict, harassment, bullying, interpersonal problems and workplace difficulties. However, this does not involve a formal advocacy role or a substitute for People & Culture Business Partnering advice.

EAP services may also be used for life enhancement, coaching, wellbeing and decision making. It is not a service only for the resolution of problems.

The use of EAP counselling is voluntary, and employees have the right to decline the offer of counselling assistance.

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SESLHDPR/416**5. MANAGER ASSIST COACHING**

A phone coaching service for supervisors and managers is also provided. This is a free and confidential service aimed at providing short term, results-focused solutions for managers. There is no limit on the number of sessions provided. Typical issues for which managers receive support relate to team functioning and dynamics, support in handling disciplinary issues, addressing team conflict, enhancing effective communication, increasing employee engagement and general development of managerial skills.

This is an important service aimed at equipping managers with skills in addressing problems before they escalate and in supporting their ongoing development.

Manager Assist coaching does not provide or take the place of People & Culture Business Partnering advice on SESLHD policy and procedures.

6. TEAM CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSES, STAFF SUPPORT AND WELLBEING SESSIONS

Critical Incident Responses are appropriate after a one-off, unusual, potentially traumatic event. Staff Support and Team Wellbeing Sessions are available after a series of emotionally challenging situations that are not necessarily unusual in the SESLHD environment, but are emotionally challenging and have the potential to impact on psychological wellbeing.

These services should be accessed by the most senior officer at the time, by calling the EAP Provider. The situation is then triaged by the EAP provider and an assessment made as to the most appropriate response. Potentially, a response can be organised as early as two hours from the time of the first call.

Due to the potential impact of a workplace traumatic event on individual staff, subsequent to both types of support sessions, staff may be encouraged to access individual follow-up counselling through EAP.

In order to provide ongoing monitoring and support, managers should note any staff who are offered and do not wish to attend Critical Incident or Wellbeing Support Sessions or to have follow-up EAP counselling.

7. EVALUATION

The EAP Provider is required to ensure all EAP counsellors are subject to ongoing quality assurance processes such as continuing professional education and clinical supervision.

SESLHD has the right to refuse services of individual counsellors where complaints about poor quality of service are received, or a perceived conflict of interest is noted.

Direct evaluation of the service is carried out by provider client evaluation surveys and the results are reported regularly.

Feedback is provided to the EAP Provider by the Safety Culture and Wellbeing Manager where issues of quality, timeliness and appropriateness of the service are raised by staff or managers.

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8. DOCUMENTATION

The EAP provider is required to maintain confidential clinical counselling notes for each individual client.

Broad, individually unidentifiable statistical data is collected by the EAP Provider, including the demographic profile of client's usage, facilities and occupational groups and the general categories of presenting problems.

From this data, monthly, quarterly and yearly reports are prepared for SESLHD by the EAP Provider detailing service utilisation, feedback and recommendations on general organisational issues as identified by EAP counsellors through the counselling process.

These reports enable the EAP service provision to be monitored for quality and usage, and for it to be tailored on an ongoing basis to the needs of the organisation.

A copy of the Annual EAP Report is forwarded to the Director People and Culture.

9. AUDIT

The performance and effectiveness of the EAP Provider and services, is audited through the feedback, complaints and utilisation rates.

The periodic tender process is also utilised to assess performance and effectiveness of services.

10. REFERENCES

- [NSW Work Health And Safety Act 2011](#)
- [NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#)

11. REVISION AND APPROVAL HISTORY

Date	Revision No	Author and Approval
August 2004	0	Former SESAHS EAP Procedure CSP2004/006
January 2006	1	Eva Lion, EAP Coordinator, SESIAHS. Approved by the Executive Management Committee, 31 January 2006
July 2006	2	Phone number change for Wollongong & Shoalhaven staff – no other content changed. Email request from Eva Lion, Employee Assistance Program Coordinator
January 2007	3	Phone number change for St George Hospital staff and change to only one external EAP organization – no other content changed. Email request from Eva Lion, Employee Assistance Program Coordinator
March 2016	4	Extensive changes to reflect new model of external EAP provision within South Eastern Sydney Local Health District.
March 2016	4	Updates endorsed by Executive Sponsor
April 2016	4	Endorsed by SESLHD DET

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July 2021	5	Minor review to reflect rescinded policy directives and direct link to Converge International.
January 2022	5	Approved by Executive Sponsor.

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APPENDIX A – Current EAP Service Provider

Converge International

Phone: 1300 687 327 (24 hours per day, seven days per week)

<https://www.convergeinternational.com.au>