

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Access free and confidential counselling to help you be at your best

Q: What is the Employee Assistance Program?

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free, short term, and strictly confidential counselling service delivered for the Department through an independent provider, [LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell](#) (LifeWorks). The EAP is available 24 hours, 7 days a week for up to four sessions for Department employees to discuss any personal or work related issues.

Q: Who can access the EAP?

The Department's EAP offering of counselling support is available to:

- all Department employees
- immediate adult family members of Department staff (18 years of age or more)
- school council employees including Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) employed by school councils.

EAP is not available to CRTs engaged through agencies.

Q: What services are offered through the EAP?

There are two main services: EAP Counselling Service (for all staff) and Manager Assist (for principals, school leaders and managers seeking advice on people management).

EAP Counselling Service (face-to-face and telephone)

Some of the issues you can explore and get support on through this service include:

- work-related issues – including work-life balance, conflict and interpersonal dynamics at work, career path and organisational change
- life-related issues – including relationships, grief and bereavement, significant life changes, carer responsibilities and concerns about your children or family members
- personal-health issues – including stress, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, addiction and coping with chronic illness.

Manager Assist

A dedicated telephone service which provides principals, school leaders and managers with confidential advice and coaching on supporting their staff. This includes:

- managing staff wellbeing issues
- approaching a difficult conversation with employees
- managing challenging team dynamics
- leading through uncertainty and change

- supporting staff at risk and managing the impact of mental health issues in the workplace.

Q: When could I use these services?

We all need some extra support from time to time. Working with an experienced professional can help you to develop tailored strategies that help enhance your wellbeing – both in and outside of work. You can use this service proactively manage your wellbeing, or you could draw on this service to get some extra support for some of life’s challenging situations.

You don’t need to be in crisis to seek help.

Q: How can I access the service?

To access the service, call 1300 361 008 to make an appointment. The telephone number can be accessed 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Once you have contacted LifeWorks, an appointment time will be scheduled within 24 hours. An appointment will be made to be undertaken within five days of initial contact.

Urgent after hours counselling requests will be put through to an on call counsellor. All non-urgent counselling requests received after hours will be booked to occur during business hours (8am–6pm).

Appointments can be booked at a time and location that works for you, over the phone or face-to-face.

Q: How can my immediate family members access it?

Family members play an important role in supporting our overall wellbeing. Immediate family members of Department employees will now be able to access EAP as part of a twelve month trial that the Department is conducting.

Immediate family members can include a spouse, child (including adopted, step or ex-nuptial), parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling of the employee, *provided they are 18 years of age or older*.

Eligible family members can call 1300 361 008 to access support. They will need to disclose the name of the Department employee they are connected to when accessing the service.

This is a completely confidential service – no personal details of those using the EAP are disclosed to the employer (the Department).

Q: Can contractors or volunteers access the EAP?

The EAP service is not offered to agency or independent contractors engaged by the Department, either in schools or corporate locations, unless you are employed under an employment contract with the Department.

Contractors and volunteers are encouraged to access support via:

- supports offered by the agency that the contractor is employed by;
- visiting their GP who may prepare a mental health plan and refer them to a psychologist
- contacting national services such as Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636

- visiting mhaustralia.org/need-help which identifies a number of hotlines that offer advice on supporting the mental health or safety of themselves or someone they know

Q: Is the EAP service confidential?

Yes.

There are strict confidentiality protocols in which no employee details are released to the Department. No identifiable details are provided to the Department.

The service provider, LifeWorks, will advise the Department of high level data, including utilisation rates of all services offered and provide a summary analysis of all access. This data helps us to ensure that we are providing the best supports for our staff and if there are any gaps in support that we may need to address.

Q: Do I need to tell my Principal/Manager that I am accessing the service?

No.

If you access the EAP counselling service outside of work hours or during leave, you do not have to tell your principal or supervisor.

Q: Can I see a counsellor during normal business hours?

Yes.

To do so you will need to liaise with your principal/manager for approval for time away from your work duties and their decision will be based on operational needs. However, you may choose to see the EAP counsellor outside of working hours if you prefer not to discuss this with your principal/manager.

Q: Who provides the counselling?

Experienced psychologists and social workers (with a minimum of five years of professional experience) deliver the service through the independent provider, LifeWorks.

Q: Are there counsellors available who specialise in Aboriginal, LGBTIQ and family violence matters?

All EAP counsellors are experienced and well equipped to support you across a diverse range of personal or work related matters. LifeWorks will do its best to match you with an appropriate counsellor when you call to book an appointment. You will be guided through a series of questions to help ensure the right support is provided.

Sometimes, you may benefit from more targeted, specialised support. LifeWorks has access to a network of counsellors who specialise in Aboriginal, LGBTIQ and family violence matters. If you would like to access a counsellor with specialist expertise in these areas, please indicate your preference at the time of your booking and the LifeWorks team will aim to match you accordingly.

Q: What happens once I have used my four free sessions? What are my options?

Once you have had all four sessions with your counsellor, they will discuss options with you based on your personal circumstances.

Q: What happens if I miss a scheduled session?

If you miss a session with less than 24 hours' notice given to the provider, or if you do not attend, this will count as a used session out of your four free sessions per issue.

Q: What if I'm not happy with the service I receive when I first access the counselling?

You will be given the opportunity to provide feedback regarding all aspects of the service after your first session with a counsellor, including feedback on the call operator, setting up a session, and your experience with the counsellor.

If you don't feel comfortable or well-matched with the counsellor allocated to you, you are able to request a new counsellor. This session *will not* be counted as one of your four free sessions. Contact LifeWorks to arrange this change on 1300 361 008.

Q: Who do I contact if I have a complaint or compliment?

LifeWorks will give each client the opportunity to provide feedback, immediately after the initial session.

You can contact LifeWorks at any time to provide feedback confidentially directly on 1300 361 008.

Alternatively, general questions and feedback about the EAP and other support services available to Department employees can be directed to the Employee Health, Safety and Wellbeing Division through email employeehealth@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Your feedback will help us improve the service to be more effective and relevant.

Q: Who do I speak to if I have general questions about the Department's EAP?

General questions about the EAP and other support services available to Department employees can be directed to the Employee Health, Safety and Wellbeing Division through email employeehealth@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Alternately, please contact LifeWorks direct on 1300 361 008.