

Ministry of Public Service, Consumer Affairs and Sports

Employee Assistance Programme

(EAP)

Handbook



**“Preparing the Way for a Better and more
Productive Public Service”**



Welcome

As an employee in the Public Service of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and throughout your career, you may experience professional and/or personal situations that affect your ability to perform effectively on the job. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) can play a significant role by providing you with knowledge and resources to support your wellbeing. From anything as simple as just listening to you or teaching you some money management skills to helping you cope with the loss of a loved one, the EAP is here to help, and it's entirely confidential.

Employee Assistance Programme



Public Servants, your well-being is our concern!

CALL: (1-784) 570-6718

EAP.MPS@GOV.VC



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About the Programme

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is concerned about the development of its human resources and in catering to the health and well-being of its employees have created a Unit for this programme to safeguard employees emotional and mental well-being; increase productivity and improve national outputs.

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a management and support programme that recognizes that there can be extraneous factors that may detract employees from performing their best in the workplace. The service is geared to help mitigate the effects of employees' personal problems on their workplace engagement, happiness and overall productivity. It is a problem-solving initiative that reduces the economic costs of absence and low productivity.



Policy Statement

The government recognizes that it is possible in the work environment to identify employees with problems, including those related to substance abuse and other emotional and psychological challenges, and believes it is important to motivate them to seek assistance or treatment at an early stage. To this end, the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines makes available to every employee within the Public Service, a confidential and voluntary Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) without prejudice to their job security or career progression.



Policy Objective

To foster and maintain the well-being and productivity of employees by providing confidential assistance or short term counselling to those who are experiencing personal or work-related problems.



Mission Statement

To create an enabling environment to support the productivity and development of the Public Service by promoting a culture of health and well-being for public service employees and their families, through high quality counselling and guidance services.



Vision Statement

To be the catalyst that drives a healthy, sustainable and high performance public service.



Core Values

- ◆ ***CONFIDENTIALITY*** - The EAP holds this as the Apex of all the core values. Every counsellor and Unit staff will assume the responsibility of maintaining in strictest confidence the identity and information of every client accessing the service.
- ◆ ***RELIABILITY*** - The EAP Unit will be seen as dependable; holding steadfast to the vision and mission of the programme. This will guarantee sustainability of high-quality service standards.



Core Values cont'd

- ◆ **COMPASSION** - At the heart of the EAP is the ability to show genuine concern, offer empathy, and create a space that is considered safe and genuine. The EAP Unit is a passionate team that shows genuine care for employees, their families, our community, and the environment.
- ◆ **TRUSTWORTHINESS** - It is the belief that the success of the programme depends highly on the ability of clients to trust the process. As such, it is encouraged that every person accessing the service be open-minded and foster an attitude of hope.
- ◆ **TEAMWORK** - ‘Teamwork makes the dream work’, this is the mantra of the EAP Unit. There is a big focus on building a team spirit, between office staff, counsellors and other Ministry stakeholders.
- ◆ **RESPECT** - At the EAP Unit, we respect, value and support all people. We take into consideration the differences in age, gender, religious, and political affiliations; we are also mindful of role differentiation and work towards the promotion of tolerance and acceptance of such differences.
- ◆ **INTEGRITY** - We act with professionalism and honesty at all times, in everything we do. Each team member promotes the uplifting of the programme’s vision, mission and objectives.
- ◆ **DIGNITY OF HUMANITY** - There is no discrimination within the programme. All are seen as equal and the service is offered to meet every person at the point of their needs.



Basic Principles

- ◆ The EAP is strictly voluntary.
- ◆ The main aim is to assist management in helping employees cope with problems affecting their work performance.
- ◆ It applies equality and equity to all employees.
- ◆ Timely intervention is encouraged in addressing personal problems.
- ◆ The EAP is grounded in confidentiality and privacy of information.
- ◆ Self-referrals—employees voluntarily seek EAP for personal problems which may affect job performance.
- ◆ Supervisor's referrals are limited to addressing work deteriorating performance.
- ◆ The EAP offers assistance for a wide range of problems.
- ◆ It's the Supervisor's responsibility to point out to the employee when job performance is below standard.
- ◆ Management has a right to maintain discipline and to take disciplinary actions.
- ◆ The EAP is not designed in resolving conflicts between employees and or supervisors. Conflict resolution is dealt with administratively.
- ◆ The EAP recognizes the need for leave to be granted to employees seeking EAP intervention.
- ◆ Employee's current job and opportunity for promotion or advancement will not be jeopardized by having used EAP services.



Counselling Services Provided

- Marital, family and relationship problems
- Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, prescription medication)
- Other addictive behaviors e.g., gambling
- Personal debt and financial management problems
- Stress (family, social, job)
- Family violence (Intimate Partner Violence)
- Mental/Emotional problems
- Work related conflicts
- Grief and loss



Eligibility

Counseling services are available to all Public Servants and their immediate families (children, spouse/partner). Sessions with family members can be done jointly with the employee or independently at the employee's request. Each employee is eligible for six (6) sessions per year within the programme.



Extension of Counselling Sessions

An extension can be granted at the discretion of the EAP Coordinator upon the advise of the counsellor, to an employee if he/she has to exceed the six allotted sessions.



Types of Referrals

Voluntary/Self Referrals - The Employee has chosen to use the programme independently. Some may have a job performance issue, but they have sought out the programme before a supervisor or manager becomes involved. They may also seek the service to address a personal issue that is impeding their ability to perform on the job.

Informal Supervisory Referrals - This type of referral occurs when there is no pattern of deteriorating work performance, but a supervisor is aware that an employee is experiencing some kind of difficulty in their personal life. For example, an employee may confide in you that they are having marital problems. This gives you the opportunity to remind them about the EAP and suggest that they call to set up an appointment, e.g., “That sounds like a difficult situation... would you like to speak with a counsellor at the EAP Unit?”

Formal Supervisory Referrals - This referral is made following a pattern of deteriorating work performance, and before disciplinary action. At this point a supervisor or manager will outline their concern to the employee, e.g., “I am concerned about the changes we’ve discussed with regard to your performance.” The EAP programme is then **recommended** as a means of salvaging the situation and the gravity of the situation and referral is outlined clearly to the employee. **“I strongly recommend that you contact the programme. I have spoken to them already, and they are expecting your call.”** The onus will be on the employee to follow up with the EAP Unit to organize the time of the sessions.

Types of Referrals cont'd

Mandatory Referrals - This type of referral takes place when there are specific policy violations or misconduct as outlined in the Public Service Commission Regulations, subsection 40⁶. In order to retain employment, the employee must contact an EAP counsellor for assessment and referral for treatment, and comply with treatment recommendations. Failure to comply with the referral or treatment recommendations could result in additional corrective action such as termination of services.

External Agency Referral - In cases where it is deemed necessary for an employee to be offered specialized intervention beyond the scope of competency of the EAP counsellor, it is expected that a referral will be made to external agencies or individual entities who are better equipped to serve the employee's needs. The referral **MUST** first be agreed upon by the employee. Following this, the EAP counsellor through the EAP Coordinator will facilitate the referral process. Once the referral is made, and once the allocated (6) sessions of the employee have been exhausted, the EAP counsellor can no longer interface with the employee on that matter. Sessions with the employee will be therefore **TERMINATED**.

EAP is a



Supervisor's Role in the Referral Process

- ◆ Be concerned with job behaviour and performance.
- ◆ Remain alert to changes in normal work pattern/behaviour/productivity.
- ◆ Take action when the welfare of the employee and or the Ministry is at risk.
- ◆ Maintain strict confidentiality with all cases.
- ◆ Not to diagnose employee's personal problems.
- ◆ Not to take on the employee's problem and try to handle it alone.
- ◆ Not to be a counsellor
- ◆ Not to cover up for employee or ignore poor work performance.
- ◆ Not to request employee to divulge information about nature of problem when requesting leave for appointment and treatment at EAP.

"We are Willing to Listen"





Benefits of EAP

- ◆ Employees arriving to work on time
- ◆ Employees taking less time off
- ◆ Higher employee retention
- ◆ Better work performance
- ◆ Fewer labour disputes
- ◆ Fewer accidents in the workplace
- ◆ Fewer workers' compensation claim
- ◆ Employees who are more engaged
- ◆ Employees feel like employers care about them
- ◆ Decreased anxiety at work
- ◆ Direct and quick access to experts who can provide the support employees need.



Operating Procedures

The EAP upholds a proactive approach in preventing a lack of productivity and efficiency of employees within the Public Service; whether the lack of productivity or poor performance is due to an employee's inability to cope with the stressors of their personal life; on the job stress or the balancing of both.

The EAP will make sure that every new and existing employee receives a brochure, information sheet or other appropriate information that describes the scope and means of accessing the EAP services.

Anonymity & Confidentiality

This is integral to the success of the EAP. Whether or not the particular issue has impacted work performance, employees are often concerned that the employer's knowledge of the problem's existence could in some way jeopardize their job or career. Maintaining the confidentiality of what is said to EAP counsellors is one of the most important principles of the programme.

The EAP counsellor protects the client's right to privacy with reference both to confidentiality and anonymity. Anonymity refers to non-disclosure of the identity of a client. Confidentiality refers to the safe, non-disclosure nature of information obtained in the communication between a client and counsellor.

A counsellor provides effective professional service only when there is complete and unreserved communication between himself and his client. The client has the right to feel completely secure in the choice to use EAP services and is entitled to assume that matters discussed with, or information disclosed to, the counsellor will be held in strictest confidence.

“Confidentiality is our business”



Breach of Confidentiality

The EAP is built on the foundation of confidentiality as a core value. In the unfortunate event that there is a proven breach within the programme, by staff within the EAP Unit, the EAP Coordinator will address all complaints in tandem with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Public Service, Consumer Affairs and Sports.

Conclusion

The Employee Assistance Programme in the Public Service of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is revolutionary, insightful and forward-thinking. There is no doubt that the EAP is being introduced at an opportune time when there is a dire need for systemic changes. It is expected that the EAP will be the catalyst for positive change needed in the public service.

As an investment is made in the psychological and emotional well-being of the employees and they begin to feel good mentally and emotionally, it is expected that they will approach their jobs with good mental health; being more adaptable, flexible and resilient. They will be able to navigate through and handle challenges, making meaningful contributions to their departments and Ministries, and most importantly, they will be able to strike a balance in their personal and professional life.

“EAP says we win as a





Notes



Location and Contact

CORNER OF TYRELL & QUEEN STREETS,

ROSE PLACE, KINGSTOWN

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We Care About You!