

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

There are times when we all need some extra support to balance the strains of life whether that be at work or at home. Living in a stressful age - millions of people living in modern countries find themselves stressed out, depressed or sick. Modern living brings with it many stresses for people to face whether it is a grinding commute, financial pressures, work pressures or family concerns. Our modern fast paced lives means our lives are full of it and sometimes it can be difficult to know how to cope. Everyone would admit to feeling stressed on occasions, but very few people are possibly aware of just how stressed they are. The impact of stress can often be masked in other symptoms for example, physical ailments, muscle pain, trouble sleeping, feeling run down, eating irregularly or lose of enjoyment.

Mismanagement of stress can seep into every aspect of your life, from the day-to-day, to career and relationship but successful management of stress can be the key to a whole, vibrant, and fulfilled way of life. As employers - we have a duty of care towards our employees to ensure that so far as is reasonable, they have access to facilities and arrangements for their welfare - as well as providing a safe working environment.

Considering this employers may consider introducing flexible working hours, part time working, job sharing or an Employee Assistance Programme. To help support employees an Employee Assistance Programme – offered free and confidential to the employee - can provide advice and counselling supports to employees should they need it. The support staff of EAPs are specialists in fields such as well-being, family matters, relationship issues, debt management, consumer rights, and much more. EAPs are generally available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and are accessible by phone, email and online.

The service is designed to help employees with a wide range of work, family and personal issues. Topics include, but are not limited to:

- Relationships
- Health and well-being
- Debt
- Disability and illness
- Bereavement and loss
- Stress
- Elder care
- Immigration
- Anxiety and depression
- Family issues
- Bullying and harassment
- Consumer rights
- Workplace pressure

The benefits to the employer of introducing the service are vast and overall will result in improved employee performance and motivation. Staff will feel valued - there will be enhanced employee retention and less employee grievances. As well as this it will can increase cost and time savings through reduced absenteeism and presentism. The benefits to the employee are huge also and the awareness of acknowledging that problems and stresses do occur can lessen the taboo that exists around issues like mental health.

While people have become more open about these things in recent times it is still evident that a prejudgment against those experiencing emotional health problems is still in existence, meaning that more employers need to get on board and help reduce the stigma. Over the past ten years Ireland's attitude towards mental health has taken a transformation thanks to the awareness created by organisations and individuals. Although larger organisations may be more aware of stress in the workplace and the effect it can have on operations - through our work as HR Consultants we see similar issues occurring in SMEs and have seen the benefits to all size organisations from creating awareness and providing supports for the needs of their employees.

*The Economics of Mental Health Care in Ireland* estimated the direct annual cost of poor mental health in Ireland at least €3 billion or 2 per cent of GNP. By taking positive actions employers can reduce this figure and encourage staff to deal with the challenges they are facing in a supported and structured way.

By putting these structures in place employers and managers are in a better position to deal with issues as it can be difficult to know what to say when these issues are evident amongst staff. Employers will also reap the rewards of a happier, healthier and more productive workforce.

The HR Suite can provide anyone in a management, team leader or supervisory role information and support on any HR subject which is impacting upon you, an individual or your team. The HR Suite can also help you set up an Employee Assistance Programme through our provider at a reasonable cost which we are happy to provide a quote for. If you have HR issues you need to talk through or if you are unsure of steps you need to take to support your employees please contact the HR Suite on 0667102887.

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