



EAPAA SERVICE STANDARDS

July 2023

Introduction to

EAPAA Standard for Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand

Purpose

To set out a number of standards applicable to the EAP industry in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. These standards will be developed from EAPAA membership input and serve to ensure consistent high-quality standard of EAP service to workplaces.

Scope

The EAP Standards are designed for EAP services in all types of organizations in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and in organisations servicing global companies. EAP services can constitute a wide brief and the Standards seek to be applicable to all types of EAP.

EAP is defined as a short-term intervention that is provided to organisations for their staff and possibly family members at no cost to the individual. It's purpose is to support employees in a range of issues, particularly Mental Health and wellbeing and provide strategies to minimise their distress and maintain their ability to participate in healthy work environments

The Standards aim to complement, not replace, other standards and legal obligations.

The Standards are relevant to professional activities and do not extend to an employer's legal responsibilities that are already addressed.

EAP professionals who deliver EAP services are also bound by standards set by their respective professional bodies in relation to their practice.

Providers of EAPs must be committed, in addition to ensuring high standards of service delivery, to help ensure that their EAP professionals act in accordance with their own professional standards. Consequently, the Standards for EAP services take into consideration and complement the professional standards set by the relevant professional bodies rather than seek to supersede or replace them.

Standards

Each standard can normally be met in more than one way. For each standard several minimum requirements are described.

Disclaimer

EAPAA will give consideration and review all feedback received about an EAP provider.

However, EAPAA is not a regulatory body and where you are not satisfied with an EAP you should follow the provider's complaints procedure and/or seek legal advice. EAPAA does not endorse or recommend any EAP and to the fullest extent permitted by law, EAPAA accepts no liability for any loss or damage (whether direct, indirect or consequential) incurred by any person howsoever caused arising from any person acting, omitting to act, failing to act or refraining from acting in accordance with these Standards.

Thanks

EAPAA would like to thank the UK EAPA for permission to draw from their established standards of service and assist EAPAA to align themselves with best practice global standards. These standards were initially published in 2019 and updated in 2023.

Implementation

1

Standard

An EAP provider will provide an implementation plan to each EAP purchaser.

Minimum requirements

The implementation plan will contain reference to:

- The actions and responsibilities of those involved and timescales required to put the EAP in place.
- Arrangements for monitoring progress and taking corrective action.
- Arrangements to promote, publicise and launch the service.
- Arrangements for continued promotion of the service.
- Emphasis on confidentiality

EAP Promotion

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Standard

An EAP provider will offer a promotional programme that encourages usage and includes promotional materials, management and employee briefings and an ongoing promotion plan.

Minimum requirements

1. An EAP provider will offer to assist the organisation in promoting the service through a variety of methods, taking full account of the specific and diverse needs of those in the organisation.
2. The EAP provider will provide regular promotional materials.
3. Promotional activity will be continuous and is aimed at all individuals covered by the service.

EAP Reports

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Standard

An EAP provider will offer management information reports to the purchaser.

Minimum requirements

- An EAP provider will provide generic usage information to all purchasers.
- The report must detail definitions and methods of calculations for standardised utilisation rate.
 - EAPAA provides a standard endorsed definition of this to be **number of new employee referrals over a 12-month period divided by the number employees/lives covered by the program as a percentage.**
 - Employee referrals are defined as those accessing services such as face to face support, telephone sessions, online services and live chat. Employee referrals do not include those visiting a website to review information.
- The report must identify any potential duplication of data and usage information.
- The report must protect individual confidentiality and anonymity.
- Data that can be used to identify individuals such as gender, location, presenting concern and age should not be collected and utilised for groups of under 30 individuals.
- The report must enable the purchaser to identify themes and trends in the usage of the EAP.

Complaints Procedures

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Standard

An EAP provider will have a published complaints procedure.

Minimum requirements

1. An EAP provider will define what is to be regarded as a complaint – which may be considered to be different from ‘negative feedback’.
2. A purchaser raising an issue as a complaint will have it identified as such and understand the complaints process as set out by the EAP provider.
3. An EAP provider will identify a person to whom any complaint should be addressed.
4. There will be a clear statement of any requirements as to the manner of communicating complaints-namely whether oral, written or both.
5. The statement will identify by whom the complaint will be investigated, reviewed and responded and the time scale.
6. There will be a procedure for resolving disputes following investigations of complaints.

Partnership and Consultancy

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Standard

An EAP provider will offer a partnership approach to the purchaser.

An EAP provider will have clear and effective lines of communication, a sharing of vision, outcomes and action plans and will provide every opportunity for the EAP to influence strategic initiatives.

Minimum requirements

1. The EAP provider should make clear its ability to provide strategic organisational consultancy as part of its role.
2. Using management information reports the EAP provider will be able to offer feedback to the purchaser regarding trends that would benefit from their action.
3. Having identified those themes and trends, the EAP provider will be proactive and supportive in suggesting appropriate remedial action.

Standard

An EAP provider will create and maintain records of services to both client and purchasing organisation that are consistent with the EAP service delivery system, purchasing and provider organisation policies, programme procedures and all applicable legal and professional requirements.

Minimum requirements

1. Every individual client at the start of any EAP Service will be informed that a record will be kept of any contact with the service.
2. The EAP provider will record all services delivered to the purchaser.
3. The content of records will be consistent with the scope of the service and detailed enough to provide management reporting.
4. Affiliates shall be informed in writing that all records maintained in a format stipulated by the provider are the property of the provider.
5. Records shall be kept, transferred and destroyed securely.
6. Records should be kept in line with other professional, legal and legislative requirements.
7. Access to records should be kept to a need to know basis.
8. Access to electronic records should have appropriate access controls including password security.
9. Individual clients have a right to request their their own records in line with the relevant national privacy acts.

Standard

An EAP provider will have a clear confidentiality statement and EAPAA members must adhere to all appropriate Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand Data Protection and Privacy legislation.

Minimum requirements

1. Confidentiality is a central tenet of an EAP service and must be maintained. On occasion HR/Management may set up a referral process in which confidentiality is not upheld, on these occasions clients are to be made aware of the limits to confidentiality before proceeding with service delivery.
2. An EAP provider will explain confidentiality to purchasers and individual clients
3. An EAP provider will have a written statement that fully informs clients about their rights regarding the scope and limitations of confidentiality available on their website. This statement will be communicated and made available to every client before assistance is offered.
4. In the case of telephone or online counselling it is expected that the statement will be either read out to the client with verbal consent or the client be directed towards the statement that is available on a website or App.
5. Every employee of an EAP provider must personally contract to a confidentiality agreement.
6. An EAP provider will have clear guidelines and procedures as to when confidentiality will be breached, such as threat to life or others and child protection.
7. An EAP provider will have clear consent to disclose information about a client, for example as part of a management referral.
8. An EAP provider will protect client information from disclosure with appropriate levels of security. Access levels for different staff within an EAP shall be clearly defined.
9. All offices from which EAP services are provided shall be located and designed to ensure client privacy

Standard

An EAP provider will attempt to ensure their services are provided through a distinct business function that provides a clearly identifiable and systematic EAP delivery system.

An EAP provider will ensure procedures are in place to enable consistent and effective delivery of services. They will be continually reviewed and developed in response to EAP objectives, business needs and client and clinician feedback .

An EAP provider will provide qualified and experienced clinicians to meet the needs of employees with specific requests.

Minimum requirements

1. An EAP provider will ensure it has sufficient resources to provide a professional and clinical service.
2. An EAP will employ at least one manager having a minimum of two years' experience of direct EAP provision.
3. An EAP provider will employ at least one senior manager of the service who is a member of such an appropriate clinical body such as AHPRA, AAWS ACA, NZAC or NZAP, NCNZ, SWRB or CIMA.
4. A service delivery system will be chosen that best reflects an EAP needs. Factors to be considered include size and diversity of employee population, number and location of sites, budget and internal resources.
5. The EAP provider will have its own policies, written procedure and identified personnel, reporting relationships and responsibilities.
6. The EAP provider will ensure clinicians provide service from specialists experienced and trained to work with specific requests, including: Domestic and Family Violence, LGBTQI+, First Nations Support and Trauma.
7. The procedures will describe all the important EAP processes, such as:
 - The access routes to the EAP.
 - Processes that ensure confidentiality.
 - The processes for problem identification or assessment, referral and for short-term resolution.
 - EAP participation in case monitoring, follow-up, treatment, case closure, reports and non-compliance.
 - EAP participation in such related areas as manager referrals, procedures relating to stress, harassment, trauma, disability, mental health, substance misuse and discipline.

Standard

An EAP provider must provide an adequate number of professionals to achieve the stated goals and objectives of the EAP in conjunction with purchaser service level agreement.

Minimum requirements

1. An EAP provider will ensure adequate staffing levels and skills are available for each client considering size, geographic location for delivery, diversity and scope of the contracted programme.
2. An EAP provider will evidence strategies for supporting staff and quality assurance, aligned with ISO-9001 standards.
3. An EAP provider will evidence staff have the knowledge, skills, qualification, training and experience necessary to perform their tasks.
4. An EAP provider will ensure all staff have access to continuing professional development.
5. An EAP provider will familiarise staff with policies and procedures including duty of care, confidentiality and data protection and their accountability for service delivery and quality.
6. An EAP provider will ensure all staff are familiar with and work consistently with the EAPAA Code of Ethics.
7. An EAP provider will ensure relevant staff are aware of their responsibilities to other professional codes of ethics as appropriate (for example, to AHPRA, APS, AAWS ACA, NZAC or NZAP, NCNZ, SWRB or CIMA) and the requirement to identify and resolve actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
8. An EAP provider will have in place systems to identify and address unacceptable practice, conduct or concerns around health.
9. An EAP provider will ensure staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and have policies and processes in place to raise concerns or grievances.
10. An EAP provider will be able to demonstrate a system for clinical governance including the maintenance of documented protocols.
11. An EAP provider will ensure all clinical staff and contractors undertake adequate clinical supervision.
12. An EAP provider to ensure all clinical staff and contractors are professionally indemnified.
13. An EAP provider to ensure clinical professionals are registered with and accredited by the relevant regulatory body and have a minimum of 3 years clinical experience.

Case Risk Management

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Standard

An EAP provider will have a clearly defined clinical risk protocol process for the management of risk cases that includes sufficient assessment, and appropriate escalation referral and consultation processes.

Minimum requirements

1. An EAP provider will maintain and have current adequate professional liability cover.
2. The EAP establishes procedures and guidelines necessary to respond to all identified client risks including referral to appropriate emergency services.
3. The EAP provider complies with relevant government regulations.
4. EAP documents such as release of information forms, statements of understanding/contract for service and consent for treatment are standardised and consistently used.

Initial Assessment and Response Time

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Standard

An EAP provider will provide professional initial intake and referral mechanisms to ensure robust processes for ensuring eligibility and suitability for EAP assistance and services being provided

An EAP will ensure that they have a 24/7 phone number available for employees answered by trained administrators or clinicians.

All clients will participate in an intake process where a referral to relevant support services will be made as required.

Minimum requirements

1. Organisations purchasing services will be made aware of the intake pathway and the level of service offered and its connections to other publicly funded services.
2. Appropriately qualified professional staff will be available to conduct an assessment of risk where one is required
3. Professionally qualified staff will undertake all required risk assessment and oversee referrals to emergency services.
4. Staff involved in assessment will follow clearly detailed procedures and protocols for the assessment and documenting of client needs and managing risks.
5. Assessment procedures and protocols will detail guidelines for crisis situations and escalation to a qualified clinician and or EAP manager.
6. Face to face metro-based appointments for non-urgent issues are to be offered within agreed guidelines of up to 7 working days from time of referral. Regional/Rural face to face appointments to be offered within 10 working days.
7. Phone/virtual appointments to be made available within 72 hours for non-urgent issues. Appointments will be provided to suit the employee's requirements and preferences wherever it is possible to do so.
8. Urgent appointments are to be offered by phone or online on the same day as referral and/or referred to emergency /mental health crisis services. Crisis calls should be attended to as soon as it is possible and generally within 2 hours.

Please see Appendix A for a summary of response times.

Short-term Problem Resolution

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Standard

An EAP provider will establish guidelines and procedures to determine if and when to provide short-term (session limited) problem resolution/counselling services.

Short-term problem resolution/counselling will be explained to the employee client at intake and /or in the first session with the clinician.

Minimum requirements

1. When entering into the initial EAP session the employee will be assessed as to whether short term EAP counselling is appropriate to meet their needs. If longer term support is required, then this referral should be made at the earliest possible time for the client.
2. Employee clients are made aware of the boundaries in which an EAP provider will work and the limits of confidentiality.

Standard

An EAP provider will refer clients to appropriate services for the assessed issue. An EAP will provide a client with information on publicly funded services that are available and community agencies providing services and provide options for their consideration.

An EAP provider will refer onward when the assessed issue is not appropriate to the EAP provision or to the purchaser.

Minimum requirements

1. Referrals will only be made to registered staff /those with appropriate professional memberships and those who are accredited professionals.
2. An EAP will provide their clinicians with an overview of services the client organisation is willing to fund for its personnel.
3. An EAP will have effective relationships with other organisations and know how to research and provide information on any additional requirements depending on the particular needs of a client.
4. Referral options will be discussed with the purchaser, with an explanation of the options, together with any costs.
5. The EAP will maintain appropriate professional boundaries in researching referral options, in making the referral and in follow up.

Standard

An EAP provider will ensure that the purchaser has given careful thought as to how employees are supported in urgent, serious or emergency situations.

An EAP provider will be able to offer support in the event of crisis and trauma situations, including telephone support, onsite support and follow up. Where the EAP is not able to offer this support it should make an appropriate referral for support.

Minimum requirements

1. An EAP provider will develop an appropriate procedure for managing and co-ordinating critical incident or emergency services, with the client organisation
2. The EAP provider will provide access or referral to 24 hour/365 days a year service that is able to respond appropriately to any crisis.
3. Standard minimum response times for critical incident support in a face-to-face environment will be up to 6 hours in metropolitan areas and in remote/rural areas or where there are issues of access this may be up to 48 hours. Response times are activated from time of the initial call to the EAP provider. Please see Appendix A for a summary of response times.
4. Procedures for accessing help in an emergency will be made clear to employees.
5. An EAP provider will have access to a team of pre-selected critical incident response specialists or be able to refer to an appropriate support organisation.
6. The EAP provider will have clear procedures and guidelines for dealing with crisis situations.

Consultancy Services to Managers

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Standard

An EAP provider will provide consultancy and support for line management within an organisation.

Minimum requirements

1. Coaching and support for these key staff on how to intervene constructively, fairly, consistently and sensitively to help employees with situations requiring attention and appropriate help.
2. Day-to-day support to ensure key staff understand their own boundaries and what is appropriate support for the employee.
3. Advice and information on how to make a referral to the EAP.

Manager Referral

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Standard

An EAP provider will provide methods to accept referrals from the organisation and its representatives; this can include line management, human resources and workplace health and safety.

Minimum requirements

1. A clear procedure is in place for referrals to take place.
2. The concept and the procedures around referrals are explained in the organisation's EAP materials so the process is transparent to all.
3. An EAP provider will provide an adequately trained and accredited professional to monitor the initial assessment, action plan and subsequently the quality of assistance provided.
4. An EAP provider will obtain explicit consent that clearly details the level of feedback to be given to the referrer and brief all staff on this in any roll out/briefing to them.

Standard

An EAP provider will implement internal procedures that are used routinely to audit and evaluate the effectiveness of both delivered EAP services and administration processes.

An EAP provider will be prepared to subject such procedures to external independent audit.

Minimum requirements

1. Evaluation parameters will be clearly defined.
2. Procedures and responsibilities for and the frequency of evaluation activity will be clearly defined.
3. Internal or external audit completed annually across all processes
4. Evaluation data on EAP effectiveness and client satisfaction is to be collected from users of the EAP service.

Appendix

A

Summary of EAPAA Standards Response Times for New Cases

		Metro		Rural	
		F2F	Phone/ Virtual	F2F	Phone/ Virtual
11.	Non-Urgent	7 days	72 hours	10 days	72 hours
11.(8)	Urgent		"Same day"		"Same day"
11.(8)	Crisis		ASAP, 2 hours		ASAP, 2 hours
12.	Short Term	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
13.	Referral	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
14.	Crisis	6 hours		48 hours	