



# INFOSHEET

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## Employee Assistance Program for Teachers

### What is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?

EAP is a professional assistance program designed to enable teachers to enhance their quality of life. It offers opportunities for personal skills development and avenues to resolve personal issues that may also impact on professional performance. The EAP for teachers includes two components: confidential assessment, referral and follow-up for professional counselling which deals with problem issues; and wellness promotion, which helps teachers prepare for anticipated change, encourages lifestyle behaviours to enhance health and promotes the development of a supportive environment. Mediation and facilitated conversations enhance both components of the program.

### What is the History of the Program?

A 1982 AGM resolution created this program for teachers. It has been further developed through the joint efforts of the NLTA, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association. The program was ratified by the three sponsors in December 1986. The first EAP coordinator was hired in 1992 to address the counselling needs of teachers. In 1995 the Program was expanded with the addition of a Wellness component and the hiring of a second EAP Coordinator. The Program is referenced in Article 55 in both the Provincial and Labrador West Collective Agreements. The Provincial Government funds 100 percent of the salaries and administrative costs for two EAP coordinators; counselling related costs are partially funded by the NLTA Centennial Fund. Teachers may be further reimbursed through their Group Insurance Health Plan.

### What are the Program Benefits?

The EAP benefits employees and the employer. Maintaining, or regaining, personal health is a

prerequisite to being able to function well. One goal of the EAP is to have healthy teachers in a supportive and healthy work environment. Having a healthy, productive staff also means that the objectives of education can be better met by the employer.

### What Issues are Covered by the Counselling Component of the EAP?

At times our routine methods of handling daily stressors are adequate. Other times the stressors go beyond the routine and require intervention, including professional assistance. If problem issues are not resolved, they tend to be expressed as difficulties in personal life, work performance and relationships. The counselling component can reduce the impact of such difficulties and provide teachers with the strategies and skill sets to make positive personal changes in attitude, behaviour and environment.

Any personal concern which is causing, or may cause, problems in job performance may be open to EAP support. This includes but is not limited to: difficulties in relationships; personal or job stress; addiction concerns; financial matters; caregiving concerns; and physical, mental and emotional health issues. An EAP coordinator can help you assess the impact and identify the options open to you.

The EAP is not an evaluative process or part of any disciplinary process.

### What About Confidentiality?

General information is kept in your EAP file. This file is confidential and accessible only by the EAP staff of the NLTA and is destroyed by request or within one year after closure.

For **voluntary** referrals, no information is shared with the school or district without the teacher's consent.

When seeing an outside counsellor, the information shared between that counsellor and the teacher remains confidential.

A teacher's email contact, phone call or visit to an EAP Coordinator will start the process. However, when personal behaviour or job performance is affected, the teacher may be approached by the principal or a colleague suggesting that the teacher access EAP support.

An interview may be set up so the Coordinator can assist the teacher in identifying issues and plan an effective approach to resolving them.

For **mandatory** referrals, the Director of the school district recommends the teacher's involvement and contacts an EAP coordinator **in writing**. The Director is then informed of the teacher's decision whether or not to participate and remain involved in the EAP. Despite a Director's recommendation, a teacher may refuse. If job performance is affected, the Director may call a meeting with the teacher and require the teacher's EAP involvement. A representative from the NLTA may be present at this meeting at the teacher's request. For this **mandatory referral**, the EAP Coordinator is notified in writing and obligated to inform the Director of the teacher's decision to accept a mandatory EAP referral. Refusal places the teacher in a position where the board may seek other avenues to ensure that the teacher's job performance meets acceptable standards.

### **What Costs Are Covered?**

The program is designed to assist with counselling and limited travel costs for the teacher. ***The EAP does not cover counselling for a child or partner.***

### **Assessment and Counselling**

There is no cost for assessment or referral by the EAP coordinator. When the referral is made to a counsellor, the program covers **50 percent of such costs up to a maximum of \$40 per hour, subject to the lifetime limit of \$2,000**. The NLTA Group Health Insurance Plan or other health insurance policies may cover additional expenses.

### **Transportation to a Counselling Appointment**

Travel to accommodate the service will be subsidized for the most economical means available, according to the NLTA EAP Policy.

### **Sick Leave Provisions**

Through the Employee Assistance Program, teachers can use available sick leave to attend counselling sessions.

(Schedule F – MOU re: Employee Assistance Program.)  
Such sick leave is provided in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the Provincial Collective Agreement and Article 27 of the Labrador West Agreement.

### **What is Covered by the Wellness Component of the EAP?**

The wellness component consists of several approaches to creating a healthy workplace. Efforts are made to encourage a supportive work environment through policies and programs which promote a physically and psychologically healthy and respectful workplace. This occurs through EAP involvement with: NLTA; School Board and government officials; school administrators and committees; and through mediation, team building workshops, and direct support to individual teachers. There is no cost for teachers to access the Wellness Program supports.

### **Wellness Workshops and Webinars**

Print information, presentations, webinars, or workshops to enhance well-being are available.

EAP Coordinators can provide materials or offer sessions at the request of school groups, school districts, NLTA branches, Special Interest Councils, or individual teachers. Common requests include topics of: stress management; life balance; change; staff morale; grief; respectful workplace; self esteem and self-care; resilience; conflict; building relationships; and overall mental health issues. All workshops are designed to meet the specific needs of the group making the request. Topics and content reflect the needs identified. The webinars run one hour and the wellness sessions vary in length. EAP Coordinators provide assistance to schools in using established programs or committees to promote teacher wellness. This is done through: the School Development Plan, Safe and Caring Schools, Respectful Workplace, Healthy Students Healthy Schools, Occupational Health & Safety, or other initiatives which can adopt a teacher wellness focus.

EAP coordinators also assist teachers, administrators and Board office personnel in working together to resolve issues which are impacting a teacher's well-being.

### **For more information, contact one of the EAP Coordinators:**

Judy Beranger or Gail Carroll

Tel: 709-726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599 (toll-free)