Wollongong Catholic Education Office
Employee Assistance Program

What is an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?

An EAP includes:

1. The provision of an independent, confidential, professional general counselling service that is accessible to you and your immediate family. It can help you deal with everyday issues, or more serious problems that may be affecting your health, family life or job performance. By offering you and your immediate family the opportunity to obtain professional assistance through counselling, on many occasions these problems, difficulties and concerns can be resolved before they impact upon you.

2. Access to the service through self referral, thereby ensuring that the EAP is available as an early intervention strategy.

Who will run the EAP?

CEO Wollongong’s EAP will be provided by ACCESS Programs Australia, which is an independent external organisation. ACCESS offers professional counselling on a confidential basis and is one of the Australia’s leading providers of EAP services.

ACCESS was chosen because they best met our criteria of having trained counsellors present in key locations for our employees i.e. the Macarthur, the Illawarra, the Southern Highlands and the Shoalhaven. They can provide twenty-four hour service through their phone service, and guaranteed face-to-face counselling within two working days.

Please note: in the interests of confidentiality employees are advised that when contacting the EAP to arrange counselling they will have a choice of ACCESS counsellors. ACCESS Programs has confirmed that all employees from CEO Wollongong will be automatically referred to non-CatholicCare counsellors unless they specifically request a CatholicCare counsellor. All counsellors used by ACCESS are qualified, experienced professionals who have extensive training in counselling and workplace consulting.

Why use the EAP?

Giving problems an airing may be all that is needed. Many of us already know that just talking over a problem with colleagues at work, family, or friends can clarify a situation.

Many people have experienced times when personal problems seem to overwhelm them, and find it difficult to carry out their normal work or family responsibilities.
CEO Wollongong is aware of the burden that stress, pressures at work, emotional problems, marital and family difficulties can have on a person's life, both at work and at home.

There are times in everyone's life when professional guidance can offer the insight you need to make a decision, respond to an issue or resolve a problem. Seeking support early can prevent a problem reaching the point where it gets in the way of your ability to cope.

**Who can use the EAP?**

All permanent and temporary employees can use the FREE CALL number *(1800 818 728)* and receive personal counselling if appropriate.

Casual employees must first seek approval to use the service and can do so by contacting the **Safety, Wellbeing and Professional Services Team** at CEO Wollongong. All enquiries will be treated as confidential.

**How does the EAP work?**

The EAP detailed here is a benefit provided by CEO Wollongong for you, at no cost to you.

If you want to use the EAP, you can contact ACCESS by telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. An experienced professional will help you assess your situation, suggest possible solutions and discuss available resources.

If a face-to-face meeting with a counsellor is recommended, you will be referred to the appropriate locally based professional. Confidential appointments will be scheduled within 48 hours (or sooner, in a crisis situation). If you need further support, your counsellor will discuss realistic options with you. If you have to cancel a meeting with a personal counsellor, please give as much notice as possible (preferably 48 hours).

**What services are available?**

**Personal Counsellors**

If you feel that you need support on personal and emotional matters, ACCESS counsellors are available on the telephone around the clock. Counsellors may help you reach a decision, find a way forward, sort out confused feelings, try out a different approach, suggest an alternative way of getting help or just help you find a better way of living with a problem that simply won't go away.

You can use the FREE CALL number as often as you need to and, if you prefer, speak to the same counsellor on a number of occasions, which is part of the service. Many people benefit from a counsellor's help because they are simply over-stretched at a particular time, but soon recover their usual balance. However, the ACCESS team is also equipped to deal with the most extreme levels of personal stress.
In talking to an ACCESS counsellor, it might become clear that a face-to-face meeting would be more useful.

You can make arrangements to see a counsellor, close to home or work. They will make every effort to arrange meetings at a location and time that is convenient for you. Their counsellors are all highly trained and experienced professionals and use problem-solving and personal development techniques.

When dealing with a situation the EAP provides for you to have up to four counselling sessions. Frequently, this is sufficient for you to feel back in control of the situation. However, where specialist or long term assistance is required, a referral to a specialist may be necessary.

**Who will know about it?**

Contact with ACCESS personal counsellors is confidential. Not only do counsellors take the duty of confidentiality seriously but they have a strict professional Code of Ethics which requires them to protect the identity of their clients.

**The identity of the employee using the service will not be disclosed.**

CEO Wollongong will not know who is using the service but will receive summary information to help evaluate the effectiveness of the EAP. General information under broad headings reflecting organisational trends and the number of employees who use the service, will be given to CEO Wollongong as it could make a positive contribution towards improving and developing our policies.

**This information cannot be traced back to individuals.**

If you have any questions about using this service, please feel free to call a member of the **Safety, Wellbeing and Professional Services Team** at CEO Wollongong. Further information can be obtained by accessing the Access web-site [www.accesspl.com.au](http://www.accesspl.com.au)

**How to contact ACCESS Programs?**

If you want to use the EAP, simply ring:

**1800 818 728 Free Call**

You do not need to identify yourself in the call. Just give the reference ‘CEO Wollongong’.