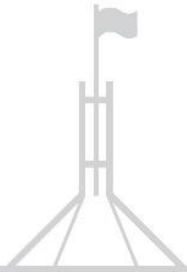




**Australian Government**



**Early Intervention Policy for *Members  
of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984*  
employees**

**APRIL 2022**

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**Early Intervention Policy for *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* employees**

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# 1. Introduction

1.1 The Department of Finance (Finance) is committed to contributing to a safe and healthy working environment for staff employed under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act employees).

1.2 This includes reducing the risk of workplace injury and illness through an integrated approach that focuses on preventing workplace harm, promoting the positive aspects of work and supporting employees who require assistance.

1.3 The implementation of early intervention in practice has proven to be effective in fostering health and supporting workplaces to demonstrate that they are committed to health and wellbeing of its workers. In general, health workers are more confident, engaged and productive.

1.4 This policy provides guidance to Parliamentarians, managers and MOP(S) Act employees to understand support frameworks available in the event a MOP(S) Act employee suffers from an illness or injury.

1.5 These frameworks support MOP(S) Act employees to stay in or return to work as soon as reasonably practicable through the provision of a variety of possible early intervention support.

## 2. Principles

2.1 This policy provides guidance to Parliamentarians, managers and MOP(S) Act employees on early intervention procedures.

2.2 Early intervention procedures have a wide range of benefits, including:

- recognising work is beneficial for people's health and wellbeing and being off work for long periods can have serious side effects
- making workplace adjustments for employees who require it to allow them work safely and productively, including enabling potential employees with a disability to perform the inherent requirements of their positions
- early reporting and intervention supports effective and timely recovery
- effective communication, collaboration and education is important in setting and aligning expectations and achieving health and wellbeing outcomes
- a strong focus on outcomes in consultation with the individual and stakeholders is key to achieving a successful outcome.

## 3. What is early intervention?

3.1 Early intervention is about identifying and responding to early warning signs and reports of illness or injury by providing assistance to employees to support them remaining safely in the workplace. It aims to reduce the impact and duration of illness or injury and is key to supporting employees in the workplace.

3.2 Early intervention does not impact a MOP(S) Act employee's ability to lodge a workers' compensation claim and should occur regardless of whether an employee has made a claim for worker's compensation.

3.3 Participating in early intervention is voluntary.

## 4. Benefits of early intervention

4.1 Early intervention programs have been found to have a positive effect for employees, including:

- improving recovery outcomes
- strengthening their capacity to remain at work
- minimising the length of time taken away from work
- reducing the likelihood of further absence due to sickness
- improving how they view the workplace.

4.2 Benefits for employing Parliamentarians include:

- promoting a productive and supportive work environment
- demonstrating that management is committed to workers
- increasing the likelihood of staff returning to or remaining work
- reducing the cost of incapacity and, in the long term, premiums
- reducing indirect costs such as lost productivity, recruitment and training costs for replacement staff.

## 5. Identifying early warning signs

5.1 Identifying early warning signs will help support MOP(S) Act employees who may be at risk of injury or illness.

5.2 There are behaviours and signs that employing Parliamentarians and/or managers can look out for that may indicate an employee or colleague may have, or be at the risk of, developing a physical or mental injury or illness.

### Behaviours

- unusual or erratic behaviour
- withdrawal from colleagues or not participating in work activities
- consuming more caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes or sedatives
- changes in ability, or inability to concentrate or make decision
- lapses in memory
- unplanned or increased number of absences from work
- conflict with team members or manager
- loss of confidence
- not completing work tasks.

### Physical symptoms

- symptoms of injury or illness, such as pain, difficulty doing physical tasks, reduced range of movement
- tiredness
- headaches
- difficulty sleeping
- sudden unexplained weight loss or gain
- dishevelled or significant and concerning change in appearance
- gastrointestinal illness
- rashes.

5.3 Further indicators an employee may require early intervention may be evident through:

- a request from the employee's medical practitioner
- referral of an issue by another MOP(S) Act employee

- ergonomic assessment findings
- reporting of a hazard and/or incident
- WHS Checklist reporting
- illness or injury that has the potential to impact an employee's ability to undertake normal duties
- an unscheduled absence of greater than 3 days.

## 6. How does it work

6.1 MOP(S) Act employees should report any work-related injury or illness or any illness that affects an employee's ability to perform their duties as soon as possible, to their Parliamentarian or manager.

6.2 Depending on the nature of the injury or illness, the employee may need to obtain medical evidence from a licensed medical practitioner outlining potential supports or workplace adjustments to support them in the workplace with their illness or injury.

6.3 Depending on the nature of the injury or illness, the employee may be referred to one or more of the support services outlined at clause 8 of this policy.

## 7. Work-related injury or illness

7.1 Access to early intervention services is generally only available for injuries or illness sustained while at work. Non-work related injuries or illnesses are generally excluded from this policy, however in limited circumstances this policy may apply. In those limited circumstance, the workplace adjustment policy may be applicable.

7.2 Access to early intervention programs are available for pre-existing conditions only in cases where the pre-existing condition is aggravated as a result or in the course of employment.

7.3 While an employee is not legally obliged to disclose a pre-existing condition, it is recommended to do so to facilitate early intervention and workplace adjustments, particularly where the condition could reasonably be expected to be aggravated by performing work related duties.

7.4 If an employee does not disclose a pre-existing condition prior to aggravation of that condition as a result of their employment, the employee may later provide evidence of the pre-existing condition.

7.5 Medical evidence from a licensed medical or allied health professional may be required in relation to that condition's exacerbation.

## 8. Services

7.1 Access to early intervention services may be appropriate for some MOP(S) Act employees. Depending on the nature of the injury or illness, the following support services may be recommended:

- referral to a licensed medical or allied health professional
- referral to an independent medical examiner for specialist testing
- recommendations for a workplace adjustments
- ergonomic or workplace assessment by the WHS Service provider
- referral to a workplace rehabilitation provider to undertake an initial needs assessment, provide return to work support, and provide other relevant services.

- use of the employee assistance program (EAP) for personal or work-related issues in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement
  - employees and their immediate family and/or household members may access up to three (3) counselling sessions per issue, for up to two (2) issues in a 12-month period
  - if the EAP provider recommends additional EAP counselling session in addition to the aforementioned, Finance approval will be required.
- access to NewAccess Workplaces - an evidence based, free and confidential mental health coaching service available to all MOP(S) Act employees
  - this service include an initial 45-60 minute assessment and up to five (5) 30 minute mental health coaching session with two (f) follow-u sessions at one and six month intervals after completion
- a team diagnostic, mediation or conflict resolution service.
- access to the Assure Management Referral which allows a manager to engage a MOP(S) Act employee with a targeted review and/or counselling through Assure program to assist the employee with managing work, personal or wellbeing concerns that are impacting them or their workplace behaviour and/or work performance
  - management referral may be helpful in situations including:
    - transitioning back to work
    - building communication skills
    - managing specific behaviours that are affecting performance
    - supporting emotional difficulties
    - other concerns that are seen to be impacting an employee's health and wellbeing and/or workplace behaviour

## 9. Reimbursement of minor medical expenses

9.1 Where medical or allied health treatment is required for a workplace illness or injury, Finance may approve reimbursement for minor medical expenses under the Enterprise Agreement. Discretionary Payments for medical expenses will only be considered if the evidence provided supports the recommendation of the treatment and is from a legally qualified medical practitioner. Endorsement from the employee's Parliamentarian or authorised officer may also be required.

## 10. Leave

10.1 A MOP(S) Act employee is able to access leave entitlements in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.

## 11. Roles and responsibilities

MOP(S) Act Employees are responsible for:

- taking reasonable care to manage their own health and safety
- familiarising themselves with this policy and related procedures
- advising their employer of any expected absences from work due to their injury or illness, and ensure all absences are actioned in accordance with the leave policies and procedures.
- providing information and medical certification, about an illness or injury that may impact their ability to perform their duties, to their employer as soon as is reasonably practicable

- cooperating with other stakeholders to facilitate any early intervention support required to achieve a positive recovery and/or outcome
- discuss any concerns regarding workplace early intervention with a MaPS Case Manager

11.1 While there is no legal obligation for an employee to disclose medical conditions or disabilities to their employing Parliamentarian, an employee is required to disclose their disability if it affects their ability to do their job safely.

11.2 It may be practical in some situations to disclose disabilities if a workplace adjustment is required for productive and safe work.

#### Parliamentarians and managers are responsible for:

- developing a workplace culture that aims to prevent injury, supports employees and shows a commitment to early intervention, rehabilitation and return to work
- showing commitment to implementing this policy to effectively eliminate or minimise health and safety risks in the workplace by taking steps to address any identified issues
- communicate the existence and benefit of the early intervention program with employees
- at the earliest sign of injury or illness, facilitating discussions with the employee to determine how they might support them, regardless of the employee's intention to lodge a worker's compensation claim
- suggesting the option of services such as the EAP or equivalent outside professional advice
- support MaPS Case Managers in performing their duties and achieving positive early intervention outcomes
- support employees and their teams through the early intervention and recovery process
- assist with the provision of reasonable workplace adjustments where required
- maintain the privacy of the employee in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*.

#### Finance is responsible for:

- facilitating MOP(S) Act employees' recovery and/or return to work as soon as possible following an injury or illness
- providing advice and guidance to the employee and supervisor on early intervention, recovery and human resource matters
- connecting and coordinating with all other stakeholders to ensure that the employee's needs in recovery and return to work are considered
- where appropriate, facilitating health assessments and/or the engagement of a workplace rehabilitation provider or any diagnostic services
- initiating, coordinating and monitoring the intervention, recovery, rehabilitation and return to work process in consultation with all stakeholders
- maintaining appropriate records and ensure appropriate documentation of the early intervention process.
- facilitating the reimbursement of expenses incurred by the employee as part of an approved workplace early intervention process

## 12. Incident management

12.1 Incidents must be logged in the Incident Management System (Skytrust) in order to measure the effectiveness of the early intervention programs.

## 13. Related legislation and guidelines

- *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984*
- *Disability and Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Privacy Act 1988*
- Workplace Adjustment Policy

## 14. Further Assistance

For queries relating to the operation of this policy please contact [MOPSWHS@finance.gov.au](mailto:MOPSWHS@finance.gov.au)



# Attachment A: Supports and resources

## In an emergency

If you are in a life threatening situation contact Emergency Services on 000

## HR Advice and Support Team, MaPS, Finance

The HR Advice and Support Team offers access to a team of trained case managers who can provide support and advice on options to Parliamentarians and employees engaged under the MOP(S) Act by calling (02) 62153333 or via email on [MOPSupport@finance.gov.au](mailto:MOPSupport@finance.gov.au).

## Employee Assistance Provider (EAP)

You can access EAP services for work or personal issues or to access the Manager Support Program by calling 1800 945 145 or by emailing [info@assureprograms.com.au](mailto:info@assureprograms.com.au) to make a booking. Available to MOP(S) Act employees' families, friends and colleagues.

<u>Authority</u>	<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Contact Details</u>
<u>Comcare</u>	<u>Commonwealth</u>	Website: <a href="http://www.comcare.gov.au">www.comcare.gov.au</a> Email: <a href="mailto:general.enquiries@comcare.gov.au">general.enquiries@comcare.gov.au</a> Phone: 1300 366 979
<u>SafeWork NSW</u>	<u>New South Wales</u>	Website: <a href="http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au">www.safework.nsw.gov.au</a> Email: <a href="mailto:contact@safework.nsw.gov.au">contact@safework.nsw.gov.au</a> Phone: 13 10 50
<u>WorkSafe Victoria</u>	<u>Victoria</u>	Website: <a href="http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au">www.worksafe.vic.gov.au</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@worksafe.vic.gov.au">info@worksafe.vic.gov.au</a> Phone: 1800 136 089 or 03 9641 1444
<u>Workplace Health and Safety Queensland</u>	<u>Queensland</u>	Workplace Health and Safety Queensland Website: <a href="http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au">www.worksafe.qld.gov.au</a> Phone: 1300 362 128
<u>SafeWork SA</u>	<u>South Australia</u>	Website: <a href="http://www.safework.sa.gov.au">www.safework.sa.gov.au</a> Email: <a href="mailto:help.safework@sa.gov.au">help.safework@sa.gov.au</a> Phone: 1300 365 255
<u>WorkSafe WA</u>	<u>Western Australia</u>	Website: <a href="http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au">www.commerce.wa.gov.au</a>

		<p>WorkSafe Email: <a href="mailto:safety@commerce.wa.gov.au">safety@commerce.wa.gov.au</a></p> <p>Phone: 1300 307 877 (within Western Australia)</p>
<a href="#">WorkSafe Tasmania</a>	<a href="#">Tasmania</a>	<p>Website: <a href="http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au">www.worksafe.tas.gov.au</a></p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au">wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au</a></p> <p>Phone: 1300 366 322 (within Tasmania)</p>
<a href="#">WorkSafe ACT</a>	<a href="#">Australian Capital Territory</a>	<p>WorkSafe ACT Website: <a href="http://www.worksafe.act.gov.au">www.worksafe.act.gov.au</a></p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:worksafe@act.gov.au">worksafe@act.gov.au</a></p> <p>Phone: 02 6207 3000</p>
<a href="#">NT WorkSafe</a>	<a href="#">Northern Territory</a>	<p>Website: <a href="http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au">www.worksafe.nt.gov.au</a></p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:ntworksafe@nt.gov.au">ntworksafe@nt.gov.au</a></p> <p>Phone: 1800 019 115</p>