



**An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí**  
**Sheachadadh PFN agus Athchóirithe**  
Department of Public Expenditure  
NDP Delivery and Reform

Seirbhís Chúnaimh  
d'Fhostaithe na Státseirbhíse



Civil Service Employee  
Assistance Service

# **Civil Service Employee Assistance Service**

## Code of Practice

## Mission Statement

### Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS)

To offer a quality resource and support service for all staff which positively affects both individual health and well-being and organisational effectiveness

## Introduction

The CSEAS Code of Practice articulates the principles, values and standards required by all Employee Assistance Officers in their role. All Employee Assistance Officers must comply with this Code of Practice. The codes laid out are applicable regardless of the service modality used (e.g., in person, telephone, text, online video).

This code is presented as a set of enforceable rules of conduct and practice for members of the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service.

Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of the standards detailed is not a defence against a charge of misconduct or disciplinary action.

## Definitions

In this Code of Practice, the following terms have the meanings given to them below:

- **“EAO”** means Employee Assistance Officer
- **“CSEAS”** means Civil Service Employee Assistance Service
- **“EA Services”** mean Employee Assistance Services
- **“Client”** means any client of the CSEAS: a HR, line management or Chief Medical Officer referred client or a self-referred client to whom Employee Assistance services are being or have been provided
- **“Client Record”** means all information recorded in the Case Management System (CMS) by the CSEAS relating to any client

## Professional Competence and Responsibility

### Overall Principles

Overall principles outlines the core values of the provision of services.

These core values are as follows:

**Autonomy:** EAOs will, at all times, respect the client’s autonomy and safeguard the client’s right to privacy and confidentiality, subject to published confidentiality exceptions. EAOs will offer an impartial, professional relationship with their clients and at all times respect a clients’ personal views, values and autonomy in so far as it does not breach the EAO’s own right to a safe working environment free from discrimination and harassment.

**Nonmaleficence:** EAOs will avoid knowingly doing harm in the carrying out of their responsibilities.

**Beneficence:** EAOs will work for the good of the individual by promoting good mental health and well-being and protecting and promoting the safety and well-being of all persons, including clients, managers, colleagues and others.

**Justice:** EAOs will treat all clients equitably and foster fairness and equality.

### Fitness to Practice

- I. EAOs will not engage in the provision of EA services at a time when their physical or psychological condition or their ability or professional judgement is impaired by the influence of any substance or illness.
- II. EAOs must: a) look after their physical, emotional and psychological health b) consult with an appropriate professional if their judgment or performance is or may be adversely affected by illness, addiction, emotional distress or medication. They must follow advice to avoid harm to service users, themselves and others. EAOs must limit their practice or stop practicing if their performance or health could have a negative effect on service users.
- III. EAOs will at all times work to the highest standards in their profession, conduct themselves in a professional, respectful and informed manner and will show a strong commitment to high standards in their work. This means that the EAO will recognise the boundaries imposed by their own competence, experience and present level of training. EAOs will provide only such services and use only those techniques in which they have been qualified by education, training and experience. The EAO will suggest onwards referrals where appropriate.
- IV. EAOs will engage in a minimum of quarterly external professional and monthly peer supervision as mandated by the CSEAS Manager

### Professional Standards

- I. EAOs will comply with requirements set out in Circular 26/04: Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.
- II. The EAO is prohibited from accepting gifts. However, small gifts are often given as a token of respect and gratitude. When determining whether to accept a gift from a client the EAO will take into account the therapeutic relationship, the SIPO guidelines and code of standards, the monetary value of the gift, the client's motivation for giving the gift, and the EAOs motivation for wanting to accept or decline the gift. Monetary gifts are strictly prohibited at all times, both during and preceding the professional support relationship, and should be reported immediately to the CSEAS Manager.
- III. To preserve the integrity of the CSEAS the best interest of the client will always be upheld while giving due regard to the organisation's (the Civil Service) duty and obligation to meet its own responsibility.
- IV. EAOs have a right to work in a safe environment, free from aggression, threats of harassment and harassment of any kind. EAOs have the right to terminate or suspend engagement if their safety and welfare is compromised in anyway.

- V. EAOs will not be subject to, knowingly participate in, or condone any kind of discrimination on whatever grounds. EAOs have the right to discontinue a session if there is persistent and overt discriminatory behaviour or language used e.g. racism, sexism, etc.
- VI. EAOs will take due care in regard to dual or multiple relationships with clients particularly if such non-therapeutic relationships have a potential to impair the professional support relationship. If, due to unforeseen factors, such multiple relationships have arisen, the EAO will advise the CSEAS manager and if required, necessary steps will be taken to resolve a potential conflict of interest.
- VII. EAOs are prohibited from engaging in professional support relationships with friends or family members. EAOs will not knowingly offer CSEAS support to a service user with whom they have had a personal relationship that could compromise their professional practice.
- VIII. EAOs are strictly prohibited from engaging in any romantic or sexual relationship, contact or sexual intimacy with a client, or a relation of the client, during the therapeutic relationship, or during the two years following the termination of the therapeutic relationship or following the cessation of employment with the CSEAS.
- IX. EAOs will be conscious of maintaining the integrity of the client/EAO relationship in their everyday dealings with colleagues.
- X. EAOs will take an active role in promoting the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service across all Departments/ Offices and regions.

#### Client Engagement and Record Management

- I. EAOs will ensure all clients have adequate information about the service and the support relationship upon their access of the service. Information will be conveyed clearly to and understood by the client, as far as possible, prior to service provision.
- II. EAOs will provide services to clients in the context of free and informed consent (i.e. clients understand and consent with no pressure from another party e.g. manager, HR etc.). The EAO will take all reasonable steps to ensure that consent is not given under conditions of undue pressure. The EAO will respect the clients' rights to refuse or withdraw consent at any time.
- III. EAOs will seek and collect only data a) for which consent has been obtained and b) for the provision of service and the continuity of service.
- IV. EAOs will ensure client records are routinely and reliably updated with particular emphasis on a client's unique identifiable information (name / email / phone no).
- V. All records created and held will comply with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, the GDPR and Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018.
- VI. EAOs will ensure that confidentiality is appropriately maintained in storing, accessing and disposing of records.
- VII. Records are stored digitally in a password-protected database. Client information is stored under case number. EAOs do not store any paper based client information.
- VIII. The Data Protection Acts provide EAOs with a legal responsibility to:
  - obtain and process personal data fairly
  - keep it only for one or more specified and explicit lawful purposes
  - process it only in ways compatible with the purposes for which it was given initially

- keep personal data safe and secure
  - keep data accurate, complete and up to date
  - ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
  - retain it no longer than is necessary for the specified purpose or purposes, and
  - provide a copy of his/her personal data to an individual, on request
- IX. Records will be retained for a period of 10 years from the time of case closure after which time client records are destroyed.

## Client care

- I. EAOs will use language in any service communication that conveys respect for the dignity of persons and peoples in all spoken, written, electronic, or printed communication.
- II. EAOs will treat all clients equally, valuing diversity. They will consistently review their own cultural identity and biases, continue to develop their knowledge and skillsets in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion and will always consider the clients' context while providing a meaningful and respectful service.
- III. EAOs will not allow any personal obligation or prospect of gain or loss, or any other circumstances which might present a conflict of interest, to affect their professional conduct.
- IV. Case closure is indicated when, through collaborative discussion, it becomes clear that the client no longer needs the service, or when the transaction of information requested is complete, or where there has been no contact for a period of one month and no further scheduled appointments. This will be noted in the client file.
- V. EAOs will inform clients of the conflict of interest procedure and will adopt the procedure set out in Appendix 1 when dealing with two or more parties involved in conflict situation(s).
- VI. EAOs will, from time to time, provide group work if deemed appropriate following consultation and assessment. The EAO will select group members whose needs and goals are compatible with the pre-determined objectives of the group work. The EAO will determine the suitability of group work and the suitability of those in attendance to ensure
  - a) members will not impede the group process
  - b) the well-being of all group members will be maintained and
  - c) that any issues arising with the group work process which are incompatible with the pre-determined objectives of the group work or the wellbeing of members are appropriately addressed.

## Confidentiality

- I. As the CSEAS is a centralised shared service, confidentiality is between the client and the CSEAS (rather than with an individual EAO). All EAOs will respect confidences about the clients of colleagues.
- II. Information and personal data disclosed by employees to the CSEAS remain confidential (exceptions are listed below) and will not be disclosed to a third party outside of the CSEAS without the prior knowledge and consent of the individual.

- III. The CSEAS duty of confidentiality remains after death of a service user. Any instance where information pertaining to a deceased service user is requested should be referred to the CSEAS Manager.

Exceptions to confidentiality

- Life-threatening situations to the individual, other parties or the public
  - Where there is a statutory responsibility to report
  - Where disclosure is required by a court or legal process
  - Where non-disclosure of information could compromise the integrity of the CSEAS and / or civil service, the safety of the EAO or if there is sound legal justification for disclosure e.g. safety or security critical situations where there non-disclosure would result in potential harm
  - Where the CSEAS becomes aware of a breach in criminal law disclosure may be necessary.
- IV. EAOs will, as a matter of course, advise clients of any situation where limitations of confidentiality might arise. As far as possible, the EAO will seek the client's cooperation in instances where disclosure is necessary, unless doing so would further compromise the safety of the client or others.
- V. Where an individual is formally referred to the CSEAS by either HR, Line Management or the Chief Medical Officer, confirmation of attendance/engagement will be made available to the referring party. With the exception of risk to life situations, where the CSEAS will act to protect life, or where disclosure is necessary as per exceptions to confidentiality, any further proposed feedback will be agreed with, and consented to by, the staff member in advance. Where an individual chooses not to avail of CSEAS support, this will similarly be relayed to the referring party. There will be no feedback provided in the case of a suggested referral by any of the above parties
- VI. Management referrals – The CSEAS accepts referrals where
- There is a threat to life
  - The referral has been recommended by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer
  - The staff member has provided explicit consent to the referring manager in situations where the wellbeing of that staff member has invoked concern.

## Provision of online support

Online/remote/telephone support is a recognised medium of the provision of support by the CSEAS.

- I. All EAOs will be proficient in the use of the recognised and official platforms of their Department and those used for the provision of support.
- II. EAOs will use only Department provided devices for the provision of online/remote support. The use of personal devices for the provision of service or contact with the client is strictly prohibited.
- III. EAOs will use only Department and CSEAS approved platforms for the provision of support.
- IV. EAOs will be familiar with and adhere to the DPENDPR ICT policies here ([hyperlink](#))
- V. One to one support sessions will be arranged and facilitated by the EAO only and not by the client unless there are extenuating circumstances and it is approved by the service manager.
- VI. Recording of one to one remote/virtual/onsite sessions is strictly prohibited. The EAO reserves the right to discontinue a session if there is, suspected or confirmed, continued presence of an unauthorised person, intrusion or if there is a recording device present.
- VII. EAOs will ensure their own environment, when providing support, is free from home devices such as, but not limited to, Google Home, Alexa or any Assistant Apps on phones etc.
- VIII. The use of messenger programmes, which do not have end-to-end encryption, are prohibited.
- IX. The EAO will ensure there is sufficient broadband to support a secure connection prior to initiating an online session
- X. EAOs will ensure prior to confirming a virtual appointment that the client has received, read and understood the rights and responsibilities of the EAO and the client. Please see here

## Social Media

- I. The use of all social media platforms, e.g. Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Threads etc., to communicate with clients is **strictly prohibited**. The use of personal social media platforms to advertise the service of the work of an EAO is strictly prohibited.
- II. A social media blog/commentary of EAO working life is prohibited
- III. EAOs should maintain professional boundaries in the use of social media to preserve public trust and confidence in their profession.

## Protection of children and vulnerable adults

EAOs must comply with requirements for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. All CSEAS staff must be aware of, and comply with, the national guidelines and legislation for the protection of children and be aware of and comply with the national guidelines and legislation for the protection of vulnerable adults. EAOs must report concerns they have in relation to the welfare of children or vulnerable adults to the appropriate authorities.

## CPD

EAOs must keep their professional knowledge and skills up to date ensuring that their knowledge, skills and performance are of a high standard and relevant to the provision of Employee Assistance support. EAOs are required to participate in continuing professional development (CPD) on an ongoing basis. Evidence of same must be recorded on their PMDS form



## Appendix 1

### CSEAS Conflict of Interest procedures

When it becomes clear to an EAO that a client is involved in a conflict situation with another member of staff, and the other staff member may in time wish to use the CSEAS, the following approach is recommended:

- I. The first client will be advised that in the interests of impartiality, it is more appropriate for EAOs not to deal with both clients involved in a conflict and a different EAO will provide the service to each of the parties, if required.
- II. The first client to approach the CSEAS centrally will be assigned to an EAO as per usual procedure.
- III. The first client to approach the designated EAO may continue with this EAO based on their availability. CSEAS reserve the right to refer to an EAO who is not the designated EAO.
- IV. If the other party, the second client, approaches the CSEAS, they will be offered the name of another EAO who will provide the service
- V. On occasion, and with review, the designated EAO may be in a position to deal with both parties in a particular situation. The EAO and the CSEAS manager will determine the most appropriate course of action.
- VI. Should there be more than 2 parties involved in a conflict situation, each EAO will adopt the above course of action, adjusting the procedure appropriately to ensure impartiality for all parties concurrently.