

One *Sun* Wellness

W

WORKPLACE

A

ABSENCE

M

MANAGEMENT

Handbook



LifeAssist.

Help at Hand

LifeAssist provides a one stop solution. WAM works seamlessly with the One Sun Wellness EWP (Employee Wellbeing Programme) – helping people to address underlying issues that affect sick absence.



Improve your performance at work



Build a support network



Cope with stress, anxiety and depression



Build your immune system



Get an eating plan from a Dietician



Get an exercise prescription from a Biokineticist



Overcome financial obstacles



Deal with drug dependency



Survive the trauma of health scares

Find out more about the Employee Wellbeing Programme in the One Sun Wellness EWP Handbook.

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A healthy partnership

LifeAssist is privileged to partner with your organisation to provide independent and professional health and wellness solutions that enhance the Employee Value Proposition [EVP] and satisfy corporate governance imperatives for companies to know and manage health risks.

This handbook focuses on Workplace Absence Management [WAM] – a proactive programme that embraces the reality that employees can become ill and recognises the need to balance the right of the employee to take Sick Leave with their responsibility to fulfil their employment contract. WAM also supports justifiable Sick Leave, and assists to curb abuse.

Within the context of WAM, there is a shift away from ‘controlling absence’ to ‘motivating and maximizing attendance’. The objective is to identify patterns of Sick Leave and reach out to those who can benefit from health coaching, counselling and advice. Early identification of health and lifestyle risks, and the cooperation of the line managers and the employee, is vital.

Unmanaged Sick Leave erodes potential, compromises quality of life and threatens the capacity of talent and the sustainability of the business.

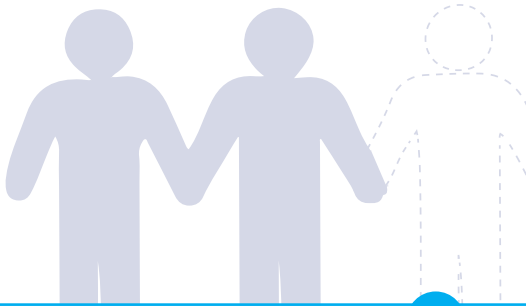
In essence, LifeAssist exists to promote a healthy, happy workplace where people thrive and organisations shine.



The business case for WAM

Research on the impact of sick absence on business is compelling. In South Africa, the cost of sick absence is estimated at > R20 billion per year, accounts for 3% of payroll, with indirect costs estimated at 8 times higher than the salary bill.

The Mecer/Kronos Study: 2010 quantifies a direct cost of 8.7% of payroll – essentially the cost of lost time – with 5.8% of this cost driven by unplanned and planned sick absence and 2.9% of the cost being due to extended Sick Leave. Indirect costs are substantial, albeit difficult to quantify, and include the impact on the cost of employee benefits and the significant toll that sick absence takes on the wellbeing of colleagues, absentees and their families.

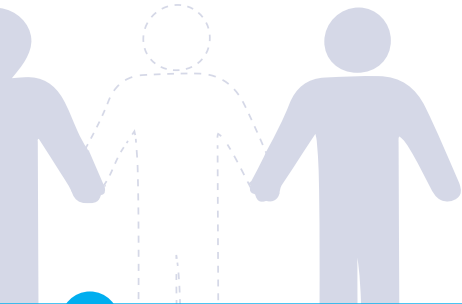


The power of One

Recurrent and extended Sick Leave patterns of one individual have a knock-on effect.

The impact on colleagues:

- Colleagues who absorb the workload of the absentee become overburdened.
- Diminished capacity to fulfil own job responsibilities may lead to performance management issues.
- Team morale can be undermined by resentment.
- Personal and family-life can be affected by work-life imbalance.
- The incidences of Sick Leave can increase as immune systems are compromised, exposing employees to the risk of acute, chronic and life-threatening illness.
- Relentless stress and fatigue can cause burnout.



The risk to the business

DIRECT COSTS

- Overburdened teams are about 22% less effective.
- Overtime increases payroll cost by 22-44%.
- When a supervisor chips in the cost is estimated at 19% higher than the absentee's cost.
- A replacement employee is only 71% as efficient in unplanned absence, and 79% as efficient in planned and extended absence.
- A temporary placement can cost the company about 15% higher than the remuneration rate while they build organisational memory.

INDIRECT COSTS

- Unhappiness in the workplace.
- Reduced capacity and increased staff turnover.
- Compromised reputation of the business when the quality of services or products is inferior and/or business projects are delayed.
- Client dissatisfaction arises from disappointment and loss of continuity in relationships.

When the reasons underlying sick absence are addressed, the business, employees, customers, and suppliers benefit from healthy and engaged people who have the energy to demonstrate their potential and fulfil their purpose at work.



Ethical principles

Compliance

The company and LifeAssist have entered into the WAM contract with confidence that the intentions, protocols and interventions are legitimate, without prejudice and necessary to:

- Entrench a culture of care.
- Fulfil the corporate governance imperative to measure, monitor, manage and mitigate health risks to the business and its people.

All interventions carried out by LifeAssist comply with The Protection of Personal Information Act 'POPI' (2013), the Constitution, the Labour Relations Act, Employment Equity Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Company Leave Policy and professional ethics.

In the context of WAM, LifeAssist is entitled to:

- receive data from the company that identifies Sick Leave patterns (to flag if individuals)
- contact employees who meet the criteria
- accept a manager referral without prior consent of the employee
- identify underlying issues
- offer professional coaching, counselling and advice
- refer employees to relevant third parties, with consent
- provide feedback on an individual case, with consent; and
- submit aggregated Group reports to the company.



Freedom of choice

Participation is voluntary. An employee has the right to participate in the process or to decline. However, with or without the assistance of WAM, the absentee will be required to address the issues underlying their sick absence and can expect to be contacted if their Sick Leave patterns or circumstances qualify for intervention – whether they are flagged or referred.

The right to professionalism

Everyone who engages with LifeAssist receives the same careful consideration and professional assistance from qualified consultants, advisors and health professionals.

Independence and neutrality

The role of LifeAssist is without prejudice. We are independent and will not be drawn into employee relations or domestic issues.

Privacy and confidentiality

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of LifeAssist. It is non-negotiable and there can be zero compromise. There are serious consequences if confidentiality is breached.

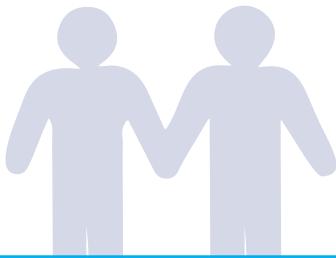


LifeAssist will not reveal any personal information unless:

- The individual gives consent – in writing or verbal (voice recording).
- The law requires disclosure – e.g. a court order for records.
- It is believed that life or safety is threatened by failure to disclose – such as a risk of harm to self (suicide) or others (homicide), a threat to safety at the workplace, domestic violence or in the case of neglect or abuse of children.

WAM is well positioned to work with your company to:

- Entrench a culture of care
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Reduce the Sick Absence Rate (less time off work)
- Improve morale and teamwork
- Improve life management skills
- Protect the wellbeing of employees
- Transfer knowledge of health conditions and treatment options
- Identify health and lifestyle risks
- Proactively manage incapacity
- Report disability cases earlier
- Increase enrolment in rehabilitation



How does WAM work?

The intention

The intention is to monitor and manage sick absence on behalf of the company by harnessing the synergy of technology and personal touch to identify and respond to the underlying issues that determine Sick Leave patterns.

WAM does not interfere with company policy.

Key success factors

- Commitment of senior management
- Active involvement of line managers
- A well-defined and transparent Sick Leave Policy
- HR involvement in relation to the Sick Leave Policy and Employee Relations standard practice
- All employees to be aware of WAM and trust the intentions

Identification and referral

People who can benefit from the counselling and advice of a WAM Health Coach are identified by computer-generated flags derived from sick absence data supplied by the company, a referral from a line manager, or through self-referral.



Health Coaching

Irrespective of the referral method, the protocol for intervention is standard in that a qualified health coach makes contact with the employee to explain the intention of the outreach and obtain permission to proceed with a telephonic interview – emphasising that participation is voluntary.

The intervention is conducted by qualified health professionals with counselling and coaching experience.

The intention is to identify underlying reasons for sick absence, understand treatments and establish the prognosis.

Advice and counselling is offered to equip the employee to address the issues and make informed choices regarding their health and wellbeing.

Where indicated, referral to relevant resources can be made.

Follow-up care calls would be indicated if the issues causing absence have not been resolved.

WAM does not diagnose medical conditions or prescribe medication.



The Absence Management Process

Early identification and management of risk

DATA FEED

- LifeAssist receives payroll and Sick Leave data monthly

ID OF HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS

- Red flagging process (manager referrals, system generated flags)
- Assessment and monitoring of data

TELEPHONIC MENTORING

One-on-one, voluntary, independent interaction with absentee in a non-threatening, confidential environment

REFERRAL

To relevant third parties – e.g. EWP, Disability Insurer via the line manager, Medical Aid and Disease Management, onsite clinic, other healthcare professionals

TRACKING OF OUTCOMES

- Compliance monitoring
- Follow-up contacts

REPORTING

- Quarterly Group Report: aggregated absence trend analysis
- Intervention and clinical outcomes
- Manager Feedback Report



Turnaround times

Making contact with absentees

LifeAssist endeavours to make contact with an absentee within 48 business hours.

If the absentee cannot be reached within this time, feedback will be provided to the referring manager and other avenues will be explored.

When follow up coaching is indicated, LifeAssist will attempt to contact the absentee for a maximum of three times. If we are not successful, the referring manager will be informed with a view to assist us to reach the absentee.

Manager feedback report

The report is provided within 48 business hours after all the relevant parties have been interviewed (e.g. absentee, manager, healthcare provider).

Group report

The Quarterly Report, cumulative to Annual Report is provided within six weeks of the close of the Quarter.



Referrals

System generated flags

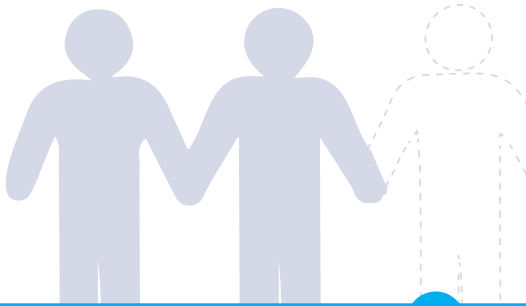
Computer generated flags alert WAM when an employee has taken more than five consecutive days of Sick Leave, are often off sick and/or have used up their Sick Leave allocation. While these flags are helpful, the data is retrospective (usually once an employee has returned to work).

The personal telephonic intervention follows.

Manager referral

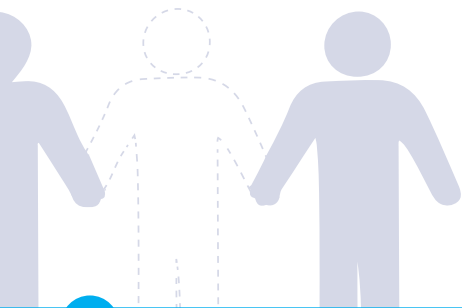
Participation of line managers is a critical success factor. Managers are invited to familiarise themselves with WAM so that they can interact constructively with their people and the programme. Manager orientation training is available from LifeAssist to equip managers to fulfil this role effectively.

WAM is most effective when a person can be contacted while he/she is off work as the knowledge, insight or referral for care could improve the health outcome and hasten return to work.



WAM can intervene proactively and express the company's care and concern when managers refer employees as soon as they become aware of these circumstances:

- Admission to hospital
- Diagnosed chronic illness
- > 5 consecutive days Sick Leave
- Disciplinary process
- Exhausted Sick Leave
- Frequent Sick Leave
- Health-related issue – e.g. lifestyle
- Organisational issue – e.g. burnout, conflict, stress
- Disability – early identification
- Suspicion about Sick Leave abuse/improbable excuses



Manager Referral Process

IDENTIFICATION

Manager identifies an absentee who can benefit from WAM.

OPTIONAL:
Manager Consultation with WAM

ADMINISTRATION

Download WAM Referral Form from website
(refer to inside front cover)

**Resource Centre>Your programme forms
>WAM Manager Referral Form**

Or request a form via wam@lifeassist.co.za

MANAGER FEEDBACK REPORT

Generated by WAM once the protocol has been completed.

If there is contact with an absentee after the report, WAM generates an updated report.

If absentee declines WAM support, the manager is notified.

CONSENT TO PROCEED

Absentee consents to health coaching, WAM engagement with treating health professional/s etc, feedback to nominated manager/HR, and if necessary, referral to third parties.

REFERRAL

Manager informs the absentee of the referral and role of WAM.

Manager completes the form.
There is no need for the absentee to sign the form.

RIGHT TO DECLINE

Absentee has a right to decline WAM support. Onus on absentee to manage underlying issues.

WAM ACTIVATION

WAM contacts absentee to offer coaching and obtain permission to proceed. Absentee has the right to decline WAM support.

CONTACTING WAM

Manager sends form to LifeAssist. Preferably with sick certificate/notes.

EMAIL wam@lifeassist.co.za
FAX/SCAN 0860 08 04 88

Manager consultation

Referring managers can benefit from telephonic consultation and coaching. This may be helpful when initiating a referral, facilitating contact with the employee, responding to the feedback report or when it is necessary to make operational accommodations and minimise the impact on the team.



Feedback following a manager referral

A referring manager can expect a written process report. Content is determined by each case, but usually includes:

- Sick Leave patterns
- Summary of interaction with the employee – contact, consent and cooperation
- If the employee is receiving treatment
- Current impact of absence on work functioning
- Prognosis: Indicates prospects of a good recovery (acute short-term or more long-term)
- Absence coach recommendations in terms of intervention/s and referral/s
- Is a follow-up contact required?
- Recommended plan of action
- Referral to relevant wellness partners

No personal information, including diagnosis, is provided without the consent of the employee.

Self-referral

Employees are welcome to get in touch with a WAM Health Coach for telephonic advice when they are concerned about their health or want to learn more about:

- Medical procedures
- Treatment
- Chronic conditions
- Health and lifestyle risks
- Disability or incapacity

Contact details are provided on the inside cover of this booklet.



Third party referral

WAM offers an inclusive solution by engaging with relevant role players such as the company, the employee, the medical aid funder and disability insurer, so that the value of the health partnership is realised.

For example:

- If there is a possible temporary or permanent disability indicated, referral can be made to the disability provider with permission from the employee. Referral to Disability/PHI may be indicated if an employee is off more than 3 consecutive weeks, frequently off-sick, IOD, progressive/chronic condition, unable to perform tasks at work upon return from illness/injury.
- If there is a chronic condition underlying sick absence, it would be appropriate to refer the employee to the medical aid scheme or disease management programme (if membership is in place) or to community healthcare services.
- If there is a psychological or social issue, referral for counselling and advice would be appropriate.
- If there is a need to review medical treatment, the employee would be encouraged to consult their preferred medical practitioner or seek a second opinion.

Verification of sick certificates

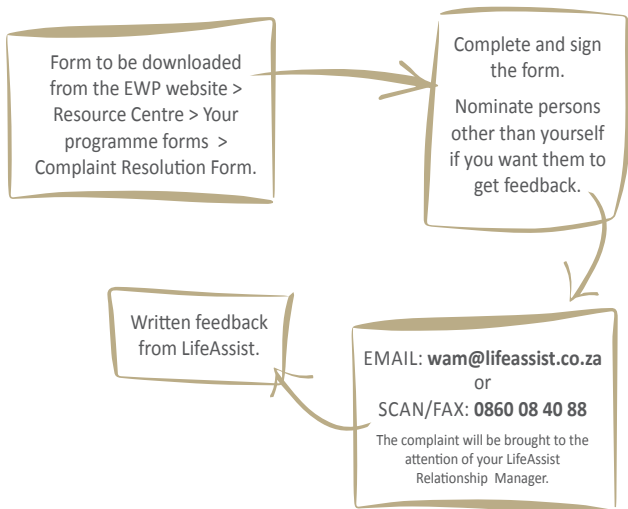
If there is concern about validity of sick certificates/sick notes, managers or HR may forward them to WAM by email [wam@lifeassist.co.za]. Astute health professionals review sick certificates to establish authenticity.



Complaint Resolution Process

If anyone is not happy with the service, LifeAssist needs to know. We take complaints seriously and welcome feedback as it helps us to review quality and efficacy of our programmes.

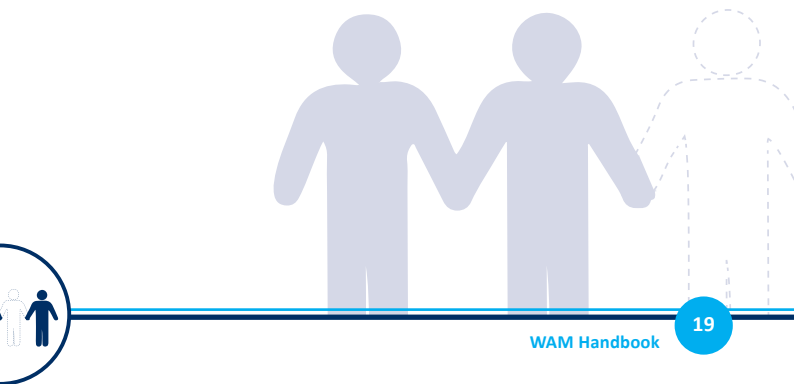
The investigation starts when we receive the completed Complaint Resolution Form. The information on this form speeds up the process as it permits LifeAssist to retrieve personal information contained in various media such as voice recordings, case notes or clinical records, and nominates the recipients of the feedback report.



Reporting and Monitoring

Quarterly reports reflect aggregated group data – highlighting the number and nature of contacts (system generated, manager referrals, manager feedback reports, follow-up calls), referrals to other resources and reasons for absence.

Historic Sick Leave data is analysed and forms the baseline for tracking efficacy as the programme matures. Monitoring enables organisations to compare results year-on-year, identify trends and measure the impact on the sick absence rate, and return on investment.



Costs and Exclusions

Costs associated with the role of LifeAssist in WAM are covered by your company, and include:

- Consultation with line managers
- Telephone counselling and advice to absentees by experienced health coaches
- Sick certificate verification
- Referral to relevant service providers that are associated with health and wellbeing
- Statistical analysis and aggregated reporting

The following services fall outside the scope of WAM:

- Health coaching from anyone who is not appointed by LifeAssist
- Face-to-face consultation with health professionals
- Medication
- Diagnostic tests
- Hospitalisation
- Rehabilitation
- Financial assistance

When a case is assessed as being outside the scope of WAM, LifeAssist may suggest that the beneficiary gets help from an appropriate service provider.

It is the choice of the absentee to take this further. The individual is responsible for any costs that may arise from these additional services.

Members of a medical aid scheme are urged to be familiar with the rules, benefits and claims process.





A Helping Hand

When sick absence affects the wellbeing of the company and its people, line managers and employees are invited to contact LifeAssist for consultation, health coaching and counselling.

Call: 0860 111 322 (SA) • +27 11 912 1198 (INT)

Fax: 0860 084 088

Email: wam@lifeassist.co.za

Monday to Friday, excluding Public Holidays | 08:00 – 17:00

MANAGER REFERRAL FORM

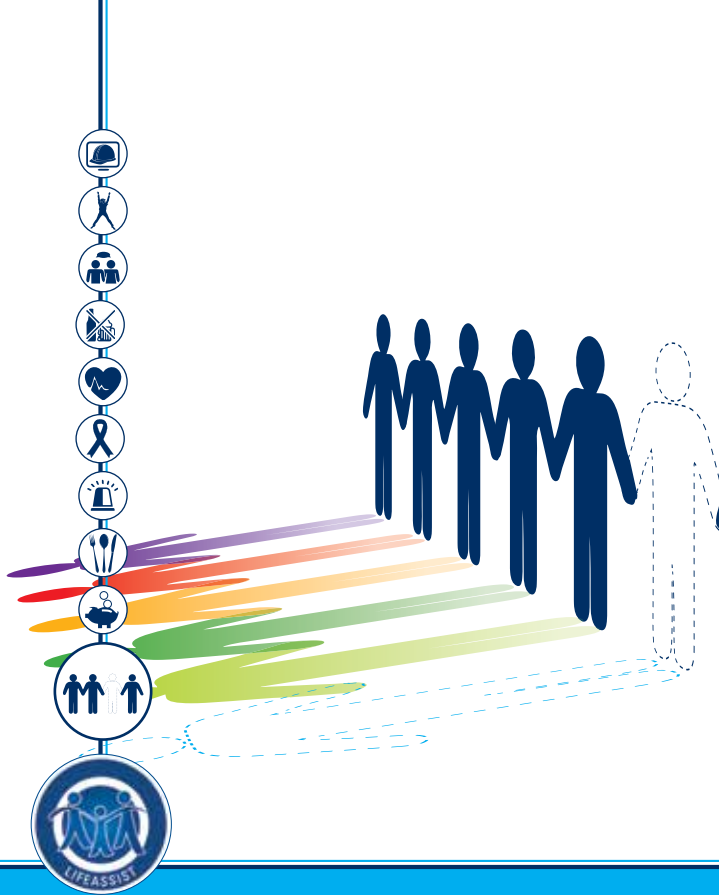
DOWNLOAD from Resource Centre at www.yourlifeassist.co.za/sunint

VOLUNTARY • PRIVATE • CONFIDENTIAL

All personal information is strictly confidential and privacy is safeguarded by LifeAssist..

Participation in WAM is voluntary. An absentee has the right to participate in the process, or to decline.

The WAM programme is compliant with the POPI Act, 2013.



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