

THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

Helping you manage your most valuable resource: Employees

June 2022

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have related to their employees and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to EAP for a management consultation at 608-775-4780 or 800-327-9991.

Q: I helped my employee get admitted to the psychiatric unit last week. He is resisting calling EAP, and the psychiatrist is calling me about his work issues. Is there any way to get EAP involved?

A: Although your employee must be the one to initiate a request for EAP assistance, getting him to call EAP will probably be easier than you think. Most behavioral care programs like the psychiatric unit understand the value of EAP professionals in assisting the employee in dealing with important back-to-work issues. Most also are experienced at explaining to patients in convincing terms the value of involving EAP in the treatment picture. Provide the psychiatrist or treatment staff with the EAP phone number. They'll take it from there. The staff will probably convince your employee to allow them to contact EAP. The counselor can then manage some of the issues you are finding awkward to handle.

Q: I'm planning a second corrective interview with my employee, because his performance problems remain. No disciplinary action is warranted yet. How can I motivate his use of EAP?

A: Review the performance record again with your employee, emphasizing those performance measures that have not changed. Because uncorrected problems could lead to some disciplinary action, ask your employee if he is

willing to consider using EAP at this time. This is quite different from suggesting use of EAP. Indeed, you are asking for a commitment from the employee to use EAP now in case a personal problem is contributing to job problems. If you get an affirmative response from the employee, consider asking him to make the phone call to EAP then and there. You could also call ahead, get an appointment time, and then give it to the employee at your meeting if he shows interest. Using EAP is voluntary, but you are giving it a harder sell with this approach than if you allow the employee to leave your office without making a commitment.

Q: I believe some of my employees, particularly a few I'm really angry with, would never accept a referral to EAP. I think this might be the reason I seldom mention it during corrective interviews.

A: Some research has shown that a major hindrance to supervisors making EAP referrals is a belief that the employee won't accept the referral in the first place. This can be a self-fulfilling prophecy, especially if the corrective interview with the employee is charged with anger and contention. It can be hard to demonstrate genuine concern for your employee when making an EAP referral, particularly if problems have been ongoing. But you are operating on the assumption that a personal problem could be getting in the way of job performance. So act supportive, not punitive. Nothing will sabotage your referral quicker than if your employee believes your motivation for suggesting use of EAP is based on a personal desire to punish him.

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