Supervisor Guide
An Essential Resource For You & Your Valued Employees

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YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

The EAP is an important and highly effective benefit for the people you manage. It’s a resource you can turn to when confronting problems at work or home. It is also an important managerial tool.

In most cases, troubled employees will seek help from the EAP on their own. That’s why it’s important to periodically remind employees that the service is available. Distribute the EAP wallet cards and mention the service at employee meetings. In some cases, (those in which an employee’s performance is affected by a personal problem) you’ll want to make a supervisory referral to the EAP. As the employee’s supervisor, you will take the initiative to ensure that the employee receives the necessary counseling.

THE EFFECT ON YOUR BUSINESS

The health and continued well-being of your employees may be at stake. Your business can also feel the far-reaching effects of personal problems.

- Much higher health care costs.
- Worker’s compensation claims are five times greater than average for employees abusing alcohol or controlled substances.
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- More than double the average rate of accidents and absenteeism.
- Lowered production which is a cost estimated to be a quarter of the employee’s salary.
- The ripple effect – these problems begin to affect the morale and performance of other employees, resulting in even greater costs.

Many supervisors have learned that quick reliance on the EAP is imperative for two basic reasons:

- It’s your responsibility as a caring person to get your employee the help they need.
- It’s your responsibility as an effective manager to preserve a healthy work environment and shield your company from the major costs associated with untreated conditions.

There are many benefits of using this important tool including:

- Improving attendance and work of the employee.
- Ensuring a pleasant, productive work environment.
- Providing employees with on-the-mark guidance from experienced counselors. These are people who have identified and treated these problems before.
- Reducing the chance you’ll make procedural or legal mistakes in handling an employee’s problem.
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- Avoiding termination of a valued employee and training costs for replacement.
- Saving your own time and reducing worry.
- Preserving departmental morale.
- And, most important, improving the quality of life for the people you care about – your employees and their families.

Taking advantage of your EAP is a simple process.

The major steps to learn are:
- How to identify a troubled employee and what to look for.
- How to approach the person and the do’s and don’ts when discussing performance.
- How to make a referral to the EAP.
THE WARNING SIGNS OF A TROUBLED EMPLOYEE

The first clues to trouble usually involve changes in mood, appearance or behavior, such as:

- Increases in absenteeism or tardiness.
- Long lunches, long breaks, long absences from their work station.
- Reduced productivity, extreme peaks and valleys in productivity and quality of work.
- Reduced concentration or confusion.
- Reduced willingness to take responsibility for their job.
- Excuses for not doing the job right.
- Accidents on the job.
- Problems with co-workers or customers, including excessive sensitivity to criticism, isolation from other employees and complaints from co-workers.
- Agitated, disinterested, stressed or nervous behavior.
- Reduced attention to appearance.
- Increases in medical ailments.
- Outbursts.
THE ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

These outward signs may be the result of such serious problems as:

- Difficulties in marriage, in other relationships, with children or with caring for an older relative.
- Grief, depression, anxiety or stress.
- Financial difficulties including gambling, catastrophic expenses, overspending.
- Crime, child support and other legal matters.
- Medical problems, alcoholism, or drug abuse affecting the employee or someone close to them.

PROFILING THE PROBLEM:
A BEHAVIORAL CHECKLIST

To define the situation, it’s a good idea to review the more detailed list of possible symptoms checking off the particular behaviors you’ve observed. None of these symptoms proves any particular problem. They are clues that may help you realize an employee needs help. They are most significant when they highlight a change from the employee’s normal behavior. This list should not be used to diagnose.
Employee’s Appearance

- Unkempt
- Inappropriate

Mood

- Withdrawn
- Sadness
- Mood swings: elation/depression; hyperactive/lethargic
- Suspiciousness
- Extreme sensitivity
- Nervousness
- Frequent irritability with others
- Preoccupation with illness and death (morbidity)

Actions

- Physically assaultive or threatening.
- Unduly talkative.
- Exaggerated self-importance.
- Rigidity – inability to change plans with reasonable ease.
- Making incoherent or irrelevant statements on the job.
- Over compliance with any routine (making it a ritual).
- Frequently argumentative.
- Frequent outbursts of crying.
- Excessive amount of personal telephone time.
ABSENTEEISM

- Multiple instances of improper reporting of time off.
- Excessive sick leave.
- Repeated absences following a pattern.
- Excessive lateness in the morning or upon returning from lunch.
- Peculiar and increasingly improbable excuses for absences.
- High absenteeism rate for colds, flu, gastritis, general malaise, etc.
- Frequent unscheduled short-term absences (with or without medical explanation).
- Frequent use of unscheduled vacation time.

“ON THE JOB” ABSENTEEISM

- Continued absence from job location more than the job requires.
- Frequent trips to water fountain or restroom.
- Long coffee breaks.

ACCIDENTS

- Physical complaints on the job.
- Accidents on and off the job.
Work Patterns and Production

- Current work assignment requires more effort than previously taken.
- Difficulty in recalling instruction, understanding office procedures, etc.
- Display of disinterest in work and takes more time to produce.
- Increased difficulty in handling complex assignments.
- Difficulty in recalling previous mistakes (although these have been brought to the employee’s attention).
- General absentmindedness and forgetfulness.
- Alternate periods of high and low productivity.
- Coming to work in an intoxicated condition.
- Missed deadlines and mistakes due to poor judgment.
- Outside complaints about the employee’s work.
- Improbable excuses for these poor patterns.
- Carelessness.
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**Work Related Relationships**

- Overreaction to real or imagined criticism.
- Wide swings in job morale.
- Borrowing money from co-workers.
- Difficulty relating to co-workers.
- Unreasonable resentments against co-workers.
- Repeated and compulsive criticism of the company.
- Persistent request for job transfer.
- Unrealistic expectation for promotion.
- Abrasive with others (managers and/or co-workers).
- Inappropriate behavior at company business meetings.
- Complaints from the community concerning the employee.

**Steps For Helping The Troubled Employee**

When you notice a change in an employee’s job performance, first seek to determine whether there is something in the nature of the work itself that is causing the problem. For example, the employee may simply be overloaded. If there seems to be an outside cause, proceed with these steps:

1. **Consider The Alternatives** available to you. They include meeting with the employee to discuss performance, discussing your concerns with your personnel office, or calling your EAP representative at any point for advice on how to proceed.
One alternative you do not have is the option of doing nothing.

2. **Document** the changes you have observed in the employee’s behavior that indicates there is a problem, particularly performance and attendance. Prepare a brief written memo outlining your concerns with the behavior of this employee. The “Charlie’s Memo” example at the end of this book may be helpful for you. Make it easy on yourself and use as much of the wording from “Charlie’s Memo” as fits the situation. Send a copy of the memo to the EAP. Call the EAP for help if you are having problems with this step.

3. **Plan Your Meeting.** Take a few minutes to decide how you will approach the troubled employee. It is important to remember that it is not your job to diagnose the underlying problem that is causing the behavior. Problem behavior can be caused by a number of different problems so don’t try to play “therapist”. That will only lead to defensiveness and you may be wrong about the exact cause.

   It is important that you prepare yourself to use plain and straightforward language to describe the behaviors that are causing difficulties. Remember, anything that is negatively impacting the team is a job performance concern. You have the right and responsibility to address job performance problems with your people. Prepare yourself to speak clearly about your concerns then schedule a sit-down conversation with the employee.
4. **Meet With The Employee** to discuss your concerns. Where possible, bring a written list with dates, times and other data to help make your point as powerful as possible. Be clear in your descriptions. Speak with personal concern, not with judgments and accusations. Explain in detail the improvements you expect from the employee. Obtain a commitment from the employee as to the timetable for the improvements.

Give the employee a copy of the “Charlie’s Memo” that you have prepared and explain that you are referring him/her to the EAP to address the job performance problem. Explain that the EAP uses a problem resolution approach to address personal problems and you strongly feel the EAP’s assistance will help to insure that the problem is effectively resolved. Clarify that the EAP is:

- Confidential and that the discussions with the EAP counselor will not be shared with you unless a release of information is signed by the employee.
- Free benefit to the employee.
- Service is available to employees and their family members to help them address a broad range of distressing problems.
- A resource that does not affect promotions or job evaluations.

5. **Contact the EAP** and let them know you have made a supervisory referral. Tell them who you referred and why. However, no additional information can be shared with you unless the employee signs a release of information.
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**DO’S AND DON’TS**

**Don’t** hope the problem will solve itself.

**Don’t** be too ready to believe excuses or believe sympathy evoking tactics. Stay focused on your right to expect appropriate behavior and satisfactory job performance.

**Don’t** discuss the personal problem with anyone other than the EAP counselor.

**Don’t** attempt to play therapist and guess at the problem.

**Don’t** allow yourself to get involved in the employee’s personal life.

**Don’t** argue. Review your facts and documentation in a calm manner.

**Don’t** sit in moral judgment of the employee.

**Don’t** make generalizations or insinuations about the employee’s performance.

**Don’t** threaten discipline unless you’re willing and able to carry through. An employee’s refusal to schedule an EAP appointment is not a reason to justify termination. Such a decision should be based on performance issues. Use of the EAP is always voluntary.
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**Do** focus solely on declining job performance and the offer of help.

**Do** have on hand written documentation of the declining job performance so you can “let the record speak for itself”.

**Do** maintain a firm and formal, yet considerate, attitude. If the interview becomes casual or intimate conversation, the impact of the message will be lessened.

**Do** explain that help is available through the Employee Assistance Program.

**Do** emphasize that all aspects of the program are completely confidential.

**Do** explain that the employee must decide on his or her own whether to seek assistance, but that the job performance problem must be resolved.

You cannot force an employee to use the EAP, but you should employ standard disciplinary action for the continuing poor performance. Some employees will be uncooperative and refuse help. Make it clear that your company’s standard procedures for discipline or termination will be followed if performance remains poor.
If the problem continues, consult with your Human Resource personnel and take appropriate action. At every step of progress encourage the employee to use the EAP to effectively address the problem. Make it clear that continued employment depends on the employee improving their behavior.

Be firm in emphasizing the serious nature of the situation and also in your genuine desire to help. Your desire to help must always be at the heart of an EAP referral. The EAP referral is not to be used as any kind of punishment.

**CONTACTING YOUR EAP**

EAP counselors are ready to intervene at any point – from the time you first notice the problem to formal referral and beyond. At each point, they can also offer you advice on how to proceed, how to cope with difficult employees, and how to monitor improvement. When the employee visits an EAP counselor on a self-referral you will receive no feedback, unless the employee provides a written authorization allowing disclosure of information to you. When you make a supervisory referral the EAP counselor will ask you for detailed information about the employee’s performance. In return, you'll be given information on the employee’s level of cooperation. However, you will not receive information about the problem or the treatment. This will only be done once the employee provides the therapist with a release of information.
Supervisory Referral

Supervisor consults with EAP on employee's poor performance

Supervisor holds performance discussion with employee and refers the employee to the EAP

Employee refuses EAP

Employee goes to EAP

Supervisor proceeds with normal disciplinary action

Employee accepts recommendations of EAP

Employee rejects recommendation of EAP

Supervisor is informed by the EAP once the release is in place and signed.

Supervisor, and EAP therapist coordinate assistance

Supervisor proceeds with disciplinary action
Taking The Proper Steps

It is natural for any supervisor to feel a certain reluctance in confronting a difficult employee and suggesting counseling. You may feel somehow responsible for the situation or worry about your ability to manage it. Unfortunately, letting the problem continue will result in a greater problem later on. It is best to manage the situation at an early stage, before serious damage is done.

That’s why your company provides the benefit of an EAP – so that neither you, nor your employees, will have to handle problems without proper guidance, support, information and experience.

Take advantage of this help. Provide the essential intervention to resolve performance issues and protect your company and other workers from the consequences of serious disruption in the workplace. Most importantly, discover an effective, proven way to help your employees when they need help.
Test Your Knowledge About EAP

1. When should you call the EAP for help?
   a) When you first notice trouble with an employee.
   b) Before meeting with the employee to discuss performance.
   c) After the first meeting.
   d) When you want to make a supervisory referral.
   e) At any point in the process.

2. Which of these is an appropriate statement to make when you meet with an employee whose performance has deteriorated and there are no work related reasons for the decline?
   a) I believe you have a problem with alcohol.
   b) I would like you to meet with the EAP staff and let them help you resolve whatever is causing the problem.
   c) Set up an appointment today or you’re fired.
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EAP

3. *When should you play therapist and try to define the cause of the poor performance?*

   a) When the cause is obvious: for example, repeated instances of alcohol on the breath, slowed reflexes, etc.
   b) When, during your meeting to discuss job performance, the employee starts making excuses.
   c) Never! That's the task of the EAP counselor.

4. *Which statement is true?*

   a) Although it's up to the employee to decide whether or not to set up an EAP appointment, if he/she refuses to go justifies termination.
   b) When you make a supervisory referral, the EAP counselor will report, once a release of information is signed, whether the employee is keeping appointments and cooperating with the EAP.
   c) An employee's use of the EAP will be noted in his/her personnel file.
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EAP

5. In many cases family problems are at the root of declines in job performance. If a member of the employee’s family needs help, the following procedure should be followed.

   a) The employee or family member should call the EAP directly.
   b) Nothing can be done – family members are not eligible to participate.
   c) The employee must first receive approval from a supervisor.

6. What costs are involved in EAP counseling?

   a) It's a pay-as-you-go program borne by the employee.
   b) Each EAP consultation costs your employee nothing. If a higher level of treatment is necessary, a referral to a local provider will be made, with an effort to find a resource covered by the employee’s insurance.
   c) The first session costs the employee nothing, then the employee and counselor negotiate the price.
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EAP

7. *In the majority of cases, employees seek EAP assistance on their own. Your role begins:*

   a) When you notice trouble with an employee.
   b) When the bottom line is threatened.
   c) With educating employees about the availability of this resource through printed materials, video and discussion.

8. *Relying on the EAP is likely to result in:*

   a) Less problems from the boss.
   b) Putting off the inevitable – termination.
   c) An improved work environment and better health and well-being for the people you care about - your employees and their families.
Charlie’s Memo

Subject: Referral to Employee Assistance Program
To: “Employee’s Name”
From: “Supervisor’s Name”
Date: (Today’s Date)

This memo is intended to express my concern for your personal and professional welfare and to outline significant deficiencies in your work performance. This memo does not constitute a disciplinary action, and it will not become part of your official personnel folder.

I have been your supervisor for several years and have known you to be a capable and dedicated employee. In recent months however, there has been an unacceptable decline in the quality of both your work and your interactions with others on the job.

Let me help you by clarifying the problems that I am addressing with you at this time. They fall into three basic areas:

1. Relationships With Other Employees.
   - With increasing frequency, you are irritable and abrasive with fellow employees.
   - You have overreacted to criticism and have resisted constructive suggestions.
   - You have been inflexible and unwilling to respond to reasonable requests from others.
2. **Performance of Your Job Responsibilities.**
   - *You have repeatedly been late in completing your assignments. On 5/3, 6/16, 8/20 and 9/15 of this year, I documented incidents where you were significantly late on important commitments.*
   - *With increasing frequency, you are making costly errors. Most recently, your failure to inform production of a change on a major customer’s order required costly reworking of the order.*

3. **Attendance.**
   - *Your attendance has become unpredictable to the point that you have exhausted your sick leave and have needed an advance on your annual leave.*
   - *You have come in late for work at least 5 times that I have documented in the past 6 months.*
   - *You are frequently away from your work station unnecessarily, which decreases our productivity and burdens your co-workers.*

I have contacted the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to make a supervisory referral for you to have their assistance in resolving these difficulties. The EAP counselors use a solution-focused approach to problem solving that can be extremely helpful in resolving both personal and job related difficulties. Their assistance will go a long way to ensure that you are successful as you address these problems.
You can contact the EAP by calling (800) 926-9619. Your use of the EAP is completely confidential and the discussions you have there will not be shared without your written consent.

I will be observing your behavior closely for the next 30 days and will reevaluate you at the end of that period. It is of the utmost importance that you address these problems immediately.

Sincerely,

(Enter Signature Here)