

THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

Helping you manage your most valuable resource: Employees

May 2024

Referrals to EAP need not necessarily be driven by poor work performance. Employees who confide to their supervisors that they are dealing with personal or family problems can and should be reminded of the availability of EAP as a resource.

As a supervisor or manager, please make sure that EAP promotional materials such as posters, cards or brochures are displayed in areas where employees can access them. Does your coffee or break room have these materials? Consider placing posters on informational bulletin boards or in employee bathrooms. If you need promotional materials, please contact your HR Department for a supply they may have on hand or contact EAP and we will be happy to get them out to you.

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:** After a supervisory referral to EAP, my employee called to say she was taking off work for four weeks on the recommendation of a social worker to whom she was referred. Can a social worker make this request?
- A:** Most companies have rules governing an employee's use of sick leave or use of family/medical leave where applicable. In most cases, a medical provider should certify the need for a medically based extended leave of absence for either physical or mental health reasons. Follow your company rules and/or consult with your human resources office, but also call EAP and inquire about your employee's request for extended leave. If EAP is unaware of this recommendation, the counselor may call and speak with the social worker (with permission) and clarify exactly what was recommended. You should be assertive about the need for a medical provider's note to accompany your employee's request for a reduced workload, work schedule changes or time-off.
- Q:** I have been involved in laying off several of my employees in the past eight months. I'm thankful to still be employed, but I feel guilty and depressed about it. Am I just being too sensitive?
- A:** It is not unusual to experience depression and guilt when terminating employees. Losing a job is one of the most stressful events possible to experience. Those who take part in laying off employees, no matter how legitimately, can expect to share in that stress. Your mental health can be affected because of the anxiety associated with repeatedly calling employees into your office and then terminating them. These accumulated "hits" of stress may cause you to feel more depressed than some employees you've terminated. Persistent depressive symptoms, including sleeplessness, sadness, lack of appetite, inability to concentrate or even thoughts of suicide, have been reported by some supervisors in your shoes. Don't hesitate to seek help through EAP because you deserve support as much as those you've had to let go.

- Q:** I mentioned to an employee that he should consider going to EAP, but he blew up, saying he didn't have a mental problem. How can I prevent such angry reactions with other employees?
- A:** You cannot control the reactions of your employees to the suggestion that they take advantage of EAP. Also, it is not possible to say exactly why this employee reacted so adversely. All employees should realize that EAP is a positive resource to be used by anyone in the organization for a personal problem. This employee may have been offended because of the stigma he associates with counseling services, but there is no way to know this for sure. Regardless, if this employee sees EAP as a place where only people with mental problems go, he is the one with the problem, not you. You may want to consider whether his reaction was inappropriate and deal with it as such.

Information contained in the FrontLine Supervisor is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with your Employee Assistance Professional. Copyright © by DFA Publishing & Consulting, LLC. All rights reserved.