

The FRONTLINE Supervisor

Helping you manage your most valuable resource: Employees

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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:** We had a sexual harassment incident and have followed company policy to address the issue to the harassed employee's satisfaction. Should we refer the employee who was the recipient of the harassment to EAP?
- A:** You should let the employee know that EAP is available as a means of helping deal with the stress of the incident. This will communicate the purpose of the referral in the right way. EAP will help find the right resource if one is needed or desired. The sexual harassment of women, and men, in the workplace is a problem that has received considerable attention and research in recent years. Victimization is not only stressful, but also costly for everyone. Reduced productivity is only one example of the cost associated with this problem. Consequent feelings of shame, self-doubt, fear, and depression are real and common for victims. Even if these problems aren't self-evident, they could still exist. EAP can be an important resource for referral of the harasser in order to address his or her behavioral problems, and for the victim in order to promote healing and renewed trust in the employer.
- Q:** I know that I can inquire about certain information, once my employee signs a release. Still, I feel like I'm intruding if I call EAP for any information after I've made a referral.
- A:** It's helpful to understand that EAP exists to interface with employees who have personal problems and with managers who need consultation to manage troubled employees. In this sense, EAP depends on an appropriate amount of communication with a referring supervisor in order for it to help the employee best. Although EAP follows strict rules that govern their confidentiality, it is important not to feel as though you are "prying" when you need information necessary to manage your employees. As long as the employee has signed a release, EAP will know what it can and cannot disclose to you. Good communication means supervisors are identifying performance problems that return after an EAP referral and use EAP for consultation whenever necessary.

- Q:** I have two employees who work together as a team. They get into verbal spats with each other. They both work hard, but I can't determine whom to discipline or refer to EAP. I'm sure this is taking its toll on productivity.
- A:** Assuming you have interviewed each employee and have been unable to understand the root of his or her problematic relationship, you should decide what consequences are appropriate if the behavior continues. Clearly communicate these consequences and specify the expectations for proper conduct on the job. It's possible that the unacceptable behavior you describe may need to be evaluated by EAP, so both of your employees may need to be referred. EAP can then interview each employee, separately, and assess what type of help either or both of them need. In the meantime, initiate frequent discussions with these employees after any corrective interview you might have with them. This will allow a clearer picture of the problem to develop. Keep notes of your observations so you can identify any pattern that emerges.

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