



SUPERVISORS AND THE EAP

A COMPREHENSIVE EAP TRAINING GUIDE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
Introducing the Employee Assistance Program	1
The First Sign of Problems	1
Using the Employee Assistance Program	2
Difficulties Your Employees May Have	3
Referring an Employee to the EAP	4
Specific Actions by the Supervisor	5
Discussing the EAP with an Employee	7
Summary of the Employee Assistance Program	9

ADDENDUMS

- I. How a Troubled Employee Behaves
- II. What Data Should Supervisors Document?
- III. Checklist of Question Areas for Supervisors

Introducing the Employee Assistance Program

Gary L. Wood & Associates, P.A. is an experienced EAP provider since 1982. The EAP is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred and sixty five days a year. Employees and others (i.e., dependants, retirees, significant others, domestic partners) as defined by organizational benefits are entitled to unlimited telephone contacts and up to the contracted number of visits per contract year provided by Wood & Associates at no charge to the client. Employees and other eligible participants may contact the EAP directly. Supervisors may also use the EAP to receive consultation regarding referrals to the EAP when an employee's work attendance, performance and/or conduct decline. All supervisory contacts with Wood & Associates should be coordinated according to organizational policies and procedures. This supervisory training guide is designed as a self-help manual in recognizing and referring an employee whose performance problems have not responded to usual and customary supervisory coaching, counseling and discipline.

Your EAP representative may be reached at:

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Example of the First Sign of a Performance Problem

Jane is a word processor who has been under your supervision for three years. Her work has always been exceptional. She has a great deal of competence, energy and professionalism. Lately, you have had some serious concerns about Jane's work performance.

Always a prompt employee, Jane now arrives late for work at least three days out of five. Her usually cheerful disposition has disappeared. She has seemed moody and humorless. She has been verbally irritable with co-workers on two occasions of which you are aware. She has had difficulty accepting corrective feedback from you and became tearful and defensive. While she has always paid attention to details, she has recently

made numerous “input errors.” She has not had material finished on time and has missed two deadlines. You have scheduled a talk with her, but you have serious concerns that the deterioration in her work has something to do with personal problems unrelated to the job. You are naturally concerned about the discussion.

Using the Employee Assistance Program

As a supervisor:

- Job performance is your responsibility
- You need to do more than just discuss the performance
- You know you are dealing with an employee who needs help
- You cannot diagnose the problem or determine what help should be used

Help is available through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

- It is a benefit for employees whose work shows a clear pattern of decline from any number of personal or behavioral health concerns
- It is a valuable resource to you as a supervisor
- It helps you correct performance decline while, at the same time, addressing possible issues that may be affecting other areas of an employee’s life
- Your EAP has a professional representative available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The EAP can assist you by:

- Assessing the employee’s concerns
- Providing initial telephone contact with a doctoral level EAP representative
- Providing up to the contracted number of visits for assessment, support and referral
- Referring employees to specific agencies or services for financial, legal, substance abuse or other assistance
- Monitoring those selected outside services to evaluate assistance and care

As a supervisor:

- Providing the motivation to assist in turning around what might even be a life-threatening situation
- Observing work performance
- Discussing work performance concerns with the employee and Human Resources

- Advising the employee to seek professional assistance when necessary
- Referring to the EAP when all normal supervisory methods, such as performance coaching, have failed to improve job performance according to organizational policies and procedures

Difficulties Your Employees May Have

- There are a wide range of concerns that could affect an employee's job performance
- These concerns can affect any one of us regardless of age, sex, education or job status
- The problems may not be those of the employee but rather those of other family members that indirectly affect the employee.

Family – Related Problems

- Concerns about children
- Aging parents
- Serious illness in the family
- Conflicts within the family

Emotional

- Stress and anxiety
- Clinical depression
- Noticeable or deeply pronounced mood swings beyond what is normal

Substance Abuse or Dependency

- Alcohol abuse or dependency
- Drug abuse or dependency
- Prescription drug abuse or dependency

Marital

- Divorce
- Communication problems
- Domestic violence

Financial

- Budget control
- Credit issues
- Planning

Referring an Employee to the EAP: Self, Supervisory, Mandated

There are several important items to remember before you refer an employee to the EAP:

- **Your decision to refer an employee to the EAP must be based on work performance concerns**
 - Don't jump to conclusions or listen to rumors
 - There is a pattern of deterioration in an employee's performance, attendance and conduct. Note that on the chart "How a 'Troubled' Employee Behaves," the solid line represents actual job deterioration over time. The jagged line represents crisis points (lows) and improvement when the supervisor intervenes (highs). The improvements, however, are only temporary. (Please see Addendum I).
- **Remember that the EAP is a tool you can use to assist you as a supervisor**
 - It is not designated to replace your supervisory role
 - Familiarize yourself with your employer's policies and procedures for dealing with questionable work performance
- **Your referral to the EAP should be made only after all other supervisory methods, such as performance coaching, have failed to improve job performance and after following all organizational policies and procedures**
- **You may wish to make your EAP referral in some initial discussions with an employee about job performance. This will depend to a large part on how serious the job performance concern is, and on your confidence in the employee being able to change behavior on his or her own.**

Before making an EAP referral, however, it is recommended that you:

- **Observe and document patterns that are affecting the employee's performance**
 - Do not base this on one observation alone unless it is a highly critical one. You are looking for a pattern.
 - Please refer to the following: "What Data Should Supervisors Document" (Addendum II) and "Checklist of Question Areas for Supervisors (Addendum III).
- **Discuss the matter with the employee after you have recognized that a pattern is occurring that may be affecting the employee's performance, attendance, and/or conduct.**
- **Give the employee a chance to explain or clarify your observation**

- Discuss an acceptable plan to improve the job performance concern. Be sure the employee agrees to the plan.

If your performance coaching does not lead to an improvement in the employee's performance, follow organizational policies and procedures to make a supervisory referral of the employee to the Employee Assistance Program.

Whenever you decide, as a supervisor, that the employee needs an EAP referral:

- it is important that the employee understands that you are concerned
- The employee needs to understand that you expect performance to improve and that you are prepared to take further action, up to and including termination, if improvement does not occur

There are several points regarding the EAP that can you cover with an employee when making a supervisory referral:

- EAP is voluntary
 - No one will force the employee to seek assistance
 - Follow organizational policies and procedures in determining what course of action will occur if the employee refuses to cooperate with a mandated referral
 - The purpose of a supervisory referral or mandated referral to the EAP is job performance improvement
- EAP is an employee benefit. Employees may contact the EAP by phone anytime. Up to the contracted number of visits to the EAP representative provided by Wood & Associates are at no charge to the employee or eligible participant. Should the employee have a problem that requires treatment, it may be covered by the employee's behavioral health insurance plan. Treatment for an eligible participant may also be covered by their behavioral health insurance plan.
- The EAP is a professional program with a proven track record
- The EAP is confidential within the parameters of professional ethics, organization contract and applicable federal and state law

Specific Actions by the Supervisor

What the Supervisor Should Do:

- Make sure each of his/her employees is informed about and

understands what is expected of him/her in terms of work performance and attendance

- **Be alert, through continuing observation, to changes in the work and behavioral patterns of employees under his/her supervision**
- **Document all unacceptable behavior, attendance and job performance that fails to meet established standards**
- **Discuss deteriorating work performance, conduct, or attendance with the employee. Make it clear that the organization is concerned with job performance. Unless performance improves, the employee's job is in jeopardy**
- **Monitor employees' work performance**
- **Intervene if work continues to deteriorate**
- **In any case of supervisory referral to the EAP, you must follow organizational policies and procedures**
- **Explain that the employee must decide whether or not to seek assistance, emphasizing that all aspects of the program are confidential within the parameters of professional ethics, organizational contract, and applicable federal and state law.**
- **Remember that mandated referrals to the EAP are made according to organizational policies and procedures.**
- **Be aware that individuals with substance problems tend to deny their illness. The worse the individual becomes, the more convinced they tend to be that a problem doesn't exist -- or at least that it's not a problem they can't handle.**
- **Be aware of symptoms, methods and signs of substance use as well as the dangers involved.**
- **Be sure all employees are aware of the service available to them through this program.**

What the Supervisor Should Not Do

- **Do not play the role of "diagnostician."**
 - **Do not attempt to judge whether an employee has a "problem"**
 - **Stick to job performance**
 - **Don't moralize!**
- **Do not let friendship interfere**
 - **While you may view the relationship with your employee as friendly and even as a friendship, it is your responsibility as a supervisor to make an EAP referral when appropriate and consistent with organizational policies and procedures**
- **Do not discuss whether or not an employee has a "problem" or attempt to counsel him/her in this regard**
- **Do not recommend termination of a previously satisfactory employee without first reviewing organizational policies and procedures**

- Do not engage in any “cover-up” activities regarding any “problem employee.”

EAP Referrals: Self, Supervisory, Mandated

- **Self referral:** When an employee recognizes they need assistance and contacts the EAP on their own for a wide variety of personal and/or behavioral health concerns.
- **Supervisory referral:** When a supervisor recognizes a declining pattern of performance, attendance, and conduct that has not responded to usual supervisory coaching. The designated organizational representative must be notified of the referral.
- **Mandated referral:** When the designated organizational representatives become aware of the following:
 - When an employee makes a verbal or physical threat
 - When an employee is not performing safely on the job
 - When a supervisor has reasonable suspicion that an employee is intoxicated or under the influence of substances
 - When an employee tests positive on a company-sponsored alcohol/drug screen
 - Any other reason as designated in the organizational policies and procedures

Discussing the EAP with an Employee

If you are going to make your first referral to the EAP, you are understandably concerned about your conversation with the employee. The following will give you an idea of how this can be conducted, with suggested dialogue in the left hand column and its rationale in the right hand column.

YOUR DISCUSSION:	DISCUSSION POINT:
<p>“Jane, we need to arrive at a plan that will help you improve your job performance. Are you familiar with the organization’s Employee Assistance Program?”</p>	<p>Emphasize that the EAP is to assist the employee in improving job performance.</p>
<p>“It is a benefit which you, as an employee, can take advantage. It can help you with anything that may be affecting your job performance.”</p>	<p>Emphasize the EAP is a benefit. Make no reference to what you think the issue may be.</p>
<p>“You can contact the EAP by phone any time and up to the number of contracted visits are free. It’s confidential.”</p>	<p>Provide specific information on major concerns.</p>
<p>“I have confidence in you that you can improve your performance. I want to help you find every way you can to do it. You are a valued employee and we do not want to lose you.”</p>	<p>Express confidence in the employee and discuss the EAP referral in light of concern for the employee and desire to see job improvement.</p>
<p>“EAP is a voluntary program, but it has helped a lot of employees already. I hope you take advantage of it, because I think it can help your job performance. And if even you don’t take advantage of the EAP, you still have to improve your performance. Here’s the EAP number.”</p>	<p>Reinforce that the EAP is voluntary. Also, reinforce that performance must improve whether the employee takes advantage of the EAP or not. Provide clear direction for the employee by giving the EAP phone number.</p>

Show the employee that you sincerely care about their welfare. Listen closely and carefully to whatever the employee says to you. Respond with empathy. Do not let sympathy stand in the way of getting assistance for the employee. Follow all organizational policies and procedures.

Supervising an employee with difficulties requires patience and a certain degree of insight. Facing and dealing with this challenge may be one of the most important and difficult things you do as a supervisor. Assisting an employee's return to a fully-functioning life can be one of the most rewarding experiences of management.

SUMMARY OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

- Available 24 hours/7days a week/365 days a year
- Confidential
- Voluntary participation
- Available to employees and eligible participants
- Initial telephone contact is with a doctoral-level EAP representative
- Up to the contracted number of visits provided by Wood & Associates at no charge to the employee and/or eligible participant
- Covers wide variety of concerns
- Remember that supervisory and mandated referrals must be done in accordance with organizational policies and procedures

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