

# PROBLEM-SOLVING CONSULTATIONS: A RESOURCE FOR SUPERVISORS

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Thank you all for joining us today for our presentation Problem-Solving Consultations: A Resource for Supervisors. I'd like to introduce our presenter, Desiree Antonacci. Desiree Antonacci is a licensed clinical social worker and an employee assistance specialist serving CMS, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, within HHS. She has more than 26 years of clinical experience and uses solution-focused interventions to counsel individuals, couples, and families. Additionally, Desiree has provided grief education, critical incident response services, and supervisor consultations to the federal workforce. And with that, I'll let Desiree take it from here.

Jessica, thank you for the lovely introduction and I am super excited to present this topic today. Does this sound like a typical day or a typical week in your life? Employee issues, productivity concerns, organizational challenges, balancing the that work, or personal life? On any given day, managers and supervisors wear many hats. Those hats include people and productivity management. And when you have a problem, without the proper fitting hat, you might be filling a little unprepared and overwhelmed. Luckily, we offer an array of flexible hats for you to try on for the many situations you might deal with on the day today.

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Our objective for today's presentation is to share information with you about the Employee Assistance Program, or, EAP. With a specific focus on how EAP supports managerial functions and the multiple challenges you may face. We want you to leave this presentation super confident that you can rely on the program to support you as a supervisor, and with awareness of how to access these confidential services.

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Today we are going to define the employee assistance program, EAP. We will highlight some specific services designed for supervisors. We will let you know about what managers and employees can expect, and review some management scenarios. Before we go ahead and get started with that, we want to take a pulse of your knowledge base and we have two polls we want you to take.

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I think Desiree it looks like it is ahead of you, if you want to go back.

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Thank you so much.

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Of course, now I'm opening up the polls right now.

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Have you ever used the EAP as a supervisory resource?

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We have about six seconds left to get your answers in please. That ding says that it is ending. I will display the results, I think. Can you see those results, Desiree?

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I can totally see those results, thanks Jessica. Looks like there is a high margin of managers and supervisors who have never used EAP as a supervisory resource. There are just a couple, some, who have used EAP as a supervisory resource, and maybe a couple who are not sure they have or are not. Wonderful. If we can go to the next poll, if you have answered yes, in what capacity have you used EAP as a supervisory resource? You have about 45 seconds to complete this question.

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We have responses coming in just under 30 seconds left to get your answers in. About 10 seconds left. Thank you, I see lots and lots of answers coming in. We appreciate you filling this out for us. And now the poll is ending, I will display the results. There you go.

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All right. Thank you so much for answering these questions as it does give a good picture of your knowledge base. I see that some have scheduled an EAP orientation so thank you. Some have requested some group services. And a number of you have called to get some guidance. All right, wonderful. Hopefully today you will leave here with a lot more tools in your toolkit with regards to how EAP can be used for a manager.

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So employee assistance, the definition. EAP, and the EAP benefit, with federal occupational health, is a no cost, confidential resource for all eligible employees and supervisors. The program is a conference of set of services and benefits designed to help employees resolve personal problems that may be impacting their work performance, conduct, health and well-being. Employees can refer themselves, or, maybe formally or informally referred by management.

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Participation in the program is completely voluntary. Now, onto a look about what the EAP provides, and some of the issues it can help address. Making use of EAP. I am having some technical difficulties, apologize about that. The slides have jumped ahead once again. Or maybe it is the user. Hopefully not. So, an overview of our services. EAP can help address a number of different things. Our EAP provides assessment, short-term solution counseling, consultations and referrals for a wide range of issues. Including things like depression, anxiety, stress, or any other personal or work related concerns. These services are available to employees and supervisors alike.

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Our services that we provide are 24/7 telephonic support, website resources, legal, financial, referrals to community-based services, short-term solution focused counseling, and much more. As you can see we do offer a wide variety of services. It is important for you to know that EAP is not the same as long-term counseling or treatment. If during the course of EAP, a clients issue warrants a long-standing treatment, the counselor may refer the client to some community-based services, including medical professionals, or, to their insurance for a referral for outpatient

mental health. Overall, EAP can increase employee morale, productivity, and general employee stress.

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EAP offers in person or telephonic assessments and consultations, and they are conducted by licensed EAP counselors. The focus here is on making practical recommendations and identifying possible solutions. If a referral is needed, EAP will help the client contact the most appropriate and affordable resource specific to their situation. The value of EAP. Support from the program can help prevent even the most productive of employees from losing focus, calling in sick, or even quitting their jobs. It helps with employee morale, stress, recruitment and retention. EAP helps employees resolve their issues so they can stay productive on their job. FOH EAP helps agency get return on investment in the following ways. Decreased absenteeism associated with personal issues. Increased productivity. And increased employee retention.

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Now let's take a look at EAP as a managerial resource. While many of you are likely familiar with EAP as counseling, from the poll , we can see maybe not as familiar with the program as a consultative support for managers and supervisors. EAP can help in a number of different ways. A manager can utilize EAP as an employee to address any personal or work related concerns. Or, as a supervisor to access management consultations and request group services. Addressing performance related concerns may be one of the most common, yet challenging tasks, that you face as a manager. At some point you will probably need to talk to an employee about performance issues. Just know the EAP as part of a supervisor support system, especially when an employee's personal problems are causing a decline in work performance, or a change in employee conduct.

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For example, EAP can give guidance on how to discuss concerns regarding employee issues they may be experiencing. By involving EAP, it allows you to stay focused on work performance and conduct. The overall goal is to maintain a productive and positive work environment. Additionally, sometimes you as a supervisor or manager just need additional strategies related to having conversations with employees regarding performance issues. EAP can also be used as a sounding board and offer ideas on effective ways to approach a variety of workplace challenges or concerns. Whether you have used EAP as a supervisory resource in the past are not, you still may be wondering, when is it appropriate to reach out? The answer here is early and often. When you find yourself in a situation where you are asking how should I handle this. Other reasons to use EAP are whenever you want to have employees know about resources that can support them with concerns they may be having. Or when you notice a decrease in the employee performance, conduct, or well-being.

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Supervisors can also call the EAP when they want to schedule a presentation, orientation, or have a conversation to informally remind him or, even formally refer an employee to the program. As well as when there is a workplace crisis or loss.

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You can also reach out to get additional information and education for yourself. Which leads us to the next slide. Management consultations. Just as you would meet with a counselor to work through personal concerns, managers and supervisors can meet with an EAP counselor to

discuss aspects of your leadership role that may be causing distress. These are confidential and one-to-one appointments that can be used to discuss interpersonal issues that affect the work place, such as collaborating on best practices with employees demonstrating conduct or performance issues. We can also assist you with navigating crisis and grief in the workplace, and to help support you in working in an ever-changing, and often challenging, work environment.

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So whether it takes one or several appointments, you can give a call to EAP 24 hours a day to discuss matters over the phone, and to arrange an appointment at your earliest convenience. On a given day you may have to deal with employee tardiness, absenteeism, lack of concentration, accidents in the workplace, complaints, and reduced productivity. You may also want to watch out for present he is him. That is when employees are at work but not fully engage or productive due to distractions with health issues and other issues in their personal life. Even more drastic, if you see a change in appearance, unusual behavior, increased irritability, bouts of crying, these are all signs that something is amiss. And whether it is medical, emotional, or drug and alcohol related, we recognize your job is very challenging.

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And when performance and conduct problems occur, getting your job done well can be extremely difficult. It is akin to nailing Jell-O to a wall. Documenting concerns about employees and consulting with employer labor relations are also crucial elements of any supervisors role. Let's look at a few situational examples. Our first example here is may be something you have been faced with, or, you have been faced with in the past, or, you may be faced with the future. An employee has been out for several months on medical leave and is due to return back to work. You are not sure how much to expect, or even what to expect from them. And you want to make the transition back to work as smooth as possible.

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By setting up an appointment with EAP for a management consultation, you can talk with us about how to prepare for that employees return, coordinate with human resources or labor relations, as well as discuss any other tools you may need to talk about EAP, or other resources, they can be addressed ahead of time to ensure that smooth transition for the employee. Our next scenario is performance consultations. Here is the challenge. I am having an issue with an employee who's had a positive performance history. That employee, who I will call Sam, is missing deadlines, showing up late, and according to some of the stakeholders and team members, have not been returning calls or responding to emails in a timely manner. When I have talked to Sam about this, Sam mentioned having issues with their teenager. You really don't know what to do. And I don't like confrontation. I don't want to upset Sam. How do I begin talking to Sam about his performance?

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Not to worry here. First, when you notice any type of decline, start to work with EAP early in the process. EAP can help review options for conversation starters to assist you in discussing that with this matter with the employee. EAP can also verify available resources for this employee, Sam, and how they can access them so you could be prepared to provide this information. The EAP counselor may even suggest having a conversation to informally refer, and I will talk about different types of referrals as we go through today's webinar, how to refer the employee for counseling. Once a plan is created, EAP is available for ongoing support as you put that plan in

place. To give an example about how this conversation can go, Sam, I am concerned you have been late to work recently and are not meeting your performance objectives. I would like to see you get back on track. I don't know whether this is the case for you, but if you are having personal issues, you can speak to one of the employee assistant counselors confidentially.

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This service has been designed to help employees who are experiencing issues that are affecting them in and outside of work. Know that our conversation today is completely confidential. If you decide to call EAP to speak with a counselor, or to schedule an appointment for counseling, that is also confidential. I cannot make you go to EAP, but I do hope you take advantage. Whether you go or not is up to you. I do have to see an improvement in performance, so please at least think about it. You are a great employee and we need you here. Let's meet again next week and check on your performance goals and discuss your progress. No matter what situation that you face, EAP can help you figure out options for discussions with employees, whether they are experiencing performance or other types of issues. Participation in EAP is completely voluntary and it cannot be mandated. Nor does participation give any type of preferential treatment or protection from discipline, up until, and including, termination.

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All employees should be evaluated strictly on job performance criteria. Your role is to continually hold employees accountable for their performance and their conduct at work. And again, EAP is available to supervisors 24/7 for telephonic management consultations on workplace behavioral issues. One more consultation. Here is the behavioral consultation for new managers. A newer manager called the EAP after struggling with an employee who totally pushes their buttons and is viewed as a bully by their team. The supervisor states that the employee regularly reminds other employees about their specific job duties. In fact, this employee has also reminded the manager of their duties, which the manager found a completely offensive.

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Desperation, this manager calls EAP and asks where do I even begin with all of this? So our consultation may go something like this. EAP will ask what has been done up until this point. You may also want to speak with the next level supervisor, and/or, human resources or employee or labor relations depending on what else is happening. You can also use EAP to review different ways to have a conversation with this employee about their behavior.

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We invite you to think of EAP as a supervisory tool to help you get your job done well. As well as with other management tools, such as feedback, performance review, and even rewards. So when you're not sure on how to address a challenge getting to the employee's performance, get guidance from the EAP customized to your unique situation. In the beginning we touched on types of referrals. So we will go over them a little more in depth. Employees can refer themselves to EAP. They may be informally, or formally, referred. A self-referral is when an employee calls EAP to schedule an appointment. And that is for any reason they have.

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An informal referral is when a medical professional, friend, or family member, or even a manager, suggests the EAP to the employee as a resource. Lastly, the formal referral. An employee receives documentation regarding significant behavioral conduct or performance related issues, that if not addressed could significantly impact the employee's job. While most

employees come to EAP via self-referral, employees may also benefit from being informally referred. I would like to go over some quick examples on how an informal referral would work.

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Informal referrals, an employee will meet with their primary care physician and they talk about the increased stress they have at work and home, and how it may be impacting their health. The doctor suggests that the employee speaks to a counselor regarding strategies for stress reduction. The employee calls EAP noting their physician suggested they do so. Another example, during a one-to-one the employee discusses how they have trouble concentrating and meeting deadlines and they worry about eldercare issues they have at home. The manager, known about the resources for EAP, reviews the EAP benefit that they are able to assist with what stress management and provide resources for eldercare, and the employee contacts EAP to schedule an appointment suggesting that their manager suggests they do so. The third example, a manager has a conversation with a high-performing employee who starts to frequently call out and miss deadlines. Something that is completely uncharacteristic for this employee.

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In contrast, when managers have continued performance issues and concerns about and employees conduct, performance or well-being that hasn't been satisfactorily addressed, by a lesser forms of discipline, which would be informal referrals or a counseling memo. When a performance improvement or other types of progressive discipline, formal referrals are usually suggested. A formal referral to EAP includes a conversation between the manager, employee or labor relations, the EAP, and ultimately, the employee. Let's review that process. Before making a formal referral make sure you are contacting labor relations to discuss the employee's conduct or performance issues, as well as actions you have already taken.

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Formal referrals are coordinated labor and employee relations because of a specific language you will need to use. After that, the next step is the manager will contact EAP. Or, call the 800 number or even the local office. EAP can assist you to formally referred the employee to counseling and provide ways to talk about EAP with the employee. Subsequently, the employee will receive documentation that is formally referring them to EAP and is advised to call to set up counseling. Something very important to note here. Purchase a patient in the EAP is always voluntary. And a letter or documentation to an employee referring them to EAP without contacting EAP doesn't suffice as a formal referral. If you formally referred an employee, have taken every step and still no change, you may be asking now what?

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Know that progressive discipline, up to, even including termination of employment, is generally the next step made by an employer when an employee use behavior or performance continues to decline, and hasn't changed despite having EAP involvement and lesser forms of disciplinary action. Here is another way managers can use EAP. We have a group services. They are available for crisis or non-crisis situations. They are used for critical incidents, and, educational or informative capacity. You can use EAP following a loss in the workplace. And in the aftermath of a natural or man-made disaster. When employees have witnessed or experienced a traumatic event at work.

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And some of our noncritical services, yet extremely important, being invited to health fairs to promote EAP and services provided. Orientation to the EAP for employees, and once specific for managers. Hosting a EAP health and wellness presentation. We also have different programs or managers, I will talk about that shortly. Here we go. So the one scenario, also thank you for your patience, my slides keep jumping ahead and I am not sure what is happening with that. Thank you for your patience with that. One of the scenarios that comes up for us pretty regularly our grief groups and how to access. Last week one of our longtime employees died in a car accident and the whole division is really in a state of shock. It has been tough for us to focus, how do I handle this.? You can call EAP 24/7 to consult with an EAP counselor to talk about setting up a consultation. Our counselors will provide education, guided, and support and a variety of options to assist you in your work group. EAP will assist your unique circumstances, and review common employee reactions to loss, as well as provide educational handouts on grief or trauma to be shared with the infected employees and assist with scheduling a group for your team when or if appropriate.

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Grief groups are usually one hour in length, voluntary, and facilitated by an EAP counselor. And participants can learn about common reactions, share memories, and acknowledge impact of loss, as well as be reminded of EAP access and availability. Now here is another scenario for health and wellness presentations. Our scenario includes employee is mentioning increased stress due to organizational, or stress and staffing changes. The whole division feels overwhelmed, and I want to be able to support them. How can EAP assist me and my team?

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We will provide education, guidance, and support and a variety of options to assist you and your team. We will assess your unique circumstance, and we will suggest health and wellness presentations, orientation, or both. Our health and wellness presentations are generally up to one hour in length and they are an opportunity for employees to learn about various topics, but also to see an EAP counselor in a different sort of setting. We had a list of about 30 presentations that can be requested by management, or agency PLC, point of contact, that we have on record, depending how your agency handles it. Topics range from stress management, resilience, civility in the workplace, to time management.

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Please note these are informational sessions and not training. They cannot be used in place of an agency training requirement. Our overall intention with these sessions is to make EAP visible so if an employee need something else from EAP they feel much more comfortable making that call. There are also presentations designed just for you as a manager. These topics include, but are not limited to, being a balanced boss, or the benefits of being a balanced boss, and multigenerational workforce. To request any of these services, all you have to do is call our 800 number. We also offer more EAP orientations specific to employees. We also have orientations just for managers. We know that one of the best ways to have staff and employees become more familiar with EAP is to ask an EAP counselor to come onto a conference call, or regularly scheduled staff meeting for 10 or 15 minutes, longer if you would like, and we can talk about EAP, confidential nature and all the different resources available.

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As we mentioned, EAP has a number of different resources to offer. And the one really great resource, you can go to our website resource which is FOH4You.com . It has a wealth of information from an overview on the EAP benefit, to webinars, reading materials, newsletters for employees, and a special section just for managers. We encourage you to peruse this website when you get a chance. There is so much information, amazing resource for both USA supervisor, as well as for you as an employee.

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Here are some other ways to promote EAP. Letting employees know about the EAP orientation on our website. We have webinars and orientations, different health and wellness presentations that are archived on the FOH website. We encourage you, and employees to take a look. Other ways that you can promote EAP, is allowing employees time for EAP appointments during the workday and dispelling myths about EAP, if available at your location, meeting the counselor. As well as having cereals posted on hand, or electronically that you can push out. As a manager, you are often the first person who notices a change about an employee, or that an employee will come to talk with about challenges at work, or their personal life. So knowing about, and sharing information about, EAP is a proactive way to support employees.

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I am going to go ahead and answer some common questions that we get. Those that we get for managers. If I refer an employee to EAP, can I confirm they went? Only if the employee tells you they're going to the EAP appointment during work hours and they have applied a signed statement form allowing EAP to disclose this information to you. If this is the case you can call and verify they attended their appointment at the scheduled time to confirm their whereabouts. If the employee attempts employment or appointments outside of work hours, in addition to the client statement of understanding, the employee would have to sign an authorization of disclosure form in order for you to confirm this appointment. This other form, the authorization, is optional. And the use of EAP is always voluntary. Even with a formal referral, you cannot make someone go nor can you ask the employee about information from their sessions . The counselor can provide the employee with a letter of attendance, that letter of attendance will be sent to the employee, and the employee can forward it to you as a manager. No other information on this letter of attendance is provided other than the date and the time of appointment.

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Another question. I have an employee having personal problems at home. We believe his marriage is in trouble and one of his children was recently arrested. Even though he continues to do a good job at work I think you would benefit from counseling. Can I call to formally refer this employee. Unfortunately no. The employee would need to exhibit problems in their work performance conduct, or attendance, without showing improvement after other types of disciplinary actions. We would instead recommend that the supervisor in formally reminded the employee of the resources available through EAP and give the EAP contact information. Anytime you have a question or concern about how to discuss a need or concern of any employee, please give a call.

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Another common question. If I use EAP on-site at my agency, will anyone find out.? The answer is no. Not unless you choose to tell someone. The agency will receive utilization reports that includes general data, not who has used them. So, the last question here, with so much



emphasis on confidentiality, is it even okay to talk about EAP with employees? The answer is yes, yes, and yes. We believe managers and supervisors are so crucial in encouraging employees of EAP. As I mentioned earlier, you are in the unique position to help reduce stigma, and that is often associated with asking for help. Talking about EAP is not only okay, we highly recommend that you do so often and openly. You can even talk about your participation in today's webinar with employees. You can either do that by continuing that conversation if you've already talked about it with EAP or initiate the conversation. You can invite them to view the employee orientation on our website, and suggest you check out the other resources also available.

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Reminding employees about EAP isn't just a one-time task. It is an ongoing process. We also suggest you have materials you can provide and you can access them through employee labor relations, HR should have them, or call our 800 number to request brochures, business cards, or to have that information sent to you electronically. As we suggested earlier, you can even invite us on to an orientation to provide orientation one of your staff meetings. If you do so it is a great way to show that you support your employees use of the services. EAP provides anywhere from three to eight counseling sessions, they are one hour in duration, the pending on your agency's plan. You may want to contact your HR department to find out how many sessions your agency offers.

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Employees are made aware that if they use EAP during work time, the supervisors to have the right to access, to find out the employees were where they said they were going to be. Another option, as I mentioned, is a letter of attendance. Employees can obtain that information from an EAP counselor and send it off to you, if that is something you are concerned with. We cannot send it directly to you, it is considered the employee's private information.

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So the key takeaways for today, EAP is a supportive resource to help you as a manager. It is designed to be one of the first calls you make to obtain resources, guidance, and even set up services. It also will help you identify and work with troubled employees, so you can intervene proactively, to get them functioning effectively as soon as possible. Our help is available 24/7, 365 days a year. You can call us at any time and speak with a licensed EAP counselor who can provide excellent guidance for any work, or employee related concerns.

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Before we close, I know from experience, even when equipped with all of this knowledge, sometimes supervisors feel uncomfortable using EAP. Being human you may experience challenges when it comes to conflict, or, concerns about talking with an employee about the problematic performance or conduct. You may feel anxious about how the employee will react, and it could further exacerbate the situation. As we discussed, we are happy to help you and offer one to one confidential guidance on how to refer specific employees to the EAP, or consult with you on how to approach difficult topics with employees, or set up other services.

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Right now I will go ahead and turn this back over to Jessica.

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Thank you Desiree. She just answered quite a few questions but we will get to your questions that have come in just a moment. First I want to remind you that if you like the information on

what was presented today, or other topics, please give a call or visit us online through FOH4You.com . This is a lot of information. Another take away might be if you have any problem work related as a manager, you are not sure what to do, give the EAP a call and will help you work through it. EAP is confidential, 24/7 to help you work for any personal or work-related issues.

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Before we get to the questions, I do want to remind you also that you will receive the recording link and transcript, copy of the slides, resource materials and one thing to note, if you've joined us before we usually send out a resource handout. This time because the EAP is the resource, we are going to send you some other manager specific materials, along with the slides, the link, as well as certificate of attendance. It will be available on FOH4You.com in about two weeks. You have a survey that you see as you exit so let us know how we did today and provide additional feedback, we do read your comments and use them to make improvements and adjustments.

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We do have questions, but before we get to that again, to clarify the question I saw, earlier, it was about requesting a health and wellness presentation. I just wanted to say, you can call and request these, but please check with your HR department first. Each agency has a different way they like to do that,, or, a channel of getting it schedule for the agency's. Please check with your HR team before making a formal request as they might have a different way for you to go about it. Desiree, the first question for you, as a supervisor how would I bring up the EAP to employees?

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What a great question. One way to do it is in a casual conversation. That EAP is a no cost benefit and resource that can help you balance the demands and concerns of work, or in your personal life. If you have material that is another way to bring that up and generally talk about that. You can also do that when you are starting to notice a change in either conduct, behavior, or performance during one of your one to ones.

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Great. The next question is could you go back over the different types of referrals?

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Absolutely. Three different types of referrals, the first is a self-referral where an employee calls and for any reason to set up services. The next is an informal referral. The informal referral is when a medical professional, supervisor, friend, or family member suggests that the employee use or access additional resources. And the employee calls in and says someone suggested that I call for services. The third one is the formal referral. That is usually when it is done accompanying progressive discipline. That is done with employee and labor relations, it is done with EAP, and finally, with the employee.

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Looks like we have time for just one more. If I call the EAP, what can I expect and what happens after I call?

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You will get a live person to speak with, a counselor, to discuss your request. And depending on what you are requesting, like whether it is group services, counseling, or a presentation, the

counselor over the phone will assess and also refer to another EAP counselor to further assist with that request and get services set up.

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Great. We are at the top of the hour and I apologize if we did not get to your question. If we were not able to answer your question please call the EAP at the number on your screen, you can have your question answered, and get answers any other specific issues you might want to discuss. Thank you all for coming and for taking the time to hear this presentation. And I do want to thank Desiree for an amazing and informative presentation.

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Thank you. And thank you all for joining and participating in the polls and asking questions. Hope to hear from you soon.

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Have a great rest of your day.

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[Event concluded]