



FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Supervisor's Guide



Federal
Occupational
Health

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

A SUPERVISOR'S GUIDE TO THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

Your organization depends on you to advance its mission. Your employees rely on you to provide consistent leadership. In today's constantly changing work environment, this can pose a challenge. Being an effective leader means motivating your employees so they are productive, satisfied, and dedicated to their work; however, sensitive issues can occasionally arise and you may need some assistance in handling them.

For example:

- A formerly reliable employee begins arriving very late several times a week
- A valued employee passes away
- Conflict arises between members of your work group
- You are notified of a pending reduction in force (RIF)
- You learn an employee is experiencing personal problems at home
- You suspect an employee is either drinking or abusing drugs on the job
- You are responsible for a new project and you want ideas for building a productive team
- You're not sure how to suggest the EAP with an employee who may benefit from it

When unique issues arise, it can be hard to decide the best course of action. But you are not alone. The EAP has experienced, licensed, and trained professionals available to respond to a range of workplace issues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The EAP is a comprehensive resource that includes:

- Worksite-based confidential assessment, referral, and short-term consultation for any personal concern
- Telephone and web-based services to help employees manage day-to-day responsibilities and life events

The resources of the program are available for you, as an employee and as a manager, whether you have a personal issue or a management-related concern.

Use of the program is free, voluntary, and completely confidential in accordance with state and federal laws.

The EAP helps with any concern or issue — it's your 24/7 resource.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE EAP?

The program offers a private source of expert consultation quickly and conveniently. You can use the EAP whenever you encounter a work situation that makes you wonder: "How should I address this? When should I talk to this employee? What is the best approach for handling this challenging situation?"

When you call the EAP, you will be connected to a master's level, licensed professional who will listen to your concerns and help you make a plan for addressing them. The counselor will guide you to a helpful range of services, from referring an employee, to counseling to dealing with a workplace conflict.

The EAP helps you navigate:

- Productivity concerns
- Relationship issues
- Performance and conduct concerns
- Incidents or crises that affect the workplace
- Absenteeism concerns

The program helps managers:

- Support employees and enhance productivity
- Choose the best response in difficult situations
- Consider ethical concerns
- Identify issues before they become problems

HELPING YOUR EMPLOYEES

How can you tell when an employee is in trouble? Usually, when employees are having difficulties, job performance or conduct suffers. The best way to determine whether your employees' personal problems are affecting job performance is to look for habitual patterns of behavior in the following areas:

ABSENTEEISM

Taking leave without authorization, frequent tardiness, leaving early, increase in requests for days off, patterns of calling in sick

PRESENTEEISM

Being at work but not fully engaged and productive due to distractions with personal health, emotional, or life issues

DECREASED PRODUCTIVITY

Work quality and/or quantity declines, inconsistent work practices, missed deadlines, impaired concentration or confusion

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE OR APPEARANCE

Unusual behavior, increased irritability, unexplained crying, isolation, increased agitation, extreme weight loss or gain, poor hygiene, change in appearance

CHANGE IN WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

Sudden complaints from co-workers about behavior, avoidance of others, unexplained oversensitivity, unexplained resentful behavior

SAFETY CONCERNS

Increased accidents, inattentiveness to safety procedures, behavior that may suggest alcohol intoxication and/or drug abuse, violent behavior



DOCUMENTING PERFORMANCE ISSUES

If you notice negative patterns of behavior or performance issues, you should:

DOCUMENT

Document performance by keeping a written record of absences, conflicts with others, missed deadlines, changes in the quality of work, or other signs of poor productivity. Also document any conversations you have with the employee.

CONTACT YOUR MANAGER

Your manager will provide consultation and inform you of past practices.

CONTACT YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

Your HR department will inform you about policies and procedures you need to follow.

Call the EAP for consultation on how to talk with the employee about performance and how to make a referral to the program.

“I called the EAP for advice on helping an employee who was having difficulties at home. I immediately spoke with a professional who helped me make a plan of action. Now my employee and my whole team are thriving.”

REFERRING EMPLOYEES TO THE EAP

Referring an employee to the program for support and direction allows you to demonstrate your concern and compassion, while remaining squarely in the “manager” role with a focus on productivity and initiating personnel action, if need be.

If you believe that an employee could benefit from one-to-one support, there are two kinds of referrals you can make.

THE INFORMAL REFERRAL

Just let the employee know that you are concerned and provide him or her with the EAP phone number, website address, and/or brochure. Let the employee know that any contact with the program is voluntary, and what is discussed is confidential.

If you need help making an informal referral, our counselors are available to walk you through the process.

THE FORMAL, WRITTEN REFERRAL

You can make a formal, written referral to the EAP as part of your effort to address an employee’s job performance or conduct issues that seem to arise from personal problems — or any reason.

While the program can assist you in making a formal, written referral, please consult your HR department for any policies or procedures around doing so. Employee participation is voluntary; however, your recommendation, along with an employee’s concern about job stability, can motivate the employee to seek help. What is discussed between the employee and the counselor is confidential.



The EAP helps address workplace productivity and well-being, and provides information and resources that help employees manage their time and responsibilities.

A WORD ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY

Counselors will only release information with the written consent of an employee, or as mandated by law in special situations. Under the law, counselors are required to report abuse of children and vulnerable adults, imminent threats of serious harm to self or others, and threats to national security. These situations are carefully outlined to employees during their first session with a counselor.

The counselor will not discuss any other personal information with an employee's supervisor. If the employee chooses to sign a Release of Information (ROI) or an Authorization to Use or Disclose Protected Health Information (AUD) form, the supervisor may be informed about, for example, follow-through with appointments, the dates of the appointments, and whether the employee complied with the counselor's recommendations.

When employees use the program outside of duty hours, the supervisor is not given any information about use of the EAP, except in instances where a breach of confidentiality is warranted, as described above.

The EAP is a confidential service in accordance with federal and state law. It is also voluntary, as is the choice to sign a ROI or AUD form. Reminding employees about this may help them feel more comfortable using the program.

WORKPLACE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

When there is an incident or crisis that affects the workplace — natural or man-made disasters, sudden violent death of an employee (on or off the job), violence or threat of violence — employees can be left with feelings of fear, grief, anxiety, and stress. These feelings are normal at such times; however, they can lead to increased absenteeism or presenteeism, disability issues, and/or increased workplace accidents and errors.

The EAP provides on-site assistance when there is a critical incident affecting the workplace. Our national network of licensed mental health professionals is specially trained in trauma and crisis response, or critical incident management.

Our workplace incident response services are available at any time. These services are tailored to what's needed and may include:

- Critical incident needs assessment
- Psychological first aid
- Educational materials
- Management consultation on incident response
- Responsive on-site support services by licensed clinicians
- Referrals to community resources
- Organizational and workplace recovery consultations
- Educational sessions on stress, grief, and coping
- Anniversary consultations and meetings



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The EAP also offers a variety of other support services for the organization that the manager can access. These offerings include:

- Reduction in force or reorganization planning and services, including consultation on framing messages and outreach promotion to employees
- Employee orientations to the EAP services and benefits
- Grief support for a loss in the workplace
- Live and on-demand educational presentations covering a variety of topics
- Online and printed educational tools and materials on a range of topics — from financial, legal, and health and wellness, to depression, anxiety, family concerns, and more

A FINAL NOTE > The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees at no cost.





COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q What should I do if I think an employee has an alcohol or other substance abuse or misuse problem?

A As a manager, you are responsible for ensuring that the workplace remains productive. Therefore, any concerns that you have about an employee should directly relate to workplace performance or conduct.

Document workplace behavior and performance issues, such as absenteeism, diminished performance, and changes in co-worker relationships.

Recognizing signs of substance abuse isn't always easy, and remember that it is not your role to diagnose. Call the program to discuss your concerns and contact your HR department to determine any additional steps to take.

Q What should I do if there is a threat or actual violence?

A Threats of violence can pose real risks to your staff, and your agency. Violence can take many forms and may include aggressive and intimidating behavior; harassment; verbal, physical, and insinuated threats; actual assault; throwing objects; destroying property; and vandalism. Also, domestic violence can follow an employee to the workplace and pose a threat to the entire staff.

Consult with HR, security personnel, and our professional counselors. In an emergency, call 911 immediately or the emergency number designated by your agency or facility.

Q An employee is really down. I think she's depressed and it's affecting her work. What should I do?

A As a manager, you are responsible for ensuring workplace productivity.

Since this employee's workplace performance has deteriorated, it's appropriate for you to take some action. Depression, which can be a complex and prolonged illness that should be diagnosed and treated by a mental health professional, can take a toll on an employee's health, personal life, and professional life.

If you address an employee's performance or conduct problems, it can prompt the employee to examine underlying health issues. Call the EAP for more information about how to talk to an employee who may be depressed.



24 HOURS A DAY
1-800-222-0364
FOH4You.com

EAP



Federal Occupational Health is a component of
Program Support Center within the
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services