



Volume 23, Issue 2

Solutions

A newsletter for managers, supervisors and human resource staff eligible for Kepro services

The following questions and answers are designed to help provide assistance related to challenges that supervisors may be facing. If any of these scenarios resonates with you, consider contacting Kepro EAP for guidance.

As a supervisor, what should I do when an employee divulges a serious personal problem? It's hard to not offer immediate advice in this situation, in addition to suggesting they contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Your role is to show your support, be available, interested, and empathic when an employee shares something personal. Doing this will help prepare your employee to take the next step toward accepting your suggestion to contact the EAP. To be empathic, acknowledge the stress or anxiety shared by the employee, through statements such as “that sounds really difficult”. Tell the employee you are glad he or she felt comfortable enough to share the information with you. You might say that since you aren't a professional, you want to make sure they get the most effective tips and advice from a professional who does this for a living and has the training and knowledge to resolve the situation. Keep the EAP contact information handy so you are prepared to share it when necessary. Invite the employee to use the phone in your office or to take a break and go somewhere private to make the first call.

One of my employees who is typically outgoing has become really withdrawn. He's had to take time off to deal with legal issues related to a divorce. I heard him telling a coworker that he feels like everything is pointless. What should I do?

If you notice a change in behavior of an employee, it's a good time to talk to them about your observations, express support for their wellbeing, and encourage the use of the EAP for assistance. In this situation, the employee has shared information with a colleague which would indicate that he could be thinking about taking his life. Those at risk of suicide have often experienced a significant stressor or loss – in this case the loss of a relationship, potential custody issues and financial strain. You'd want to meet with him immediately to express your concern and talk to him about using the EAP for support. You would call the EAP and explain the situation and then place the employee on the phone. The counselor would do a full assessment and assist him in scheduling an appointment with a

local counselor. When in doubt about what to do, contact the EAP for assistance developing a plan. If at any point you become concerned that he is going to do something immediate, calling 911 is the best option.



I attended an EAP supervisor training that discussed constructive confrontation and referral of troubled employees. I understand how to do it, but to be honest, I have always been afraid of confronting employees and typically just avoid it. How can I overcome this fear?

Supervisors who resist talking to employees about issues affecting their performance or the workplace sometimes struggle with other forms of communication as well, including giving positive feedback. Build your constructive confrontation skills with the “sandwiching technique”, providing positive feedback and some corrective instruction, and then closing with a restatement of a positive observation about the employee's performance. Example: “Jane, good work on helping that customer yesterday. Next time remember to use the new codes so it will go faster for you. I was especially impressed with your patience.” Imagine your boss offering no feedback at all. How would it feel? This awareness may motivate you to do it more often. You might think about meeting with an EAP counselor who can help role-play a constructive confrontation with you to build your skills at providing feedback. Talk to the EAP counselor about your concerns with confronting employees.

I recommended my employee visit the EAP to resolve problems with a roommate whose partying and disruptive behavior are causing the employee to come in late nearly every day. This was not a formal referral, but how long should I wait to see changes in the employee's attendance?

Expect changes the next day. You made a suggestion to visit the EAP as a normal part of the corrective process with this employee. It is his or her job to make the change. Expect results immediately unless some accommodation officially required by a health care provider is requested and considered in consultation with your HR or management adviser. Many supervisors have the mistaken belief that their hands are tied for an uncertain time period after a referral to the EAP or that they must accept unsatisfactory performance until the employee can "get up to speed" or until counseling can have its desired effect. A troubled employee may attempt to convince you to accept this sort of faulty thinking. If change is not forthcoming, it's time to make a formal referral (dependent on your organization's policy).



Our management team had a private meeting to discuss an employee's absenteeism problem. The employee is now saying he has contacted the EAP for help with a personal issue before we were able to suggest he contact the EAP. It seems like he knew his job could be on the line and isn't really sincere about getting help. Should we be skeptical?

Although it may not look this way, the process is working to motivate the employee to make a change. When the organization demonstrated it was firm about taking action, this employee accessed the EAP, having recognized your intentions. Employees with difficult personal

problems characterized by denial and the inability to control symptoms will almost never enter counseling or treatment until they experience duress. Your meeting to discuss this situation triggered the constructive behavior. The "reality check" motivated the employee to seek professional counseling immediately. The motivating factor is fear of job loss. Should you be skeptical or feel manipulated? Is this sincere? No one can say yet. However, consistent with many employees in the same situation who suddenly head for counseling or treatment, this employee probably feels urgency and is frightened, and therefore is sincere and motivated, at least for now. Beyond effective treatment, the employee remaining motivated and involved in counseling or treatment will be greatly influenced by well-organized, follow-up communication involving the EAP, you, and the employee.

Kepro's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Program through Kepro assists organizations and their workforce in managing the personal challenges that impact employee well-being, performance and effectiveness. Kepro's life management consultants employ a comprehensive approach that identifies issues impacting the employee and assists them in developing meaningful solutions.

The Employee Assistance Program can be accessed anytime, for free, confidential support from a professional consultant or online resource. Call or log on today.

Phone:

Website:

Company Code:

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