

Tip Sheet: EAP as a Management Tool

As a manager or supervisor, your primary role is to maintain the safety and productivity of the workplace. However, you may find it difficult to help an employee when you suspect that personal problems have impaired their job performance. The EAP provides additional options in many of these types of situations. In some instances, employees will contact EAP on their own. At other times, you may suggest that employees contact the EAP. You can also formally refer an employee to the EAP when their work performance problems do not respond to standard supervisory interventions. The EAP can help you address management issues, performance problems and all kinds of situations you may not be quite sure how to handle. It can help make your job easier and less stressful.

Why Should Managers Know About the EAP?

Managers can be one of the best referral resources for the EAP, and employees may come to you looking for advice or direction. As a manager, you want to assist employees with issues that arise in the workplace. To do so, you can utilize the EAP as a resource for both you and your employees. For almost any issue that an employee is struggling with, the EAP can provide a resource to help. You can offer your concern and assist the employee in making connections to the EAP. Promoting the EAP as an employer-sponsored benefit is good for your company and for your employees.

Why Use the EAP as a Management Tool?

The EAP is an excellent management tool, once you understand how it works and what it offers. Management Consultation is a confidential source of guidance and information to help you:

- Provide encouragement and support to your employees during difficult situations.
- Address small issues before they become larger problems.
- Show compassion and caring for your employees.
- Develop a plan to deal with employee performance issues.
- Save valuable time by providing solutions to a wide array of employee issues.
- Intervene on personal issues that interfere with workplace functioning and productivity.
- Create a more satisfied and productive workforce.

How To Use the EAP

You can call the EAP to discuss your concerns and explore options, brainstorm solutions and develop a personal action plan. You can also receive information on how your EAP benefit can assist you and your employees.

How to Use the EAP as a Management Tool

Dealing with performance problems may be one of the most common and challenging tasks you face as a manager. At some point, you'll need to talk to an employee about a performance issue. The following are two different ways a manager can refer an employee to the EAP.

- **Informal Referral:** You can offer the EAP to employees on an informal basis as a way to help them deal with personal problems that aren't yet affecting their work performance. This is called an "Informal Referral." When you initiate an informal referral, you suggest or encourage an employee to use the EAP.

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However, since the EAP is a confidential benefit, you will not know whether the employee chooses to follow through. Therefore, you will want to continue to monitor the employee's performance and productivity.

- **Formal Management Referral:** Serious job performance problems, violations of workplace policies (sexual harassment, drug-free workplace, etc.) or disruptive behaviors in the workplace may warrant a more formal type of referral to the EAP. Initiating a Formal Management Referral provides an employee the opportunity to address an issue that may be affecting work performance, while providing you the assurance that the issue is being addressed in the most appropriate manner. For you to receive updates regarding an employee's compliance with the recommended services, the employee must sign a Release of Information form (an ROI). In some cases, a formal management referral to the EAP may be mandatory and a condition of the employee's continued employment.

The EAP provides consultation to help you decide which type of referral is appropriate, and how to proceed. You will also be directed to consult your company policy and/or HR representative as you make your decision.

Consider a Formal Management Referral When:

- You observe a pattern of performance and/or behavior problems.
- You want to use the EAP as part of a Performance Improvement Plan.
- You need confirmation of the employee's follow-through with the EAP referral process and recommendations, if given.

When Else Should You Use the EAP?

- Whenever you find yourself worrying about an employee's welfare.
- Whenever someone's work is suffering because of personal concerns.
- Whenever a crisis strikes.
- Whenever you encounter a situation that makes you wonder, "How should I handle this?"

For more information about using the EAP as a Management Tool, or to request a Management Consultation, contact SupportLinc.