

THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

Helping you manage your most valuable resource: Employees

November 2022

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have related to their employees and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to EAP for a management consultation at (608) 775-4780 or (800) 327-9991.

Q: I learned at the holiday party that my employee's son has a drug problem. Although the employee isn't aware that I learned this from a neighbor, should I encourage him to take advantage of EAP?

A: Your employee has never disclosed information to you about his child's drug problem, so there is no reason to suggest that he use EAP. In addition, you must assume that the employee would have told you if he wanted you to know. It is important for him to know that EAP is available for any personal problem, but singling him out to let him know it would not be appropriate. Although you were told about his son's problem by a neighbor, you don't have firsthand information about specifics, which may be quite different from the neighbor's account. As an employer, you are well advised to avoid initiating discussions with your employee about his personal life or his problems, even if you are close enough to be invited to his home for a party.

Q: We are a large company and have an employee with a chronic absenteeism problem. He calls in sick with colds or sore throats too often. Going to EAP has not helped him.

A: If you have not consulted with EAP, you should ask your employee to sign a release so you can do so. You may also need to consult with your human resources specialist to determine a fair but conclusive response to this absenteeism problem. EAP may have made recommendations that simply are not being followed. You and your organization need to decide how much absenteeism can be tolerated based on the burden this problem posed, existing policies or laws and precedents for accommodating the same degree of absenteeism from other employees. Excessive absenteeism that disrupts or diminishes your organization's operational effectiveness is an expensive burden. So, a question to consider is whether he can remain qualified for his position if he is unable to show up enough.

Q: I easily get angry and blow up at some of my employees. I'll admit, it's a bad habit. I would like to contain my temper better. Any tips for gaining control?

A: Anger is a powerful emotion that often requires more than a simple decision to improve its management. A programmatic approach is sometimes needed to make a permanent change. One well-known technique for managing anger requires, first, that you keep a journal and make a notation immediately after an anger incident by recording the first symptom of anger experienced. Second, write down exactly what triggered the anger. Third, record how you responded. Fourth, identify what you did well in the anger management situation, and fifth, make a notation about what you can do differently the next time a similar incident occurs. It's likely you'll see noticeable changes in the way you manage

anger after approximately seven to eight journal entries. Remember to rely upon EAP for help to get a better picture of what might be contributing to the anger management problem.

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