

THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

Helping you manage your most valuable resource: Employees

February 2023

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: It appears that many psychotherapists charge high fees for counseling. How does EAP assist employees in obtaining excellent counseling services when they can't afford high fees?

A: Not all therapists charge the same rates. Employee Assistance professionals often know therapists who are willing to tailor their fees or billing practices to meet the need of employees who are financially strapped. Community mental health centers, which usually charge fees on a sliding scale, can be excellent source of affordable therapy services. In fact, they can equal the quality of services provided by private therapists. Sometimes employees will achieve better results in resolving their problems through group therapy or even self-help groups rather than individual or couples therapy. For example, counseling to deal with grief and loss might be more appropriate in a group where others can provide understanding, support, and reciprocal empathy. In such cases, Employee Assistance professionals should encourage employees to consider the most effective means of help and reduce therapy costs at the same time.

Q: I became upset with an employee who argued with me. I made an EAP referral and imposed a written disciplinary action. He then had it nullified by promptly appealing to my supervisor. Where did I go wrong?

A: Obviously your supervisor does not agree with the disciplinary action you dispensed. You may also be upset because she did not support you. It appears that you reacted in the "heat of the moment." It is usually possible to end an emotionally charged discussion and return to it later, rather than act on impulse. You can then take time to calm down and think about what you want to do. Explaining the basis for the action to your supervisor and gaining support for it can prevent what you have experienced. Before taking disciplinary action, always discuss the performance problem in detail with the employee. Be specific and cite examples. Suggesting concrete remedial steps and deadlines for improvement may ultimately make

disciplinary action unnecessary. Such a discussion takes preparation, of course, but without it disciplinary actions appear arbitrary to employees.

Q: I've heard the term "Type A" used to describe someone who is compulsive and a perfectionist. As a supervisor, I admit that sounds like me sometimes, but what does this term really mean?

A: In the 1950's, two California physicians conducted research in an attempt to predict what types of personalities were likely to be associated with having a heart attack. People with personality traits that made them likely to have a heart attack were called Type A. Those without such traits were called Type B. A Type A person is *not* more achievement oriented than a Type B person. Internally, however, they respond differently. People with Type A personalities experience a chronic sense of time urgency; have a hard-driving and competitive orientation; strongly dislike being idle; and are chronically impatient with people and situations that are seen as blocking efforts to get things accomplished. Type B persons are just as achievement oriented; it's just that Type B's do not create the internal psychological and physiological havoc to which Type A's subject themselves. The advice for Type A's: Easy does it.

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