

THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

Helping you manage your most valuable resource: Employees

December 2025

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. My employee says she is bored with her job. She comes to work late, doesn't complete assignments and says she doesn't have the energy to be the performer she used to be. I can't refer her to EAP for boredom, can I?

A. You can't refer your employee to EAP for boredom because it is not a measurable performance problem, but you can refer her for attendance, incomplete assignments and unsatisfactory performance. It is a misstep in managing a troubled employee to accept at face value the employee's self-diagnosis ("I'm bored.") because there is no way to confirm it, and it can leave you feeling at a loss about what to do. Your employee might be bored, but she could also be depressed. Many other issues may contribute to what appears to be boredom. As a first step, encourage your employee to visit EAP as a self-referral to address her feelings of boredom. Also ask what she needs from you to feel more enthusiastic about work. If she is unwilling to consider using EAP, she has not done everything reasonable to improve her performance. Don't accept a lower standard of performance because of boredom.

Q. Two groups of employees in our organization are in ongoing conflict. The negative impact on productivity is very clear. I know EAP works with individual employees and coworkers in conflict, but what about larger "inter-group" conflicts?

A. Examine the conflict between the two work groups, then meet with EAP to see if its capabilities and scope of services match your intervention needs. Inter-group conflict may be fueled by organizational issues that members have little control over, specific underlying needs and personal issues of individual group members, or both. EAP may be appropriate for any part of the conflict, or it may refer you to other intervention services within your organization. Discuss with EAP the issues of the conflict, the fighting and making-up pattern between the groups, how they retaliate with each other, the role of individual employees, and the degree to which employees feel fatigue and desire for resolution of their conflict. Bring these issues to EAP. Together, you and EAP can identify a strategy for helping to resolve the conflict.

Q. My employee is a good worker, but he's a "clock-watcher." He always leaves on time. His behavior has a negative impact on morale because other employees must pitch in and take care of unpredictable work demands. Is there a way to intervene?

A. If your employee watches the clock to leave on time, he obviously either must leave on time, or experiences a positive incentive to leave and not stay longer to do more. You may have little control over these factors. It is more important to be concerned about the morale of coworkers. You may have more control and influence over this issue. Consider rewarding or recognizing employees who put in extra time and complete more work. Making this recognition public in front of peers is a proven morale booster and motivator. There is no guarantee that your employee will stay longer by witnessing the rewards given to others for going above and beyond the call of duty, but it should have a positive impact on morale. Eventually, you may wish to recognize initiative or quantity of work accomplished on performance evaluations so employees who do more feel appreciated.

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