



Volume 26, Issue 1

Solutions

A newsletter designed to support leadership and human resource staff



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HEALTH

The following questions and answers are designed to provide practical guidance related to issues that supervisors may be facing. Acentra Health, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides confidential consultation to managers seeking guidance related to a variety of workplace challenges.

I want to get off on the right foot as a new supervisor and develop solid relationships with each of my employees. What are some recommended steps?

Employees want meaningful relationships with supervisors, so taking this initiative is a good decision. Take time to introduce yourself personally to each employee if possible. Schedule informal meetings or coffee chats to get to know them on a more personal level. Ask about the employee's role, ideas for the job, responsibilities, and goals. Keeping a few notes will aid you in future communication regarding work preferences and concerns. Consider observing employees throughout the year, listening to what they say and how they say it. You will gain a keen sense of their work style. Do you have appropriate access to the past performance records? If so, review these files to understand needs, areas for improvement, skills, abilities, and where the employee can be celebrated. Finally, watch how employees interact with each other. You will get clearer insights on cooperation levels, leadership potential, team dynamics, or problems that may later require your intervention. This is an ongoing process, but with an "open door" policy for engaging with employees, you will develop a strong team.

I am a new supervisor and do not want to become a controlling boss. How can I avoid making employees feel stressed, anxious, and pressured?

Avoid the following behaviors and you will be seen as a supportive leader:

- Constantly monitoring and micromanaging as well as excessively checking up;
- Setting unrealistic deadlines; Demanding an immediate response to issues and problems;
- Overloading employees with work that can't reasonably be completed in a specific time frame;
- Ignoring employee input and ideas;
- Taking credit—even a little—for your employee's work, or failing to acknowledge the team's contributions;
- Showing a lack of empathy for an employee's personal problem or crisis at home, and instead focusing only on the work (suggest the EAP as a way to be supportive);
- Ignoring personal boundaries by expecting employees always to be available;
- Nitpicking about small stuff, like within a report, without acknowledging the greater effort.



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My employee is involved in a divorce, and it has been very disruptive to his attention and performance and it's also hard for me to see him struggling. He's mentioned that there are legal and parental issues. I want to suggest that he meet with a counselor through the EAP. How do I encourage him to get support for himself?

It would help to explain all the ways that an EAP counselor could help during this life transition. A counselor can offer the following:

- Emotional support: Taking advantage of the fact that the EAP is a safe and confidential space to express feelings and emotions related to the divorce.
- Coping strategies: Learning effective coping strategies to manage stress, anxiety, and turmoil.
- Time management: Organizing time to balance work responsibilities and personal needs during this challenging period to avoid getting overwhelmed.
- Communication skills: Improving communication skills to help navigate difficult conversations, especially with children.
- Conflict resolution: Receiving guidance on resolving conflicts at the office or in personal relationships.
- Self-care practices: Exploring activities to promote physical and mental well-being to counterbalance the stress of the divorce.

- Goal setting: Helping the employee maintain a sense of direction and purpose.
- Referrals: Directing to additional resources or support services, such as legal assistance, financial consultations, assisting with locating housing options, support groups, and more.

I've been avoiding talking to my employee about a decline in performance over the past few months. What's the best way to handle this?

Start by scheduling a time to talk to your employee about what you've observed. Provide clear examples of what constitutes an acceptable performance. This will help the employee visualize what compliance looks like, what is expected, and how to achieve it. Meet with the employee regularly to discuss progress and conduct a corrective interview. This will give you the opportunity to provide real-time feedback and address any concerns or questions. Always keep a record of meetings and what was discussed and provide the employee with a copy of this record. Follow your organization's HR and labor policies for managing workers' performance issues. You can recommend that the employee contact the EAP at any point along the timeline, especially if the employee raises any concerns about situations in their personal life impacting work.

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As a supervisor I really care about my employees' overall wellbeing. Sometimes they'll mention personal challenges in casual conversation that I think the EAP could help resolve. I want to normalize reaching out for help. How should I do this?

Everyday challenges can significantly affect an employee's well-being and productivity. It is crucial to remind employees periodically about the EAP service and its strict confidentiality guidelines. If you have used the EAP yourself, consider sharing your experience to help model and normalize using the EAP as a resource. Share this non-exhaustive list of issues that may affect employees, to help them consider using the EAP program for support, guidance, counseling, and other resources:

- Caring for children and aging parents;
- Dealing with the loss of a loved one or coping with other grief;
- Career advancement, skill development, or career transitions;
- Legal advice or financial consultation for non-work-related matters;
- Managing anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns;
- Coping with traumatic events in their personal life, and more.

Employees Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides counseling sessions at no cost, as well as a wide variety of services to enhance overall wellbeing and support healthy work/life balance. In addition, the EAP is available to provide meaningful solutions to address the many challenging situations facing those in management roles. Leaders can take advantage of unlimited management consultations and receive guidance and assistance related to employee and team functioning concerns.

The EAP can be accessed anytime. For free, confidential support from a licensed, experienced counselor, call today. You can also access helpful management tips and resources on the website.

 **Phone: 1.800.833.3031**

 **Website: www.EAPHelplink.com**

 **Company Code: IOWA**

Solutions is a newsletter for managers, supervisors and human resource staff eligible for Acentra Health services. Acentra Health EAP services provide assistance and guidance to supervisors dealing with workplace performance issues. This newsletter is intended for general information purposes only and is not intended to replace the counsel or advice of a qualified health professional. Individuals should follow the policies and procedures laid out by their human resource management department concerning use of the EAP. Some articles reprinted with permission from DFA Publishing and Consulting, LLC. Acentra Health, McLean, VA. All rights reserved.