Employee Assistance Program

Supervisor Handbook

... here for you as life happens

Alliance Work Partners a professional service of Workers Assistance Program, Inc.

© Alliance Work Partners 2016
Supervisor Handbook

Table of Contents

Section I – Using your Employee Assistance Program
   Eligibility for EAP Services
   The Supervisory/Managerial Referral
   Procedures

Section II – Observation

Section III – Documentation
   Put it in writing
   How to document incidents of poor work performance
   What should be documented

Section IV – Interview
   Meeting with the employee
   Preparing for corrective action
   During the discussion

Section V – Referral
   Presenting the EAP

Section VI – Follow-Up
   The managerial role after referral
   Follow through after the Supervisory Referral
   Confidentiality
   What you can expect from the EAP after a referral
One of the most interesting and complicated parts of being a supervisor/manager is dealing with employees as human beings. Problems come up and more often than many people admit.

You, as the supervisor/manager, are the one who must handle work performance problems – the absenteeism, the mistakes, the conflicts, the deteriorating performance. You are instrumental in making and carrying out the difficult decisions that can lead to discipline or termination of a once valued employee.

By investing in an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), your organization has taken action to help your valued employees perform. This booklet summarizes how to use your program to the best advantage of everyone – your employer, your employees and yourself. We ask that you read it then keep it handy for reference when the need arises.

There are a number of ways to access the EAP – including self-referral and supervisory/management referral. To assist you in making supervisor/management referrals, Alliance Work Partners has developed our Procedural Referral process.

The Procedural Referral process provides services to managers and supervisors in making referrals to the EAP. The service is accessed by calling 1-800-343-3822 and you will speak with a mental health professional who triages the calls. AWP Case Management staff will provide management consultation, follow-up and compliance monitoring.

Solving Job Performance Problems

A portion of any labor force is experiencing personal problems at any one time. Such problems develop at all levels of the work force; no one is immune from personal difficulties.

Troubled employees may suffer anxiety, depression, confusion, low self-esteem and fear. Their problems affect their families, their friends, their work situations and their supervisors/managers.

Your EAP gives employees a chance to get professional assistance in assessing their problems and needs, and it gives supervisors/managers a wider range of possibilities before disciplinary action or termination is necessary. **Intelligent use of your EAP is the key to its success.**
Eligibility for EAP Services

Employees of your company, their immediate family members and dependents and household members may use this service. Your EAP offers assessment and referral (at no cost to the employee) in a variety of situations:

- Family
- Personal/Emotional
- Marital/Relationship
- Substance Abuse
- Financial
- Legal
- Job Related

Most employees contact the EAP on their own. They want help with their problems and they see the benefits of using professional services. Sometimes family members make initial contacts for employees or for themselves. These are known as Self Referrals.

The Supervisory/Managerial Referral

The following is a guide to help you determine when to make a referral. There are three types of Supervisor/management Referrals and you need to know which are available to you based on your company’s policies. Always follow your company’s policies regarding EAP referrals since each company has different policies developed by the Human Resources and the Legal departments.

A - Informal Referral:

If an employee needs help in dealing with a personal problem that has not begun to affect work performance, acknowledge the employee’s concerns, give information about the EAP and suggest that they call the EAP for assistance. This is totally voluntary and the supervisor gets no feedback regarding the employee’s follow through.

The following are Supervisor Referral Scenarios where you may want to consider making a Procedural Referral. Remember to consult with your Human Resources Department before making a Procedural Referral.

- The employee’s behavior is affecting work performance.
- You have begun documenting performance problems.
- The employee self-identified drug or alcohol problems.
- This employee tested positive for drugs or alcohol.
Procedures

Your company has its own rules and policies governing poor work performance. An EAP does not replace or change those guidelines, so you should continue to use them as you have done in the past.

Most work settings have procedures similar to those we will outline. It is important that you use defined procedures. They protect you from charges of unfairness and illegality, and they help minimize your possible discomfort with the personal aspects of employee confrontation.

B - Formal Referral:

You will call the EAP for a consultation and complete the following steps. Identify the work performance issues. Develop a plan for constructive confrontation. Speak with the employee. Discuss your concerns in specific behavioral terms. Develop a performance improvement plan, including a time frame for improvement. Inform the employee that you would like feedback from the EAP – to include the scheduling of an appointment, keeping an appointment, and following the treatment plan. The EAP will have the employee sign a release of information so you can get feedback regarding compliance with recommendations. You may call the EAP while speaking to the employee to encourage follow through.

C - Mandatory Referral:

The procedure is the same as the Formal Referral above. Using Mandatory Referrals are reserved for the following situations – when the employee is close to termination and is offered a “last chance agreement”; when an employee has violated DOT or DOD regulations; or when an employee has a security clearance or is in a safety sensitive position. Be sure to follow your company’s written policies related to referrals. Review the referral with Human Resources, and if available, your Legal Department. Then call the EAP for a consultation and to develop a plan for the intervention. Meet with the employee and outline your expectations. The EAP will have the employee sign a release of information so you can get feedback regarding compliance with recommendations.

All Procedural Referrals are case managed and all drug and alcohol cases are followed for one year if they are diagnosed with substance abuse. If they are diagnosed with behavioral issues (anger management), they are followed up with until they complete their EAP sessions.

The EAP is there for your use with an employee whose work is deteriorating or not up to par.
The first step for the supervisor/manager is observation.

Unsatisfactory or deteriorating work often takes these forms:

- Inconsistent Productivity
- Wide Variation in Quality of Work or Poor Attendance
- Frequent Lateness
- Excessive Sick Leave
- Neglectful Attitudes toward Assignments and Deadlines
- Moodiness, Depression, Anxiety
- Blaming Others
- Irritability
- Avoidance of Co-Workers and Supervisor/Manager

You are looking for patterns – not single events.

Needless to say, one or two incidents do not warrant extreme concern. However, it is best to catch problems as early as possible. Your silence might allow incidents to become habits. The fact is most poor work performance issues become more troublesome when they are not addressed. The earlier you recognize and address a situation, the earlier you can find a solution.

Acknowledging and addressing an employee with poor work performance can be an uncomfortable task. This is more difficult when that person is a friend or valued colleague.

But ignoring the situation is not helping the employee. Family and friends often cover for or ignore a person’s unacceptable behaviors. Because your role is monitoring job performance, you are in a key position to see a person’s behavioral patterns and changes. Your acknowledgement can be a strong motivation for the person to face his or her unacceptable behavior and understand the necessity of changing.

A responsible Supervisor/Manager can be the best resource for a troubled employee.
Document

Document the facts in an incident file. Write down the specifics – how many days absent or late, poor productivity, errors, etc. Include the date, time, place and nature of the incident and the names of any other persons involved.

Documentation clarifies the situation for you and for the records. It helps you communicate specifics to the employee and facilitates discussion. It also provides you legal protection.

Put It In Writing!

Nobody likes to take time to write down what seems to be obvious. When someone is late, they are late. When they have a bad attitude, it is plain to see.

But think about it a month later – or two months later. How many times was that administrative assistant actually late? And the day your assistant had such a surly disposition – was that also the day your son scraped the car fender? You were pretty grouchy yourself that day.

Although you may be sure in your own mind of the date, time and attitudes, it needs to be formally documented. If you do not have it documented correctly, a troubled employee is going to look for every loophole possible to keep himself off the “hot seat” and you on it! You cannot afford that.

If you are going to maintain a smooth, efficient operation in your department, you have to treat all employees consistently and with no wasted motions. Consistent actions and documentation is your best protection against misunderstandings.

It doesn’t take long to make a note here, a quick entry there. It’s a small price to pay for the double security of avoiding the “hot seat” yourself and helping an employee deal squarely with a work-hampering problem.

Think of it like this – if its important enough to take notice, then take note.
Section III – Documentation

How to Document Incidents of Poor Work Performance

1. Write down the incidents of poor work performance as they happen. Be clear, concise and include: date, time and specifics of events.
2. Be objective. Record actual events, actions and behaviors – not impressions or hearsay.
3. Documentation should include acceptable as well as unacceptable behaviors.
4. All documents/information should be treated as confidential and only discussed with the employee in question, your supervisor and/or the EAP counselor.

What Should Be Documented

1. Any decline in work performance, e.g.: missed deadlines, increased mistakes, poor judgment, work taking more time, inconsistent work pattern, low efficiency, inability to work cooperatively with co-workers.
2. Attendance records (ensure they are correct and accurate).
   - Absenteeism: frequent accidents, frequent questionable excuses
   - Tardiness: frequent abuse of breaks and lunch period
   - Lateness
3. Supervisory/managerial warnings and reprimands – both oral and written.
4. As a supervisor/manager, record your recommendation of how to improve/solve the problem. If the suggestions made during the informal interview did not resolve the problem, document why and try to explore alternative recommendations in subsequent meetings.
5. Forms or memoranda to an employee should record the expected time frame for improvement, a realistic one that you have discussed with the employee.
6. In each case, you must specify if this is the first or second warning, the meeting recommending an EAP referral, or that you are simply proceeding with administrative action.
7. For the protection of both supervisor/manager and employee, it is helpful to have both sign these letters that record what was discussed and agreed upon. The employee keeps one copy of the letter and so does the supervisor/manager. If a referral is made to the EAP counselor, it is helpful to send a copy to the EAP.

A final piece of documentation to help ensure a successful outcome is an “information release” form provided by the EAP to each employee. A release of information specifies what information can be released and protects the employee’s rights to confidentiality.
Meeting with the Employee

As a supervisor, productivity and job performance are your main concerns. Motivating employees and reviewing performance problems are two of your major responsibilities. When faced with performance problems, your challenge is to seek performance improvement and to remain objective and effective. It is crucial during a meeting to be clear and concise with employees about their performance and act in a professional manner.

Preparing for the Corrective Interview

☐ Consult with Human Resources and have on hand the company’s personnel policies and disciplinary procedures.
☐ Meet with the employee as soon as an established pattern had developed.
☐ Arrange to have the discussion in a private office or conference room with the door closed.
☐ Plan in advance the structure and goals of the meeting.
☐ Focus on measurable items, actions and behavior, not the person.

Summarize the discussion and plan to follow-up on improvement/progress at appropriate, regular intervals.

The performance Improvement Plan can be used to structure your feedback to the employee. You may want to check with your Human Resources Department. They may have specific forms they want you to use.

During the Discussion

✓ Review performance objectively
✓ Stress the seriousness of the situation
✓ Present a Performance Improvement Plan
✓ Outline the EAP availability and services
✓ Make sure the employee knows that the performance must be corrected
✓ Stick to the facts
✓ Avoid emotional manipulation
Presenting the EAP

Explaining the EAP requires tact. Unfortunately, many people still have a negative attitude toward seeking professional help for personal problems. Be careful that the employee does not see the referral as a punishment.

Employees need to know that their voluntary use of the EAP is not entered in their work records, and that it in no way jeopardizes their job security – any more than going to a dentist would. They also need to understand that the strictest confidentiality is maintained regarding their voluntary use of the program and the nature of any problems in their lives. If there is a formal referral or procedural referral, the employee is asked to sign a release of information to inform the referring supervisor whether the employee made an appointment, kept the appointment, and is following treatment plan. The information given to the employer is limited by the release and does not include specifics regarding the employee’s personal issues.

Helpful Suggestions

- **Do not attempt to discuss an employee’s personal problems.** You may not have the necessary training and skills to counsel. Personal problems are sensitive and highly complicated. You do not want to be seen as meddling. Guard against being emotionally manipulated. Be as supportive as you can, but maintain your position that the performance on the job must improve. Focus on job performance.

- **Describe – don’t evaluate.** For example, say, “Pat, I see that you have taken sick leave six Mondays in the last two months.” Do not say, “Pat, you must be drinking on weekends, since you are never here on Mondays.”

- **Do not rely on your memory.** Have your incident file – days absent, sick leave, mistakes, accidents, etc… - in front of you. It is likely that you will run into defensive, upset and hostile reactions. Do not let yourself be led from your main point: That work performance must improve.

- **Stick to what you can document.** If the employee thinks your points are based on hearsay or vague reports, he or she may not be convinced that your criticisms are fair. Most people are not very objective about themselves. Remember to bring up only behavior you are willing to confront, and that the employee cannot reasonably refute. Specific behavioral observations and documented facts are your most convincing approach.

- **Do not try to diagnose an employee’s problem.** So-called “obvious” problems are sometimes the most difficult to diagnose accurately. Avoid “isms” and labels. Leave diagnosis to trained professionals.

- **Do not make idle threats.** Explain clearly what will happen if work performance does not improve. You must be able to follow through on any action you use as a warning. Otherwise, the employee (and co-workers) will not take you seriously.

- **Be honest, be firm and be respectful.** Remember that a “straight-on” approach encourages respect on both sides. It is a clear indication that you, as supervisor/manger, can be trusted. Don’t ignore the situation.
The Managerial Role after Referral

After you have met with your employee where you outlined the performance issues, strategies for improvement and presented the formal referral to the EAP, contact Alliance Work Partners at 800-343-3822 to “register” the referral. The Case Manager will contact you to discuss the specifics of the performance issues and to provide further consultation. Your Account Manager will also be notified of the referral and is also available for consultation.

A supervisor cannot expect to learn the nature of the details of an employee’s personal situation. Confidentiality standards forbid giving information about the problem or the referral, if one is made. Once an employee has made contact with AWP, no information may be given without a written release of information.

If a counselor obtains permission from the employee, more information may be shared with the referring supervisor.

An employee will not always be able or willing to bring performance issues up to par. Success cannot always be guaranteed, no matter how much good will and effort go into an employee’s improvement.

**Whether an employee’s case ends in termination, disciplinary action or job performance improvement, you have gained in these ways:**

- You have identified and faced an unacceptable work related behavior.
- You have handled it with clarity, compassion and scope.
- You have fulfilled your responsibilities to your company, yourself and especially, to the unit you supervise.
- You have brought the conflict to a responsible and timely conclusion.

*It is important to maintain strictest confidentiality at all times.*
Section VI – Follow-Up

Following through after the EAP Supervisory Referral

√ Continue to openly communicate with the employee on performance issues.
√ Continue to document and monitor performance issues clearly.
√ Provide specific measurable behaviors to the employee on how he/she can meet performance goals.
√ Consider a time frame on when you expect the performance to improve.
√ Provide feedback to the employee on what is going well and what is not going well.
√ Encourage the employee to sign a release of information so the EAP can communicate with you regarding the employee’s participation. *(If the employee does not sign a release of information, we will be unable to share the information on whether or not the employee is participating.)*
√ Remember that the referred employee should not be treated any differently with respect to performance expectations.
√ Remember that the referred employee is not protected from further disciplinary action by virtue of accessing the EAP.
Confidentiality

One of the biggest concerns of employees using a referral or counseling service is confidentiality.

Everyone who voluntarily uses the EAP is protected by professional standards of confidentiality, as well as by federal and state law.

It is important that you communicate to the employee that no information regarding their confidential situation will be transmitted without their express written permission.

Clarify that no information regarding EAP voluntary use will enter the employee’s records.

What You Can Expect From The EAP After The Referral Has Been Made

✓ Consultation on performance issues that led to referral.
✓ Collaboration with the supervisor on addressing the employee’s performance issues.
✓ Request for ongoing feedback from the supervisor on any performance issues.
✓ Monthly follow up with the employee if referral is for substance abuse.
✓ Consultation on ways to support and manage the employee during the process.

We are your partners is assessing, identifying and creating action plans for improving employee performance.

800-343-3822
TDD 800-448-1823
AM@alliancewp.com
www.AWPnow.com

Please contact your Account Manager for login information
Alliance Work Partners is a professional service of Workers Assistance Program, Inc.