

# THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

*Helping you manage your most valuable resource: Employees*

## March 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:** We met with an employee to confront her about a continuing absenteeism problem. She told us she was using EAP, but this couldn't be confirmed. What's our next step?

**A:** You should make a supervisory referral to EAP and request that the employee sign a release so you can learn of her attendance. The employee's report of prior EAP involvement should not interfere with this decision. It would be tempting to accept the employee's word for her participation in EAP and not make a supervisory referral. Even if the employee is participating in EAP, she may not be following through with exactly what EAP has recommended. A supervisory referral would likely include appropriate feedback about participation in EAP's recommendations. Employee follow-through with those recommendations, therefore, is more likely to occur. Without a supervisory referral at this point, you risk more problems and further confrontations that could unnecessarily jeopardize her job security.

**Q:** Some employees improve their performance or attendance temporarily after being confronted by the supervisor. After a while, problems may return. Is this proof that such employees are really in control of their problem?

**A:** The cycling effect you describe is often referred to as a "honeymoon period." This is a temporary period of satisfactory performance resulting from honest attempts by troubled employees to make personal changes after being confronted with attendance or performance problems. Promises made by troubled employees may be short-lived because they can control the symptoms of the problem but not resolve it. The symptoms of certain personal problems can be overcome in the short term, particularly by an employee empowered by fear or anxiety associated with adverse action if things don't change. Without appropriate help or treatment for the problem, however, the symptoms frequently return. "Honeymoon periods" often cause supervisors to postpone EAP referrals. If this is true in your case, contact EAP for guidance.

**Q:** My employee has been on the telephone for many hours this week trying to deal with problems with her elderly mother, who resides out of state. Can EAP help?

**A:** Yes, EAP can help. As the population ages, more services are becoming available to help adult children find help for elderly parents. In particular, specialized referral agencies and associations can help identify specific services in the area where the elderly parent lives: geriatric psychiatric assessments, shopping help, companionship

and personal assistance services, transportation assistance, consultative services for alternative living arrangements, and more. Employees can use a lot of time and personal energy at work conducting long distance research. EAP can steer your employee to elder care resources that can reduce the time required to hunt down appropriate and reputable services for an aging parent. So, one of the important benefits of EAP is a more available employee who has more peace of mind.

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