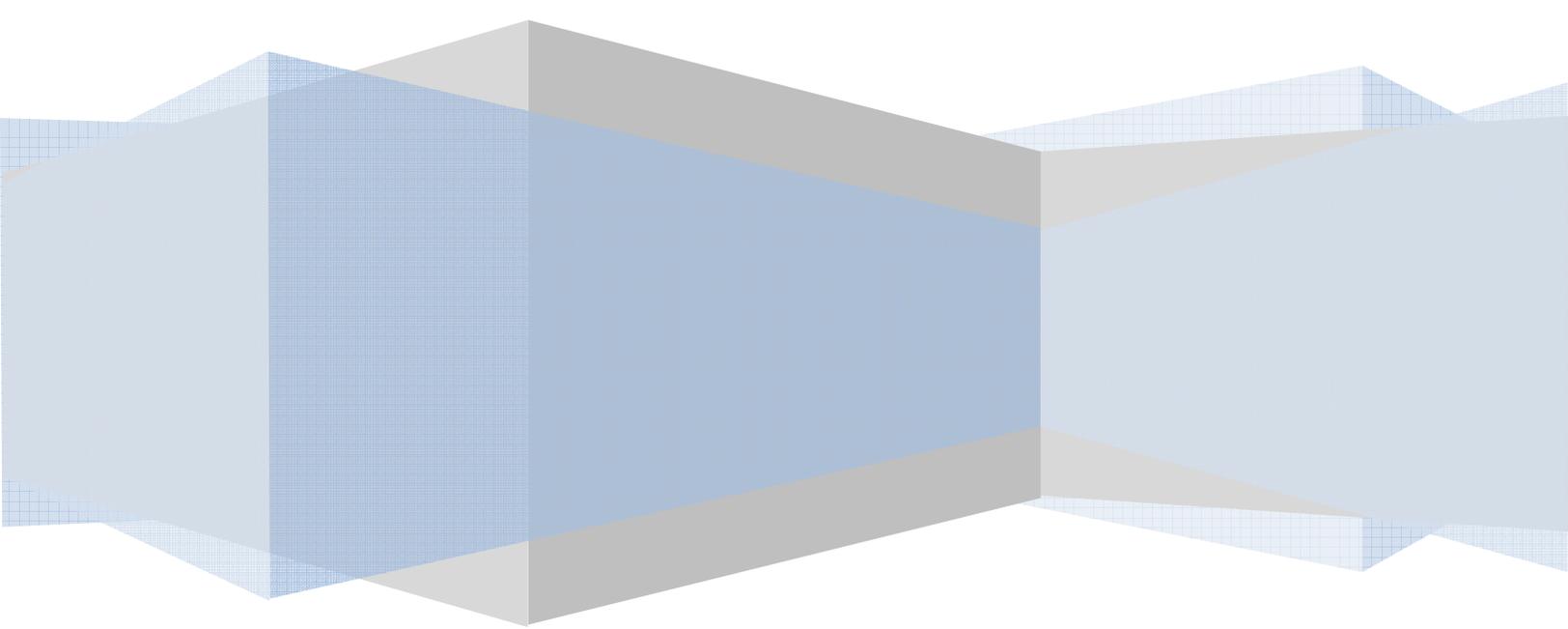


# Supervisory Intervention Training Guide

Using the EAP to help supervisors deal with  
troubled employees



(239) 278-7435 or (800) 226-7930



**YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)** is an important - and highly effective - benefit for the employees you lead. It is a place where they can turn when confronting problems at work or in the home. Your EAP is:

- **INDEPENDENT** – Your organization has contracted with Synergy EAP Solutions to provide this benefit. Staff members of the EAP are not employed by your organization. We provide these services to approximately 40 plus employers in the area.
- **CONFIDENTIAL** – EAP offices are located off-site. All records kept by the EAP staff are confidential. Information will only be released to the workplace with the client’s express written consent. We conform to HIPAA and other federal confidentiality statutes.
- **COUNSELING** - An assessment, short-term counseling and referral service to assist employees solve personal problems that may interfere with their job performance. Counseling services are confidential, and are available to all members of employees’ household. There is no cost to employees for EAP services. It is also a tool for supervisors to use to help deal with troubled employees.
- **AN EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT TOOL** – The EAP is designed to help employees resolve problems that may affect their job performance and to help managers deal with these situations. An employee’s use of the program does not result in any special privileges or exemptions from disciplinary action. By the same token, a manager cannot use the EAP as a condition of employment unless there is a written policy.
- **PROFESSIONAL** – All EAP counselors are mental health professionals with master’s degrees or above. We have been in this business for over 25 years, and have professional counseling staff with backgrounds in addictions, marriage and family therapy, mental health counseling and clinical social work.
- **A COMPANY PAID BENEFIT** – The EAP is provided by your organization at no cost to the employee. It provides professional short-term counseling and referral. Outside resource referrals will be made with consideration of many factors, including financial/insurance.
- **ACCESSIBLE** – The EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A counselor is always just a phone call away at 1-800-226-7930.
- **AVAILABLE TO HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS** – Since problems experienced by family members can impact an employee’s work performance. Spouses, significant others, and dependents are covered if they live with you and are encouraged to use the program.
- **OBJECTIVE** – EAP counselors are available to assist in problem resolution, not to advocate for one side or the other in a job performance situation.

The EAP is also an important managerial tool....

In most cases, troubled employees will seek help from the EAP on their own. That's why it is important to periodically remind employees that the service is available to them and be able to refer them to EAP pamphlets in your work location. But in some cases – those in which an employee's performance may be affected by a personal problem – you'll want to consider making a supervisory referral to the EAP. By doing so, you as the employee's supervisor, will take the initiative to ensure that the employee receives the necessary counseling.

The purpose of a supervisory intervention is to save the job, and restore the performance of a previously well functioning employee. It is most effective on a troubled employee evidencing declining productivity – one who develops an observable pattern of deteriorating work performance or troubling behavior changes that fail to respond to an informal intervention.

An informal intervention is one that the supervisor mentions, not in a formal setting, that the EAP is available to all employees, at no cost and completely confidentially, to help solve personal problems. Many times individuals embroiled in a problem are unaware of its impact on job performance, or that there is help available. If the job performance issues/behavior problems do not resolve themselves, then it is time for a formal supervisory referral.

### **THE SUPERVISORY INTERVENTION PROCESS**

- 1. Identify the unproductive employee and behaviors, document performance issues**
- 2. Confront with compassion**
- 3. Offer assistance and contact Human Resources to facilitate the referral to the EAP**
- 4. Schedule and keep a follow-up meeting**

### **The Warning Signs of a Troubled Employee**

Your first clues to trouble usually involve changes in mood, appearance or behavior, such as:

- Increases in absenteeism or lateness

- Long lunches, long breaks, long absences from work station
- Reduced productivity; extreme peaks and valleys in productivity and quality of work
- Reduced concentration, or confusion
- Reduced willingness to take responsibility for the job
- Excuses for not doing the job right
- Accidents on the job
- Problems with co-workers or customers, including excessive sensitivity to criticism, isolation from other employees, complaints from co-workers
- Agitated, disinterested, stressed or nervous behavior
- Reduced attention to appearance
- Increases in medical ailments
- Outbursts

### **Take Action**

Discuss performance difficulties as they occur. Call the EAP counselor or come in person for supervisory coaching at this point. It is more effective than during a crisis. As a supervisor you have unlimited access to this kind of coaching. All sessions are confidential.

### **Documentation**

Documentation is a vital tool in preparing for and objectively communicating performance problems and motivating employees.

**Behaviors, actions, events & facts** are your most important support tools.

Continue mentioning the behavior to the employee as you document it.

Utilize the following list of issues to help you be specific in your areas of concern.

### **Profiling the Problem: A Behavioral Checklist**

To define the situation, it's a good idea to review a more detailed list of possible symptoms as follows, checking off the particular behaviors you've observed.

None of these symptoms proves any particular problem, but may be clues which may help you realize an employee needs help. They are most significant when they highlight a change from the employee's normal behavior. This list should not be used to "diagnose", but help you identify patterns. Identify any changes in job responsibilities - is it the job or the employee? Look for patterns - all employees will have a bad day occasionally.

### **Employee's Appearance**

- Unkempt
- Inappropriate clothing

## **Mood**

- Withdrawn
- Sadness
- Mood swings: elation/depression; hyperactive/lethargic
- Suspiciousness
- Extreme sensitivity
- Nervousness
- Frequent irritability with others
- Preoccupation with illness and death (morbidity)

## **Actions**

- Physically assaultive (or threatening)
- Unduly talkative
- Exaggerated self-importance
- Rigidity - inability to change plans with reasonable ease
- Making incoherent or irrelevant statements on the job
- Overcompliance with any routine (making it a ritual)
- Frequent argumentativeness
- Frequent outbursts of crying
- Excessive amount of personal telephone time

## **Absenteeism**

- Multiple instances of improper reporting of time off
- Excessive sick leave
- Repeated absences following a pattern
- Excessive lateness in the morning or upon returning from lunch
- Peculiar and increasingly improbable excuses for absences
- High absenteeism rate for colds, flu, gastritis, general malaise, etc.
- Frequent unscheduled short-term absences (with or without medical explanation)
- Frequent use of unscheduled vacation time

## **“On-the-Job” Absenteeism**

- Continued absence from job location - more than job requires
- Frequent trips to water fountain or restroom
- Long coffee breaks

## **Accidents**

- Physical complaints on the job
- Accidents on the job
- Accidents off the job

### **Work Patterns and Production**

- Current work assignment requires more effort than previously taken
- Work takes more time to produce
- Difficulty in recalling instruction, understanding office procedures, etc.
- Display of disinterest in work
- Increased difficulty in handling complex assignments
- Difficulty in recalling previous mistakes (although these have been brought to the employee's attention)
- General absentmindedness, forgetfulness
- Alternate periods of high and low productivity
- Coming to work in an intoxicated condition
- Missed deadlines
- Mistakes due to poor judgment
- Outside complaints about the employee's work
- Improbable excuses for these poor patterns
- Carelessness

### **Work-Related Relationships**

- Overreaction to real or imagined criticism
- Wide swings in job morale
- Borrowing money from co-workers
- Difficulty relating to co-workers
- Unreasonable resentments against co-workers
- Repeated and compulsive criticism of the company
- Persistent requests for job transfer
- Unrealistic expectation for promotion
- Abrasiveness with others (managers and/or co-workers)
- Inappropriate behavior at company business meeting
- Complaints from the community concerning the employee

In order for a supervisory intervention to be effective, you must be able to specifically identify either work performance deterioration, or workplace behavior that has become unacceptable. If coworkers and/or customers are uncomfortable with the employees' behavior, although their performance may currently be okay, the behavior needs to be addressed. The best way to record behavior is to include direct quotes from the employee(s) in question as available.

When do you document? You are looking for a pattern. You begin to reconstruct, on paper, the pattern and then begin to write down the occurrences. It is in your hands when to begin documentation, and then - when to act.

#### BEFORE the Intervention Process

- Consult with immediate supervisor
- Consult with Employee Relations
- Review your documentation
- Consult with Employee Assistance provider
- Plan the corrective interview
- Choose a private, comfortable setting
- Understand disciplinary procedures. Be prepared to discuss them with the employee

#### The Intervention

- Have your detailed documentation of poor job performance with you. Note your intervention meeting date/time on it.
- Emphasize confidentiality - of intervention and EAP.
- Be professional. Be direct. Be objective.
- Don't moralize or threaten. Don't diagnose or discuss personal problems.
- Keep the focus on JOB PERFORMANCE issues.
- Have another supervisor present as an observer (if warranted.)
- Be specific about what you want from the employee.
- By the end of the meeting, prepare an agreement to be signed by both of you. This agreement should include:
  - Specifics regarding what job performance and/or behavior is expected from the employee including timeframe
  - Other specific actions required of the employee (such as attending EAP assessment)
  - Disciplinary consequences if problem(s) continues.
  - Agreed-upon follow-up date to review the situation.

#### AFTER the Intervention

- Human Resources and/or you as the supervisor will contact the EAP to let them know of your referral (if mandatory)
- Keep your follow up meeting, even if job performance improves

## **Dos and Don'ts When Discussing the Employee Assistance Program**

- Don't...* attempt to play doctor and guess at the problem or label the employee
- Don't...* argue. Review your facts and documentation in a calm manner
- Don't...* sit in moral judgment of the employee
- Don't...* be too ready to believe excuses or believe sympathy-evoking tactics. Stay focused on your right to expect appropriate behavior and satisfactory job performance.
- Don't...* hope the problem will solve itself
- Don't...* allow yourself to get involved in the employee's personal life
- Don't...* make generalizations or insinuations about the employee's performance
- Don't...* threaten discipline unless you're willing and able to carry through. An employee's refusal to schedule an EAP appointment is not a sufficient reason to justify termination. Such a decision should be based on performance issues.
- Do...* focus solely on declining job performance and the offer of help.
- Do...* have on hand written documentation of the declining job performance, so you can "let the record speak for itself".
- Do...* maintain a firm and formal, yet considerate, attitude. If the interview becomes casual or intimate conversation, the impact of the message will be lessened.
- Do...* explain that help is available through the Employee Assistance Program.
- Do...* emphasize that all aspects of the program are completely confidential.
- Do...* explain that the employee must decide on his or her own whether to seek assistance.
- Do...* follow up with the EAP with any questions/concerns about the employee or the process.