



# SUPERVISOR NOTES

NE S ETTE O PE SONNE N E ENT I E S

February 2001

Employee Assistance Program 278-5018  
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**In This Issue:** New Staff and Work Team Conflicts  
EAP and Temporary Employees

Ill or Injured staff on Leave and EAP Referral  
Performance Focus for EAP Referrals

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- **Team conflicts have suddenly emerged since I hired a new, highly capable employee. I think he is a great hire with new ideas and energy. Team cohesion is a priority for me, but how do I refer an employee to the EAP for being "too good?"**

After hiring a highly capable employee, some managers report an increase in conflicts among coworkers, perhaps for the first time. Your new employee may be failing to identify or balance the needs of team members with his own needs. Often, poor timing of assertive behavior and failure to negotiate with the team's needs underlie such conflicts. This is called having poor "other-awareness" skills. Young, bright employees with high self-esteem are particularly at risk for this performance problem. Ironically, the better the employee's relationship with the supervisor, the more problems. Hence the confusion. Bring complaints to your employee. A referral to the EAP would be based upon the impact of the employee's difficulties in working effectively with the team. Remember, this is not a disciplinary act. Give the EAP consultant plenty of background on team conflicts. Your objective is to resolve the conflict without losing either your longer-term employees or the new one.

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- **My employee was injured severely a few weeks ago at work. She is still out, and fellow employees say she is depressed. Can the EAP play a role in this matter? And, based upon what other workers say, can I refer the employee to the EAP?**

Although your employee could be depressed, it would not be appropriate to make a referral to the EAP based upon the reports of coworkers. Reminding your injured employee about the availability of the EAP, however, would be a good idea. The effect of severe injury on workers, and the disruption it can cause, are sufficient reasons to justify such a call. This might prompt a self-referral. Generally, employees who have been injured at work appreciate calls and signs of support from coworkers and the organization. Injured employees who do not receive such contact often cite lack of support as a major complaint.

Frequently, the EAP can provide a helpful bridge of support during a convalescence period by identifying community services to help the employee such as meal services, home health care, companionship services, transportation, and more.

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- **Our EAP is available to temporary employees, but these employees don't receive other benefits such as health insurance and paid holidays from our company. Does this say something about the purpose of the EAP?**

Any paid worker at the university could be a potential liability if a personal problem interfered with job performance. Hence, the organizational rationale of making your EAP available to any person on the payroll. EAP services are made available to family members for the same reason. Family problems can disrupt worker productivity; therefore, the university benefits when it makes the EAP available to family members. So, the EAP is more than a benefit for employees; it is a productivity tool with a rationale that supports the university's mission and its employees' welfare.

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- **During supervisors' training we learned not to look for personal problems with employees, but to base EAP referrals on ongoing performance problems. When did this idea emerge in the EAP field?**

Most EAP historians agree that the concept of referring employees to the EAP based on ongoing performance problems, not personal problems, originated in the late 1950s with occupational alcoholism program pioneer, Lewis Presnall. Operating a company alcoholism program at a copper mine, he was able to identify many more alcoholic employees when he trained supervisors to refer employees to his program based strictly upon performance and attendance problems. This concept took hold quickly and advanced the popularity of occupational alcoholism programs (OAPs). This led to federal funding of such programs. Later "broad-brush" EAPs emerged in the early 70s to respond to the wide range of personal problems employees face. Today, performance-based referrals to EAPs by supervisors remain a cornerstone of their successful operation. This principle is particularly important when performance problems unknowingly are caused by personal problems rooted in denial, or the inability of the troubled employee to identify symptoms.

***Call the EAP for a confidential consultation about supervisory concerns, job-related issues or personal problems.***

Information contained in Supervisor Notes is for general information purposes only and is not intended as specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with your Employee Assistance Professional.