



SUPERVISOR NOTES

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A NEWSLETTER OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IDEAS

Employee Assistance Program

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Q. I have an employee who is a superstar performer but acts like a bully toward a co-worker. This co-worker has not complained and does not appear upset by the behavior. They seem to get along quite well. Should I leave this situation alone and not be concerned? Can the EAP help?

A. A true "superstar" has no need to bully. Even though the bullying hasn't been reported, if you've observed it you should address it. Not all victims are reduced to visible anguish by bullies. Instead, they try to cope and suffer in silence. These employees can pay a big price in lost productivity and negative effects on their health. In addition, others are usually aware of the situation and are also impacted. They may directly feel the stress of the bullying behavior, or fear it will be aimed at them next. In addition, the feelings from watching someone they know and possibly like being mistreated and not acting on it will also create stress. Ignoring your good judgment that a problem exists will jeopardize everyone concerned. Employees may question your leadership based on your inaction. Like sexual harassment, bullying is not always reported by victims despite their victimization, but if you know about it, you must address the problem immediately. Intervene and rely upon the reasonable standards of behavior and respect needed in the workplace as the basis for taking action. Act in accordance with your policies. Offer the EAP as a possible source of support. We all have a role in creating and maintaining a workplace that promotes respect for everyone.



Q. I have read about the value of soft skills. I agree that they are essential. How do I discover employees who possess them? Some previous employers don't give references, so you don't know until it's too late that a new hire can't maintain effective relationships.

A. It is difficult to see evidence of well-honed soft skills by looking at a résumé. Proficiency can be difficult to gauge because soft skills are dependent upon one's attitude, self-image, and relationship skills. Comparing answers candidates give to open-ended questions in job interviews can help. A team of interviewers is the best choice to prepare and ask questions because of the subjective nature of the answers. Judging the "best" response can vary from one person to the next, and a discussion can build consensus. Remember to formulate questions that require the person to "open up" and explain what he or she would do in response to a work situation. Start questions with how, what, and why. Remember to ask questions using scenarios that underscore important aspects of work and, just as important, your unique work culture. Try and present situations that require decision making, judgment, and collaboration in order to provide the "best" answer. Remember, you are assessing thinking skills along with actual knowledge. Talk to your HR experts to learn more.

Q. My employee reports concern about an individual believed to be a stalker. I am glad the employee came to me, because I want to be supportive. Can you offer suggestions on managing this issue?

A. Review your policy on violence in the workplace to ensure that you follow established procedures. Meet with your manager or key managers and human resources to discuss the issue, and determine the safety concerns to address. Suggest that your employee contact EAP for support and guidance. You're wise not to ignore this complaint. Too frequently, stalking is perceived as just another personal problem like marital conflict or troubles with a teenager. Stalking is a serious crime with significant risks, especially for women. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, homicide is the leading cause of death for women in the workplace and one out of eight homicides is from a stalker. Key issues to discuss include how to respond to restraining orders, whether other employees should be informed, the role of the police, etc. Your work group should have a safety plan in place to alert others if a situation poses a potential risk. If not, one should be developed. Everyone should be aware and knowledgeable about the plan and feel responsible for protecting the safety of the work setting for everyone.

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 one of our Employee Assistance Program professionals.