



# **Supervisor's Guide**

## **Employee Assistance Program**

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The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is an important resource for supervisors to assist them with employees who have attendance, job performance, or behavior problems, and with employees who are seeking assistance with personal problems. The EAP, a voluntary program, provides information, assessment, short-term counseling, referral, and follow-up services to help employees maintain productivity and personal well-being.

This guide provides managers and supervisors with a brief overview of how to access and use the services available from the EAP. By following the procedures and guidelines described, supervisors will provide employees an avenue to overcome personal problems that may be affecting job performance. These problems may include emotional difficulties, substance abuse, relationship issues, or child and elder care responsibilities.

For information or assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week call:

1-800-EAP-4-YOU

(1-800-327-4968)

TTY: 1-877-492-7341

[www.EAP4YOU.com](http://www.EAP4YOU.com)

## Services Available To Managers/Supervisors

Consultation and training services are essential components of the EAP with EAP staff providing valuable consultative services to you. Services include:

- Consultation regarding concerns about an employee's job performance or behavior.
- Help in defining the problems and considering options.
- Coaching on constructive feedback skills.
- Assistance in making an EAP referral.
- Clarification on supervisor and counselor roles when an employee decides to participate in EAP counseling.
- Assistance with employees who are returning to the workplace following an extended absence.
- Delivering training programs on EAP-related issues.

## Role of the Supervisor

A critical role of the supervisor is to ensure that all employees perform their assigned duties and responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner. When unacceptable performance or behavior is identified, or when a pattern of deteriorating attendance, job performance, or other behavior develops, the supervisor should intervene as soon as possible to prevent the situation from becoming worse. This intervention should include a constructive feedback discussion and a possible referral to the EAP. If the intervention results in an employee taking extended leave to

fix the problem, the manager or supervisor should also assist in reintegrating the employee to the workplace upon his or her return.

## Identifying Potential Problems

It is important to identify job performance problems as soon as possible. Early identification and intervention can help resolve problems before they become too ingrained or complex. Watch for patterns of behavior developing over a period of time as well as significant isolated events. Warning signs that may indicate personal or job-related distress include:

- Tardiness.
- Absenteeism.
- Decreased productivity or quality of work.
- High error or accident rate.
- Irritability, moodiness, or anxiety.
- Avoidance of coworkers and supervisors.
- Odor of alcohol.
- Vague medical complaints.

Warning signs that may indicate a potential for violence include:

- History of violent behavior.
- Angry outbursts or agitated behavior.
- Verbal threats of violence.
- Hostility.
- Deteriorating relationships with coworkers.
- Sexual or other harassment of coworkers.
- Tendency to be a loner or become withdrawn.
- Recurring expressions of being wronged or humiliated.
- Preoccupation with weapons.
- Minimal social support system.

If you see warning signs of potential violence, please contact your district's Threat Assessment Team coordinator or other team member and involve them in deciding upon a proper course of action, including a decision as to whether or not to refer the employee to the EAP.

## Referring an Employee to the EAP

Supervisors should refer employees to the EAP when they become aware that an employee is experiencing personal problems even though these problems have not yet affected performance or behavior on the job. Such *verbal* referrals are to help employees overcome problems before they affect the workplace. Supervisors should not attempt to diagnose the perceived personal problem whether or not it is having an effect on the employee's performance or behavior at work.

When the workplace is affected, supervisors should follow procedures outlined in this publication to make a written referral to the EAP. The employee has the option to refuse the referral and cannot be disciplined for not attending.\* However, employees are still responsible for maintaining acceptable job performance standards, whether or not they decide to receive assistance from the EAP. If an employee's performance or behavior continues to be unacceptable, you should talk with the EAP consultant to discuss the best way to offer assistance to the employee.

**\*EXCEPTION:** In instances for which the employee has signed a Last Chance or Settlement Agreement and commits to participate in the EAP, the employee can receive corrective action for noncompliance within the terms of the signed agreement.

A written referral should include:

- ✓ A summary of what is valued about the employee's work (as was discussed during the constructive feedback session).
- ✓ Specifics of the deteriorating attendance, job performance, or unacceptable behavior.
- ✓ A clear statement of the purpose of the referral.
- ✓ The name and telephone number of the EAP4YOU Service Center and information about the confidential nature of the program.
- ✓ A specific date and time for a follow-up performance evaluation.

A copy of the memorandum should be given to the employee. Another copy should be provided to the EAP consultant so he or she knows that the supervisor has referred the employee.

An employee's first visit to EAP is on the clock, whether the visit is initiated by management, the union representative, or the employee, unless the employee prefers to visit the EAP unit on his or her own time. Subsequent consultations are on the employee's own time. If a reasonable period of time has elapsed since a management referral or a previously disclosed self-referral, the manager or supervisor may, at his or her discretion, approve an additional on-the-clock session.

## Next Steps

The supervisor's job is not finished simply by referring the employee to the EAP. The supervisor should continue to provide feedback and monitor the employee's attendance, job performance, and behavior, whether or not the employee accepts the referral and sees a counselor.

If the employee authorizes the counselor to release information in writing to the supervisor, such as the employee's follow through with a treatment plan and anticipated outcomes and timeframe, the supervisor may consider this information when making decisions on work assignments.

If the employee takes extended leave to deal with his/her problems, a meeting should be scheduled just prior to the employee returning to work to welcome the employee back and to review attendance, job performance, and behavioral expectations. The EAP consultant should participate in this return-to-work meeting, which should also include the supervisor and the employee. The goal of the meeting is to ensure the successful reintegration of the employee to the workplace.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of a successful EAP. If the information an employee shares with the EAP counselor is not properly protected, employees may be reluctant to seek the help they need to improve their performance or behavior. The EAP must operate in compliance with privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.

The counselor can, with the employee's written authorization, confirm with the supervisor the employee's attendance while in duty status. With limited exceptions, no information may be released to anyone without the employee's written consent. If employees want paid leave for their EAP appointment, they must sign the "Authorization to use or Disclose Protected Health Information (PHI) On-the-Clock Verification" so that management can confirm their attendance while on the clock.

Information relayed to you, the manager or supervisor, by the EAP is private and should not be disclosed further.

## Conclusion

The supervisor has the responsibility of ensuring that all employees work as effectively and efficiently as possible. If an employee develops a pattern of deteriorating attendance, job performance, or other inappropriate behavior, the supervisor should follow the steps described in this guide to provide the employee with feedback and offer the help available through the EAP.

There may be occasions when an employee shares a personal problem with you, or you are aware of a problem even though the employee's job performance has not suffered. In these cases, you can still recommend that the employee call the EAP. Inform the employee in a supportive way that the EAP is confidential and is a resource to assist the employee with any personal or job-related concerns he or she may have. Offer the phone number to the EAP4YOU Service Center and encourage the employee to make the call.

The EAP is an integral part of the employee benefits of the United States Postal Service® and it supports workplace environment improvement initiatives. When employees need assistance, the EAP is here for you. Also, the EAP Web site, *EAP4YOU.com*, provides additional information, resources, and guidance.

For information, consultation, or assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call:

1-800-EAP-4-YOU  
(1-800-327-4968)  
TTY: 1-877-492-7341  
[www.EAP4YOU.com](http://www.EAP4YOU.com)

**Make the Call!**

This program is provided by the U.S. Postal Service® through an agreement with:

FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH  
TWO ILLINOIS CENTER  
233 NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE SUITE 270  
CHICAGO IL 60601-5519

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