

**Effectively Dealing with  
Job Performance Problems**

**DOR**

**Employee Assistance Program**

**1660 South Highway 100, Suite 430**

**Minneapolis, MN 55416**

**612-332-4805      1-800-367-3271**

**Fax: (612) 342-2422**

# Program Description

## Your Employee Assistance Program is:

**COUNSELING**--Consisting of **assessment** (getting to the root of the problem, rather than the leaves, which show up at work); **short term counseling** (looking at and trying out various problem solving options); **referral** (on-going long term help, such as treatment, support groups, classes, etc.). This is true for all individuals coming in, whether a supervisor or an employee.

**INDEPENDENT**--Your organization has contracted with **DOR** to provide this benefit. We service many organizations like yours in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area, and nationwide. Staff members of **DOR** are not employed by your organization.

**CONFIDENTIAL**--EAP offices are located off-site. All records kept by the EAP staff are confidential. Information will only be released with the client's express written consent, a life threatening situation or in child abuse cases.

**PROFESSIONAL**--All EAP counselors are mental health professionals with master's degrees or above.

**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. If a counselor recommends that an employee consult an outside resource, the counselor will assist in interpreting insurance benefits or other non-insurance information.

**ACCESSIBLE**--The EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A counselor is always just a phone call away.

**AVAILABLE TO DEPENDENTS**--Since problems experienced by family members can impact an employee's work performance. Spouses, significant others, and dependents are covered and 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.

**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.

**DIFFERENT FROM YOUR MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS**--The EAP assists individuals in the context of the workplace. We form partnerships with management, labor, and employees to assist in return to effective work performance, thereby saving the organization money in areas such as turnover, absenteeism, low productivity, worker compensation claims (for stress and other reasons).

## **Before You Begin**

Be aware of good daily supervisory practices:

- o Continual assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses
- o Practicing effective communication skills
- o Familiarity with your policies & procedures and disciplinary continuum.

**There are several basic steps you need to be skilled in when managing through a performance problem:**

**Recognition** - Sharpen observation skills by being aware of problematic behavior early.

**Taking Action** - Positive communication steps linked with supervisory coaching can act as an effective crisis prevention tool.

**Documentation** - Preparing for further action, if necessary.

**Problematic Performance Discussion** - Specific ways to directly approach continued problematic performance.

**Referral** - How to work in partnership with the EAP counselor to motivate improved job performance.

**Reintegration** - Following through with a plan for effective back to work transition.

# SUPERVISORY STEPS

## Recognition

- o Start the process early.
- o Don't wait for crises or disciplinary actions to start the process.
- o Use the following checklist to assist you in your observations.

## **Examples of behavior that may indicate a problem.**

## **Instructions**

1. The checklist below is to be used when you've become concerned about an employee's declining job performance.
2. **This checklist is to be used only as an observational aid for the manager or supervisor.**
3. Where a combination of three (3) or more items appear on a continuous basis, this is a likely indication of a troubled individual.

## **CURRENT BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS**

(check those behaviors that apply).

### **I. APPEARANCE AND PERSONAL HYGIENE**

- Declining personal appearance
- Inappropriate clothing
- Lack of hygiene
- Other

## II. ENERGY LEVEL

- Withdrawn
- Sad
- Energy swings, high and low
- Suspiciousness
- Extreme sensitivity
- Nervousness
- Frequent irritability with others
- Preoccupation with illness and death (morbidity)
- Other

## III. ACTIONS

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

## IV. ABSENTEEISM

- Multiple instances of improper reporting of time off
- Excessive sick leave
- Repeated absences following a pattern, (each Monday, etc.)
- Excessive lateness in the morning, or upon returning from lunch
- Peculiar and increasingly improbable excuses for absence
- High absenteeism rate for colds, flu, gastritis
- Frequent use of unscheduled vacation time
- Other

## V. "ON THE JOB" ABSENTEEISM

- Continued absence from job in excess of job requirements
- Frequent trips to water fountain or rest room
- Long coffee breaks
- Other

## **VI. ACCIDENTS**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Physical complaints on the job
- \_\_\_\_\_ Accidents on the job
- \_\_\_\_\_ Accidents off the job
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

## **VII. WORK PATTERN & PRODUCTION**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Consistently late for work or appointments
- \_\_\_\_\_ Current work assignments requires more effort than previously taken
- \_\_\_\_\_ Work takes more time to produce
- \_\_\_\_\_ Difficulty in recalling instructions, 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 individual's attention)
- \_\_\_\_\_ General absentmindedness, forgetfulness
- \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate periods of high and low productivity
- \_\_\_\_\_ Coming to work in an apparent intoxicated condition
- \_\_\_\_\_ Missed deadlines
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mistakes due to poor judgment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Outside complaints about the employee's work
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improbable excuses for these poor patterns
- \_\_\_\_\_ Carelessness
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

## **VIII. RELATIONSHIP WITH COLLEAGUES AND COMMUNITY**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Over-reaction to real or imagined criticism
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wide swing in job morale
- \_\_\_\_\_ Borrowing money from co-workers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unreasonable resentments against co-workers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Repeated and compulsive criticism of the company
- \_\_\_\_\_ Persistent request for job transfer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unrealistic expectation for promotion
- \_\_\_\_\_ Abrasiveness with others (managers and/or co-workers, customers)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

## **Take Action**

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

## **Documentation**

- o After you've been coached, continue documenting.
- o Documentation is a vital tool in preparing for and objectively communicating performance problems and motivating employees.
- o **Behaviors, actions, events & facts** are your most important support tools.
- o Continue mentioning the behavior to the employee as you document it.
- o You may use the behavior checklist as a guide.



## **PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION**

- o Anticipate employee's response. Review defense strategies (attached). Be aware of yours & employee's.
- o Have a private meeting with your employee addressing sub-standard performance, using your documentation. There should be no surprises at this point.
- o Redefine performance difficulties verbally and in writing.
- o Give the employee some limited time to respond to the cited performance problems and to recommend some possible solutions.
- o Taking into account the employee's input, clarify your expectations and corrective behavior desired.
- o Explain consequences clearly, check for understanding & set up a follow up date to review progress.
- o Show concern but stay with job performance.
- o If there are personal problems, do not get involved. Emphasize that you care and that you are concerned about the problem. Advise them of the confidential EAP program and give them the telephone number.

## **MAKING A FORMAL REFERRAL**

A formal referral means that you, the supervisor are requesting that the employee see the EAP counselor in an effort to assist the employee in resolving any personal problems that might be affecting their performance.

This is a voluntary request even though you may strongly suggest it.

If the employee refuses to go you can note that the offer was made and was turned down in the employee's personnel file.

If a formal referral is made, the information you give to the employee and send to the EAP should be the same. The following form is very effective.

# Supervisor's Evaluation Form

(Please complete and return to the EAP counselor before the appointment)  
(612) 332-4805 \* 1-800-367-3271 \* fax (612) 342-2422

COMPANY/ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYEE'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ JOB TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

SUPERVISOR'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SUPERVISOR'S PHONE NUMBER: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYEE MUST SCHEDULE APPOINTMENT BY: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How would you rate the employee's overall job performance:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> outstanding   | <input type="checkbox"/> below average  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> above average | <input type="checkbox"/> unsatisfactory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> adequate      |   |

2. This employee's work has been unsatisfactory in the following areas:

- |   |  |                                |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> attendance             | <input type="checkbox"/> mood swings       | <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tardiness              | <input type="checkbox"/> irritability      |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sick leaves            | <input type="checkbox"/> safety violations |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mistakes, carelessness | <input type="checkbox"/> reduced quantity  |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> forgetful              | <input type="checkbox"/> reduced quality   |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> inconsistent judgment  | <input type="checkbox"/> deadlines missed  |                                |

3. Specific job performance you want addressed:

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4. Have you suggested using the EAP to this employee in the past?

Yes  No If yes: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Action taken to date concerning this employee's performance (written documentation including: warnings, dates, issues and reasons).

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6. Specific documented expectations for improvement, date for review, and deadline for expected change.

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7. Consequences if job performance does not change:

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**Reintegration** - Employee's return to work

- o Be supportive.
- o Keep lines of communication open.
- o Expect performance standards to be met.
- o Reward good performance.
- o Take action if performance falls below stated standards.
- o Ask employee if they want to explain or want supervisor to explain any sensitive situation to their colleagues.

**THE BACK-TO-WORK CONFERENCE**

Occasionally, an employee needs in-patient treatment or must take time off work for other personal reasons. Returning to work can be difficult and awkward for all concerned. The EAP can assist in this transition by arranging a back-to-work conference with the employee and the supervisor. The purpose of the conference is to support and encourage the employees efforts to get help, review the prior work record, and implement a plan for the successful return to work.

**NOTE:** A visit or consultation with an EAP professional is not a guarantee that performance problems will improve. If used correctly, however, the EAP can be of great benefit to all involved. The availability of voluntary, free, professional, and confidential help may be the incentive needed to improve performance problems, if the problem is personal rather than management or organizational.

## DEFENSE STRATEGIES

When you meet with an individual, you can expect him/her to be threatened and use various defenses to protect himself/herself. Below are listed and described some of these defenses and recommended counter-moves. You will also be able to add to this list from you own experiences.

DEFENSE	DESCRIPTION	COUNTER-MOVE
<b>Excuses &amp; Sympathy</b>	Individual will have a good reason for everything that happens. "You'd have the same troubles I do if you had a wife/husband like mine."	"Your problems at home sound difficult. My concern in today's discussion involves your performance, and my data here says you are not doing your job. I want to tell you about our Associate/Employee Assistance Program."
<b>Apology &amp; Promise</b>	"I'm really sorry. You know that! I'll never do it that way again."	"I appreciate your apology. But what you did can't happen again. I'm going to make a note in your employment record and if it happens again (state consequence)."
<b>Switching</b>	"I know about that, but look what a good job I've done on that Ajax job!"	"You did do well on Ajax, but I expect good work on all jobs. You have had more problem jobs than successful ones lately. Look at the record."
<b>Anger</b>	"Darn it! One mistake and the roof falls in - after 15 years of killing myself for this place."	"I see that you're angry but I expect you to listen to me. Getting angry won't help us. I'm concerned about your performance. And I'm not talking about one mistake. Look at the record."
<b>Tears &amp; Helplessness</b>	"I don't know what to do. I'll never get out of this mess. (crying.)"	"I appreciate your sadness. I want you to know that I want to help, which is why I set up this meeting. You have been a valuable part of our organization. Now let's look at your job performance and see what you can do."
<b>Self-Pity</b>	"I knew this would happen. I've never been able to do anything right."	"I wouldn't be taking this time to talk with you if I didn't have faith in you. So let's move on to talk about what can be done to help. You know, our Associate/Employee Assistance Program could be just right..."
<b>Innocence &amp; Blaming</b>	"It's not my fault. Joe let me down. I don't get any help at all around here."	"The record indicates something different, and we need to start looking at your part in what is happening. Let's see how we can get things worked out."

## WHAT SUPERVISORS CAN EXPECT FROM THE EAP

AS A SUPERVISOR, YOU ARE ENTITLED TO THE FOLLOWING SERVICES FROM THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:

- o A patient, and understanding professional to listen to your problems and reactions to the employee you supervise.
- o Assistance in working out those problems and reactions in a productive way, so your employees can all do their jobs and you can do yours.
- o Guidance in documenting performance and behavior problems.
- o Guidance and support in confronting your employee about job performance and behavior problems, when this is necessary.
- o Competent and professional assessment and referral, as needed, of employees you send for help.
- o Follow up with treatment resources, if so referred, to determine whether your employees are receiving the services promised and whether they are following the prescribed treatment programs.
- o Follow up with you, to the extent permitted by confidentiality regulations.
- o Continued assistance, as necessary, to your employee and to you in readjusting to a productive work relationship.

### WHEN YOU ASK THE EAP FOR ADVICE, IT:

- o Is not a cop-out or admission of any failure on your part as a supervisor. On the contrary, it's good management. When you need a specialist--whether it's to fix a typewriter, program a computer, or paint a wall--you get one. Helping a troubled employee is one of those times. Letting professionals do their job is part of your job.
- o Doesn't commit you to anything. The decisions you make will remain yours. The advice you receive will be just that -- advice, but it will be professional advice.
- o Is **CONFIDENTIAL**. What you say will not be passed on to your employee, your supervisor, or anyone else without your consent.

# REFERRAL PROCESS SUPERVISOR'S ROLE

