

THE *Front-line Supervisor*

Presented by **DOR**

Helping you to manage your company's most valuable resource -- your employees.

September 2004

CASE 1

Should I make a referral?

- **Q. My employee takes feedback as a personal attack. I don't see this as a performance issue, but it prevents constructive discussions in correcting his work. Is an EAP referral appropriate if his performance is otherwise excellent?**
- A.** If your employee is unwilling to accept feedback in an appropriate manner, and as a result you cannot adequately correct his work, then he has a performance problem. It is not unusual for a performance evaluation to measure how well an employee accepts constructive feedback. Even if your employee has excellent job skills, the give and take in communication and willingness to work with a supervisor or evaluator by welcoming and accepting feedback can be considered an essential function. Making a supervisor referral is appropriate and you need to let him know that his inadequate response to constructive feedback is a performance problem. Not doing so would send a message that his attitude is not an issue and minimize the seriousness of the problems. A telephone consultation with a DOR counselor can help you script out what you'd like to say to this employee.

CASE 2

Can I still make a referral?

- **Q. I was thinking of taking disciplinary action in response to my employee's conduct problems at work. She entered treatment for alcoholism, so I held off. Unfortunately, she quit treatment and went home. Should I quickly prepare the disciplinary action? If I don't, I think problems will continue.**
- A.** Troubled employees who enter addiction treatment and suddenly leave against medical advice, rejecting further help, sometimes confuse supervisors who may wonder how to respond. If severe performance problems preceded admission to treatment, a supervisor may feel moved to levy a disciplinary action for prior performance or conduct issues, hoping to change the situation before the employee returns to work. Feeling angry or "taken advantage of" by the employee may add to this desire to be punitive. Would you feel the same way about an employee with a different type of illness? Discuss your feelings with the EAP, and develop a plan to manage the employee's performance. Work closely with your human resources specialist or manager to avoid taking an action that might appear arbitrary and lead to a grievance or legal challenge.

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Employee Assistance Program
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