

Solutions for Supervisors

from your

Affiliated Employee Assistance Program

1.800.769.9819
www.affiliatedeap.com

A publication provided by your organization's EAP (Employee Assistance Program) to help you with common employee dilemmas and/or problems.

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WHEN DOES WHAT'S GOING ON IN AN EMPLOYEE'S PERSONAL LIFE BECOME A JOB PERFORMANCE ISSUE?

A supervisor in the modern workplace wears many hats and has a lot of responsibilities. Roles can include team leader, coach, educator, sponsor, counselor, mentor, director, and advocate; often across multiple sectors of the organization. A primary supervisory focus is on the job performance of each employee. We all know that it can sometimes be hard for people to "leave their personal problems at the door." So what happens when personal issues do appear to be affecting the workplace? A supervisor has to be cautious in addressing such situations; you don't want to cross a boundary, raise legal risk, or make it more challenging for yourself to stay focused on the job performance of employees.

QUESTION: When does a supervisor address an employee's mood/behavior change, observed in attitude and responses to co-workers?

ANSWER: Consider Marie: She is a new employee three months beyond new hire probation. She has been stellar in her attention to detail, interaction with clients and staff, and takes initiative to learn. For the past three weeks she has often been quiet, separates herself from working with others, and seldom smiles or responds to work-related conversation or social comment. Marie's functional skills are more than adequate for the job assignments and client needs, yet she performs them with less clarity and efficiency than previously observed. Co-workers notice a change and comment among themselves. Some comments she's made suggest possible issues at home or in social relationships.

The supervisor recognizes a change and is concerned about Marie. The supervisor is responsible for the effective functioning of this team as well as quality of service to clients. The boundary between personal care and professional concern is delicate. Both are important but the supervisor's primary concern must be the work behavior.

Remember that EAP is here to help in any way that we can - call on us for consultation and assistance anytime!

Educational Programs for Supervisors

Affiliated EAP offers many educational programs designed to help leaders become more effective in supervising their staff. For a complete course listing or to schedule training, contact us at:

1-800-769-9819

Or visit our website:

www.affiliatedeap.com



For more information about how to best handle employee work performance problems, call your EAP at:

1-800-769-9819

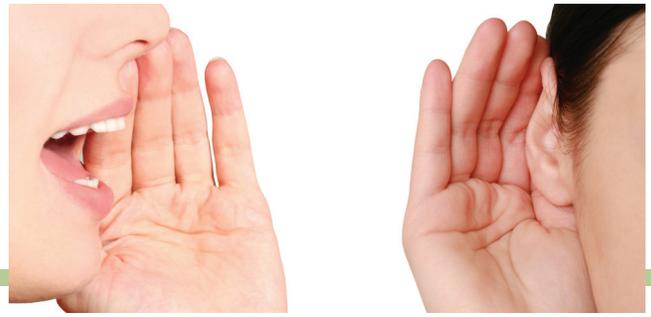
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Solutions

continued



Supervisor tasks include:

1. Address the job performance directly with Marie. Note specific, observable and verifiable change(s) in behavior, communication, and job outcomes.
2. Consider how to convey human concern for Marie while also respecting her privacy. Are there specific support resources within the workplace that might be available to assist her? Coaching, mentoring, or training can sometimes be helpful.
3. Offer support through EAP to address concerns that may be impacting her.
4. Ask for anything specific that would be helpful to her at work. Work with her on finding a solution that may assist her while not negatively impacting the team or productivity.
5. While showing empathy and concern for any personal issues she may disclose, continue to emphasize the necessity of the restoration of acceptable performance levels.

QUESTION: When does a supervisor address a personal/work relationship with an employee?

ANSWER: Consider Jolene and Anna: Both long-time employees with strong performance records. They have never worked in the same department but their work does overlap at times. They regularly have lunch together and socialize outside of work. Then something changes and the office grapevine is buzzing with the news that they've had a falling out. Employees in the two departments report "walking on eggshells" because of whatever's going on between them and a supervisor observes an angry exchange between them in a regular project meeting.

This is a situation that should be addressed sooner rather

than later. Many supervisors may avoid it in the hope that it will resolve itself but it is beginning to impact the workplace and a clear expectation should be set that, whatever the dispute, employees are required to treat each other with respect and remain professional. Does your organization have a policy about friendships/relationships at work? If so, this may be helpful to draw on when you approach each of them. It's not important that you know the nature of the dispute unless it's work-related. What is important is that you lay out how it's impacting the workplace, expectations for change, and offer them resources to resolve or manage the conflict. Their co-workers should not be put in the position of having to "choose sides". Co-workers don't have to like each other or be friends in order to get work done effectively.

If they insist that they are unable to work respectfully together and/or their disruptive behavior continues, then they have choices to make. The supervisor's job is to hold them accountable for expected work behavior and offer resources as appropriate. The employees are responsible for their own behavior.

Remember that you can speak with one of your EAP consultants on the phone anytime and we can help you brainstorm how to navigate any concerns that may be impacting your team and the workplace.

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