



Employees—
Your Most
Valuable
Resource

Frontline Supervisor

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Kentucky Employee Assistance Program

(502) 564-5788 or (800) 445-5327

■ **I have an employee who shouts at customers. He's had run-ins with coworkers, DUIs, and scrapes with the law. He's a classic hothead. So far, I've avoided disciplining him, afraid of how he'll react. Can the EAP help or tell me what to do?**

Your employee has persistent and severe conduct problems. Therefore, a management referral to the EAP is appropriate. The referral to the EAP is to help the employee deal with his problems; however, you can no longer fail to address his poor job behavior. The EAP can't participate in administrative decisions. You should definitely document all concerns and consult with HR about appropriate corrective action steps. The EAP will assess anger issues, use of alcohol, and other risk issues. Your job is to calmly explain job expectations, let him know when he falls short of them, and provide logical consequences to failing to meet those expectations. Poor behavior must be addressed. Consult with EAP and HR about your plan and ways to minimize negative confrontation and promote safety. Note that you always should refer employees to an EAP at the earliest sign of persistent conduct issues. This affords a better opportunity to intervene with chronic employee behavioral problems, which often grow worse.

■ **My employee's work is good, and frankly, he is my best employee. There is nothing to document regarding performance, but he has a bad attitude with gruff communication style, barbed comments and cynicism. Coworkers don't want to work with him. Can the EAP help?**

Yes, the EAP can help. They can help you craft your approach as supervisor. You do have job performance issues that you can document and upon which you can base a referral. It's attitude at work. Attitude can be described in a way that makes it measurable. The EAP can consult with you on useful language to consider in documentation, and it will do so with you confidentially. The task is to describe the manner in which your employee conducts himself, the disposition and temperament he displays, and most importantly, the impact on others. This is key to effective documentation—describing the harm or cost to the organization in lost productivity, lower morale, conflict, lost team cohesion, etc.

■ **I recently read that anxiety is common among workers of all ages, especially younger workers. What performance or workplace symptoms**

Looking for mental health symptoms is not an efficient way of identifying troubled employees from a management perspective. Focusing on performance standards you want improved and then considering a referral to the EAP when they do not get better is the way to go. Are you puzzled by an employee who turned down a promotion for the third time? What about an employee who always avoids the annual holiday party? These employees may be exhibiting symptoms of two quite

would indicate an employee suffers with an anxiety disorder?

different forms of anxiety—or they may not be symptoms of anxiety at all. There is a wide spectrum of anxiety disorders. Everyone experiences some anxiety from time to time, but many with severe forms of anxiety may perform in a superior fashion.

■ We are pushing this year to hire more veterans. It's the right thing to do, and we believe it will be a win-win. What are some of the key issues we should keep in mind after we begin hiring?

Be proactive and communicate effectively with veterans. Surveys of vets who are employed in the civilian workforce find that most think their unique skills—ones that would directly help the employer—aren't fully or effectively used. So, when supervising vets, dialogue with them about their ideas, skills, and potential. Put them to the test. Vets are trained in taking or giving directions and then performing to their maximum ability. They are not necessarily conditioned to play the devil's advocate, question authority, hold brainstorming sessions, or delve into discussions about how employees feel. These participatory workplace behaviors of the modern era may require more prompting to pull vets into them. If you are hiring vets, consider the special report released last year that will aid you in maximizing your effectiveness in working with vets. It's called "Mission Critical: Unlocking the Value of Veterans in the Workforce." Find it at online bookstores. Don't forget to make the EAP available and have its message communicated to family members and spouses. These persons can help reach vets if personal problems arise.

■ After making a formal supervisor referral to the EAP, should I expect to hear what is happening with my employee at EAP? My concern is change or improved job performance. I either see it or I don't.

Regardless to what is happening with your employee at EAP, you should continue to watch for signs of improved job performance or behavior. The steps they are taking in their personal life is their own confidential information. Give the employee time to turn things around, but if the job problems continue, be prepared to use all of the other tools in your supervisor tool belt. You may want to provide a second referral to EAP if no change occurs. This will assist the EAP in their work with the employee to help focus on what is not working with the plans and recommendations. An EAP exists because of its primary business purpose, which is helping the workforce remain happy, healthy, and productive. Part of this must be motivating the most difficult and most troubled workers to follow through with its recommendations.

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