

December 2020

# EAP NEWS

A worksite newsletter for supervisors provided by your Employee Assistance Program.



## EAP Support for Supervisors

We understand that as a supervisor you are often the first person that will hear of an employee with a worksite conflict, work-life struggles, concerns with legal or financial issues, or other challenges. The EAP is here to help you keep your employees safe, healthy and productive while at work and at home.

**Q.** My employee has been late too often over the past several months. I have mentioned it to him several times in passing, wrote him up, and I referred him to the EAP in the memo. What is my next step?

**A.** Tardiness is a frustrating problem for supervisors. Oddly enough, a common missing piece of the solution is sitting down in private with the employee to discuss the matter, and most importantly, expressing disappointment. Be sincere. You may be angry, and feel like lecturing, but express your disappointment. Contrast this disappointment with what you envisioned for the worker. This can trigger a stronger awareness of responsibility and guilt (which is a good thing.) Employees with chronic behavioral issues use defensive mechanisms like denial and rationalization to avoid experiencing anxiety caused by their improper behavior. Healthy anxiety is the “juice” of change. Your expression of disappointment can overpower this self-reinforcing process and make the EAP referral more certain and participation more likely. If you are trying to avoid disciplinary action, the above is your next step.

**Q.** If I phone the EAP to provide information concerning a rumor I heard about an employee who was recently discharged from treatment for drug use, will the EAP keep my phone call confidential? How will this information be used?

**A.** A key principle in working with addictive disease employees is to avoid enabling and codependent-like responses to their behaviors. In this instance, seeking to verify such a rumor would be akin to chasing something nearly undiscoverable. The EAP, understanding this dynamic, will avoid engaging in such controlling behaviors, but instead use the information as a backdrop to have a more effective follow up discussion on progress in treatment and follow-through with a recovery program. EAPs don't provide treatment, so follow-up with the treatment provider will be important to allow clinical staff working with the employee to better manage or intervene if necessary. You did the right thing in passing along this information, but your goal should continue to be the employee's performance.

Go to [ibhsolutions.com/members](https://ibhsolutions.com/members) to learn more about EAP benefits, and to access promotional materials, newsletters, trainings, work-life balance resources, webinars and more.



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**Q.** How do I document a bad attitude? It is too subjective. I would almost need a video to accurately describe it.

**A.** You're right. A bad attitude cannot be documented as such. It requires more quantifiable language. The Oxford dictionary defines "attitude" as "a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior." The clue is behavior! Behaviors that can be seen, heard, and therefore described, constitute the language that reflects attitude problems. But it does not end there. The next piece is linking these behaviors to undesirable or problematic effects. If, for example, your employee is constantly making cynical remarks in team meetings, ask the team how this behavior affects them and learn about how it negatively impacts the team's enjoyment of the work environment or productivity. These are what's needed to create effective documentation. Can the EAP help? Yes, this is one the most commonly referred employee issues.

**Q.** My employee periodically visits the EAP, but this has been going on for a year. I thought the EAP provided short-term assessments?

**A.** The EAP may meet with employees periodically to discuss their progress in treatment or counseling, or to evaluate how well they are following through with other recommendations. Recovery from certain illnesses like alcoholism takes work, lots of dedication to a recovery program, and support with overcoming challenges, stressors, and life events that can precipitate relapse. Periodic meetings with EAP clients are typically on an as-needed basis with those who may be considered more at-risk for recurring problems related to job performance or issues originally addressed in the first appointment. An employee who is not following through with a doctor or community treatment program's recommendation may be asked by the EAP to come to an appointment to better understand difficulties the employee may be having with attendance, participation, or cooperation.

**Q.** Which is more effective as a means of identifying substance abusers, spotting signs and symptoms of addiction or focusing on performance issues like absenteeism and conduct problems?

**A.** When employee assistance programs emerged fifty years ago, a major shift occurred in supervisor training. The field moved away from training managers to look for the signs and symptoms of addiction to instead being observant of performance issues that did not improve, and referring employees to the EAP based upon these performance issues as the primary means of identifying troubled workers. Some of these workers might also be alcoholic or drug addicted. Since evidence showed addictive disease ultimately would manifest as absenteeism, quality-of-work issues, and behavioral problems, the new approach flourished. Today, supervisors are also taught to spot signs and symptoms of substance abuse to support reasonable suspicion testing, particularly in regulated occupations deemed safety-sensitive, especially by the U.S. Department of Transportation. So, decades later, the two strategies have somewhat merged. However, the dominant model of observation, documentation, confrontation, and referral to the EAP has proven to be the most effective for salvaging the most workers.



### Working Together: Helping Any Troubled Employee Get Back on Track

When an employee's performance begins to erode in some way, often supervisors will try to 'help' the employee by looking the other way or not giving any consequences. Sometimes this helps the employee – and sometimes it perpetuates the problem. How do we know what the best course of action is? This seminar will discuss how to recognize concerning behavior and how to help any employee get back on track.

**Register for the upcoming webinar.**



### College Corner

College-related debt has become a major issue in America, and a political football. Currently, there is \$1.7 trillion outstanding. This surpasses the total of all credit card debt & car loans combined. Due to Covid-19, the US Department of Education has allowed an extended period of forbearance. Without congressional intervention, the forbearance period will end December 31, and payments will recommence.

It is understandable that many are stressed by the levels of college-related debt. A way to avoid this stress is to avoid or minimize debt, and the best way to avoid this debt is to find the best college based on academic, social and financial fit.

However, this must be done prior to applying to college. Too many apply only to find themselves piecing together the financing because of a poor financial award. The cost of college should be known before your student applies. But figuring this out accurately is the challenge.

If you are concerned about the high cost of college, or if you are stressed by your college-related debt, your EAP has solutions. Visit our website to arrange a time to speak with one of our specialists. This is free and can end up saving you thousands of dollars.

<https://my.timetrade.com/book/N62GH>