


BEST EAP REFERRAL TIPS FOR SUPERVISORS




Supervisors can benefit by following useful tips when making supervisor referrals to the EAP. Employees frequently decide to contact or not contact the EAP, and whether to follow its recommendations based on what supervisors say or do. When in doubt, consult with the EAP before making a referral. The EA professional can remind you about important tips.


Arranged Appointments

 Ask the EAP if it can provide an appointment that you can offer to your employee at a corrective interview. Make a supervisor referral, and invite your employee to accept the appointment or arrange a more convenient time. This convenience helps employees follow-through, and may determine whether you salvage your employee.

Do Not “Badger” or “Hound”


 Do not pressure, insist, or threaten your employee to visit the EAP. EAPs are voluntary programs that can be wrongly perceived as disciplinary if supervisors or managers attempt to coerce employees into using them. In the course of a routine supervisor referral, never state that you are “making the EAP mandatory.”*

Ask for Permission


 Ask the employee to sign a release giving the EAP permission to contact you and confirm attendance and cooperation. If your employee refuses to sign a release, this will not prevent you from managing your employee’s performance.

**Referrals to Substance Abuse Professionals (SAPs) and cooperation with their recommendations are required for employees testing positive for prohibited substances under Department of Transportation drug testing rules. If the EAP serves as the SAP, referral and successful follow-through with SAP recommendations may be required.*


An Alternative to Discipline

 Adopt a positive attitude during your corrective interview. See the opportunity for an EAP referral as a good thing for your employee. The EAP could make future disciplinary actions unnecessary by resolving personal problems that are affecting productivity.


Expect to Hear from the EAP

 Anticipate that the EA professional will contact you to confirm your employee’s appointment at the EAP. This is done with a *consent for the release of confidential information* signed by the employee at the EAP. Call the EAP if the EAP does not call you.


Focus on Performance

 Focus on performance after supervisor referrals. Do not base future administrative actions on treatment or counseling successes or failures.* Remember, not all employees will improve performance after a supervisor referral, even if personal problems are resolved.


Use Your Documentation

 Provide your documentation of job performance problems to the EAP prior to referral. This prevents the need for the EA professional to repeat what you said about job problems to your employee. To do so impedes effective interviewing of your employee because it invites arguments about details.


Refer for Performance Issues

 Do not consider whether personal problems exist as the criteria for deciding to make a supervisor referral. Only consider whether performance problems (attendance, quality of work, behavior, etc.) are continuing despite attempts as a supervisor to correct them.

Don’t Rule Out Need for EAP

 Do not “rule out” the need for an EAP referral based upon what your employee tells you about his or her personal problems. Examples include seeing “a counselor” already, sudden cures for personal problems, concerns about using the EAP, etc.

Make Referrals Formal

 Tell your employee that you are making a “supervisor referral.” Do not suggest that the employee visit the EAP, and then later consider such discussions as supervisor referrals. Do not assume that your employee is so problematic that a supervisor referral is a waste of time, or that if you made a supervisor referral, the employee would not accept it. Make the referral anyway, and document it.