

The Successful SUPERVISOR

2011

May

Tips from  LifeSolutions

"I have an employee whose job performance continues to deteriorate in spite of my efforts to coach and counsel him. Should I make a mandatory referral to the EAP? I really want him to use the EAP as I know he can be a good performer." This scenario illustrates the confusion that exists around making performance-based supervisory referrals to the EAP. In this issue, *The Successful Supervisor* will outline the difference between the two types of performance-based referrals, highlighting the formal referral. As always, we are interested in your feedback and/or questions. Please e-mail your questions and comments to the EAP at ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com or contact an EAP account manager at 1.800.647.3327.

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Most managers recognize the value of the EAP as an ally in addressing performance issues with employees. They want employees to succeed and see the EAP as a resource to help employees improve performance, especially if a personal issue is involved. In their desire to be helpful, managers sometimes jump to a mandatory referral when the formal supervisor performance-based referral is a more appropriate choice.

Below we define a "formal supervisor performance-based referral" and describe how it is different from a "mandatory referral" to the EAP.

- ◆ **Formal Supervisor Performance-based Referral:** This type of EAP referral is used when it has been documented that an employee has shown declining work performance due to a lack of job skills, demonstrated specific problem behaviors, or violated a policy (such as attendance, not completing work in a timely manner, etc).
 - Use of the EAP is *voluntary* on the part of the employee.
 - Information about attendance at EAP sessions and compliance with recommendations will be shared only when the employee signs a written release.
- ◆ **Mandatory Referral:** A mandatory referral to the EAP is used when there is gross misconduct by the employee, there is a threat to personal or workplace safety, or a fitness for duty situation exists.
 - The employee is *required* to come to the EAP — failure to do so may result in job action up to and including discharge.
 - Situations requiring a mandatory referral to the EAP are rare.

For both types of referrals, the supervisor must call the EAP for consultation before making the referral.

How to make a Formal Supervisor Performance-based Referral

In the opening scenario, the issues did not meet the criteria for a mandatory referral. That means a formal supervisor performance-based referral would be the appropriate choice. The steps for making such a referral include:

- ◆ **Consultation with HR.** When there are performance issues with an employee, HR should always be consulted to clarify policy and procedural questions.
 - HR partners with the manager to review performance deficiencies and identify the appropriate course of action, based on your company's policies and procedures.
 - Call LifeSolutions (EAP). The manager and/or HR need to call the EAP to make this type of referral *prior to recommending that the employee call the EAP* to set up an appointment.

- The EAP needs information about the performance issues to best assess the situation and determine a plan of action.
- We can also coach you on how to talk to the employee about this referral.
- ◆ **Meet with the employee.** After your documentation of the performance issues is completed and you have contacted the EAP, you are ready to talk with the employee.
 - Part of an action plan is the referral to the EAP. Framing an EAP referral in the best light possible is the key to success in encouraging the employee to contact the EAP.
 - Some key words/phrases to use to maximize employee follow-through include:
 - **The EAP is a resource** to help you be successful at work.
 - **I'm not suggesting you need counseling.** The EAP is workplace-based; The EAP will help you focus on and figure out what is needed to get your performance back on track.
 - **It is up to you whether you use this resource — it is totally voluntary.** I want you to be successful, so my job is to make any resource available to you to help with that goal.
 - **What you say to the EAP is confidential.** Only if you give written permission will your EAP counselor tell me whether you have attended and are complying with the recommendations, but nothing more.
 - **Bottom line, your performance needs to improve (in these ways ...).** The EAP can support you in accomplishing this.
 - **Here's the number — 1.800-647.3327.**

If you have questions about making any type of referral to the EAP, call LifeSolutions for consultation and support.