

SUPERVISOR'S GUIDE

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is designed to help supervisors deal effectively with employees who have job performance or conduct problems due to personal or job-related issues. The EAP provides assessment, short-term counseling, referral and case management services to help employees maintain productivity.

This guide provides managers and other supervisors with a brief description of how to combine basic supervisory practices with the services available from the EAP. When the manager or supervisor follows the procedures and guidelines described, disciplinary action may become unnecessary and valued employees may be retained in the workplace.

For information or assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week call:

**1 - 800 - EAP - 4 - YOU
(1 - 800 - 327 - 4968)**

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MANAGEMENT

An essential component of the Employee Assistance Program is the provision of consultation and training services to managers and other supervisors. These services may include:

- Confidentially discussing concerns about an employee's job performance or conduct
- Helping to define the problem(s) and consider alternatives
- Offering instructions on documentation techniques
- Assisting with the preparation of a referral memo
- Coaching on constructive confrontation skills
- Assisting with the reintegration of employees into the workplace
- Mediating disputes between individuals or among work groups
- Analyzing operations and organizational relationships and developing recommendations for improvements to management
- Arranging and/or providing training for managers and other supervisors on various topics

ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR

A critical role of the supervisor is to ensure that all employees perform their assigned

duties and responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner. This is accomplished by observing an employee's performance and conduct. Both acceptable and unacceptable performance or conduct should be regularly documented. When a pattern of unacceptable performance or conduct develops, the supervisor must intervene as soon as possible to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. This intervention should include a constructive confrontation and a referral to the EAP. When the intervention results in an employee taking leave, the manager or supervisor should also assist in reintegrating the employee to the workplace upon their return.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Because you are in a key position to observe performance and conduct, it is important to identify problems an employee may be having as early as possible. **Early identification** and intervention can help prevent problems from getting worse. Watch for patterns of behavior developing over a period of time, not isolated events. Warning signs that may indicate personal or job-related distress include:

- Chronic tardiness
- Absenteeism
- Decreased productivity or quality
- High error or accident rate

- Irritability, moodiness, anxiety
- Avoidance of co-workers and/or supervisors
- Vague medical complaints

Warning signs that may indicate a propensity for violence include:

- History of violent behavior
- History of mental health problems
- Angry outbursts or agitated behavior
- Verbal threats of violence toward others
- Hostility
- Personality changes or bizarre behavior
- Deteriorating relationships with co-workers
- Tendency to be a loner or become withdrawn
- Consistent job performance concerns or poor job evaluations
- Substance abuse problems
- A recent trauma in the employee's life (e.g. death of spouse, demotion)
- Expectation of lay-off or termination
- Preoccupation with weapons
- Minimal social support system
- Routine violations of company policy
- Sexual or other harassment of co-worker(s)

DOCUMENTING JOB PERFORMANCE

Proper documentation involves focusing on observable or surveyable facts and **avoiding subjective judgments** that

could be interpreted differently by others. Suggested guidelines include:

- Be specific as to the date, time and place that the unacceptable job performance or inappropriate conduct occurred
- Write down what you observe, not your opinions, conclusions or evaluations
- Include good as well as poor performance observations
- Keep it confidential. Your observations should be shared only with the employee
- Do it on a frequent basis
- Be objective, fair and consistent

THE CONSTRUCTIVE CONFRONTATION

Some supervisors are reluctant to confront employees for fear that it may result in bad feelings or harm a relationship. Others may confront an employee in a public place or in a manner that lowers the employee's self-esteem and promotes conflict. However, a well-planned and executed constructive confrontation can significantly improve an otherwise negative or troubling situation. A constructive confrontation is advisable with any employee who has developed a pattern of unacceptable performance or conduct problems. Your discussions with the employee should be based on objective performance data based on your documentation. Suggestions for a successful meeting include:

- Select a place and time that assures privacy
- Have the documentation on hand during the discussion
- Be aware of your expectations and what you consider to be acceptable or unacceptable
- Be consistent, fair and do not be more tolerant of one employee than you would be with another
- Begin your discussion by pointing out that the Postal Service values the employee's years of service, past performance, technical skills, etc.
- Describe the observed performance and compare it with the desired performance
- Get a commitment from the employee to improve their performance or conduct within a specified period of time
- Set a date for a follow-up meeting

You are encouraged to seek advice from your EAP counselor for help in preparing or conducting the constructive confrontation.

REFERRING AN EMPLOYEE TO THE EAP

A formal management referral is usually necessary and appropriate in a situation when an employee's job performance or conduct is poor or is deteriorating. After you have documented and reviewed the employee's performance or conduct, you

should initiate a referral to the EAP. A timely EAP referral offers an employee professional services before disciplinary action becomes necessary. This is initiated by a memorandum of referral provided to the employee.

The memorandum includes:

- A clear statement of the purpose (referral to the EAP)
- Documentation of the declining job performance or unacceptable conduct
- The name and telephone number of the EAP counselor and the confidential aspect of the program
- Mention of a follow-up performance evaluation within a specific time

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is an important aspect of a successful EAP. If the information an employee shares with the EAP counselor is not properly protected, employees may be reluctant to seek the help they need to improve their performance or conduct. The EAP must operate in compliance with privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations. Management may be informed whether the employee has scheduled or attended the initial counseling session on the clock. However, with limited exceptions, no other information may be released to anyone without the employee's written consent.

FOLLOW-UP

If the employee takes a leave to engage in treatment, the supervisor should participate in a return-to-work meeting with the EAP counselor and employee to review the employee's status and job performance expectations. This can help successfully reintegrate the employee into the workplace. As a part of the follow-up phase, the supervisor should continue monitoring the employee's job performance or conduct. If it has not improved to an acceptable level, corrective action should be initiated in a very timely manner.

CONCLUSION

The supervisor has the responsibility of assuring that all employees work as effectively and efficiently as possible. If an employee develops patterns of unacceptable performance or conduct, the supervisor should follow the steps described in this guide and offer the help available through the EAP. For more information or consultation call your EAP counselor today.



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a day, 7 days a week, call:*

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*This program is provided by the U.S.
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