



# EAP Manager's Manual

Tools and resources to help you lead

Contact us 24/7



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# Introduction

Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a work-site-based program that is designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems associated with employees who are impaired by personal concerns.



## **EAP can be used as the following:**

- A confidential resource that helps employees identify and deal productively with personal problems including relationship problems, family issues, depression, stress, alcohol, drugs, legal questions and financial difficulties.
- Assistance for employees whose personal problems may be affecting their job performance.
- A resource for information on a wide variety of work-life topics.
- A tool to help you be a more effective and efficient manager.

## **Benefits of using your EAP program**

You and your organization may benefit from utilizing EAP by:

- Maintaining employee performance and productivity by offering a way for employees to address and resolve personal problems before they escalate.
- Retaining employees and enhancing positive supervisor/employee relationships.

# EAP fundamentals

## Core EAP concepts

EAP is based on the following concepts and assumptions:

- From time to time, we all experience problems that challenge our ability to cope.
- Personal or workplace problems sometimes impact job performance.
- It is the responsibility of the manager/supervisor to address issues with the employee.
- The best way to address these issues is to consult with a human resources representative and provide help by referring the employee to EAP.

## Confidentiality

EAP is a confidential service. Any contact you or your employee has with your EAP program is held in the strictest confidence. Exceptions to this rule are:

- When someone is an imminent threat to themselves or others. Included in this category are threats of homicide, suicide or child/elder care abuse.
- When the employee has signed an Authorization for Release and Disclosure of Protected Health Information (ROI), which allows EAP to discuss with the worksite when the referral is based on job performance. Without the employee's written permission, EAP may not release any information to the worksite or another third party.

## Why encourage use of EAP?

It is not cost effective to lose trained and experienced team members. Anyone can experience a personal problem at any time; EAP is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Employees who receive help can be restored back to expected levels of productivity with minimal disruption.

EAP offers to help employees and their household members for problems including:

- Marital and household
- Childcare and elder care
- Financial and legal
- Mental health
- Alcohol
- Drugs

## EAP as a manager's tool



In addition to providing valuable support to individuals and their families to address issues such as stress, relationships, depression or substance abuse, EAP is an important resource for managers and supervisors. Available around the clock, EAP can provide management consultation related to:

### **Employee behavior changes**

As a manager, you may witness a slight deterioration in performance or sense small behavior changes in an employee that, if left unchecked, could escalate. EAP has experts available to consult with you on how to identify a troubled employee and best refer them to your EAP.

### **Drop in performance**

Sometimes performance declines to the point where a more comprehensive consultation with your EAP is appropriate. Not only can we help you in coaching the individual and documenting the performance problems and attempted resolution, EAP's management consultants can guide you in talking to the employee and formally recommending that they contact your EAP.

### **Threat of violence**

Violence in the workplace is always predictable and avoidable. It always results from unresolved conflict that escalates out of control. EAP can assist you in dealing with troubled employees and resolving issues before they deteriorate into a potentially violent situation.

### **Conflict resolution**

Whether it is a communication problem between you and your staff or conflict between members of your work team, EAP can coach you through handling such situations, ensuring a more productive and satisfied team.



In this workbook we will outline how EAP can assist you to:

- Recognize the warning signs of a troubled employee
- Coach them through performance problems
- Document issues and actions related to performance problems
- Refer employees whose performance is not improving

## Referrals

### Informal referrals

When you identify some change in performance and/or behavior, a referral to EAP can be made early in the process. You can express your concern to the employee “informally,” without initiating the corrective action process. This type of referral is appropriate when you observe no specific work performance issues, but you are concerned by behaviors such as lack of concentration or focus. You do not counsel the employee. You only suggest that he or she might consider contacting EAP. No information is given to you regarding your employee’s participation in EAP.

### Formal referrals

If performance continues to deteriorate, a formal referral to EAP may be made. You should check your organization’s policy regarding formal referrals to EAP before proceeding. A formal referral is a recommendation that an employee contact EAP because of poor performance. Your part in the referral process is:

- Contact EAP to discuss making a formal referral. Explain your concern about the particular employee, indicating the behavior problems you have documented previously.
- Together with the EAP counselor, you will devise a plan to approach the employee. You may request feedback from EAP regarding the employee’s compliance.
- Discuss the plan with your own manager or human resource department to make sure the referral follows your company policy and procedure.
- Meet with the employee to share your concerns and ask the employee to call your EAP. Explain that participation in the program is optional and performance will continue to be monitored. You may be notified that the employee has contacted EAP if he or she signs an Authorization for Release and Disclosure of Protected Health Information (ROI) to Employer.

### Mandatory referrals

In the event of a positive drug screen, behavioral concerns, or an ongoing performance problem not resolved through previous efforts, depending on your organizational policy, you may make the employee’s involvement with EAP a condition of continued employment. You will be notified that the employee has contacted EAP and whether the employee has been compliant with treatment recommendations if the employee signs an ROI. Please check your organization’s policies regarding this issue, as policies may vary by employer.

## Identifying a troubled employee

Think about the employees that you supervise. Do any of them have any of the following characteristics?

### Absenteeism

- ☐ Instances of leave without prior notice
- ☐ Excessive sick leave
- ☐ Frequent Monday and/or Friday absences
- ☐ Repeated absences that follow any pattern
- ☐ Excessive tardiness, especially with an established pattern
- ☐ Leaving work early
- ☐ Unusual and increasingly improbable excuses for absences
- ☐ Higher absenteeism rate than other employees for common illnesses
- ☐ Frequent unscheduled short-term absences (with or without medical explanation)

### “On-the-job” absenteeism/presenteeism

- ☐ Continued absences from work station—more than job requires
- ☐ Taking long breaks
- ☐ Repeated physical illness on the job without medical interventions

### Safety issues

- ☐ Accidents on the job
- ☐ Accidents outside of work that affect job performance
- ☐ Behavior that is unsafe and that could easily cause an accident

### Lack of concentration

- ☐ Work requires more and more effort
- ☐ Tasks take more and more time to complete

### Confusion

- ☐ Difficulty recalling instructions, details, etc.
- ☐ Increasing difficulty handling complex assignments
- ☐ Difficulty recalling work errors, however, able to recount errors of co-workers

**Irregular work patterns**

- ☐ Alternate periods of high and low productivity
- ☐ Change in the amount of effort required to meet deadlines

**Reporting to work**

- ☐ Coming/returning to work in an obviously abnormal state (mental/physical)
- ☐ Difficulty beginning work upon arrival

**Generally lowered job efficiency**

- ☐ Missed deadlines
- ☐ Mistakes due to inattention and/or poor judgment
- ☐ Wasting materials or resources
- ☐ Making poor decisions
- ☐ Complaints from customers or clients
- ☐ Improbable excuses for poor performance
- ☐ Increase in personal activities and phone calls

**Poor employee relations**

- ☐ Overreactions to real or imagined criticism
- ☐ Wide swings in morale
- ☐ Borrowing money from co-workers
- ☐ Complaints from co-workers
- ☐ Unreasonable resentments
- ☐ Avoidance of associates

**Total number checked:**

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If you have checked **three or more** behavioral changes, you have an employee with whom you should discuss job performance. If you have checked **five or more** changes in behavior, please contact EAP for a consultation.



## Five-step process for managing employee concerns

While difficult and often uncomfortable, it is a manager's responsibility to take steps to correct performance problems. These five steps can help.



### **STEP 1: Recognition**

You have recognized a pattern of poor performance extending over a period of time. Inform the employee of the problem and allow some time for improvement. Be specific about the behaviors or performance issues that you have identified. It's important to remain focused on the work performance problems.

### **STEP 2: Observation**

This is the observation of the pattern of behavior and an exploration of its impact over time. When shared with the employee, this information will assist them in the problem-solving process.

### **STEP 3: Documentation**

This involves keeping a written log of the observations made over time, which serves to help you and the employee see exactly what is going wrong.

### **STEP 4: Feedback**

Using the information from the written log, the manager/supervisor presents it back to the employee. Then, with the employee, you help to define the specific problems.

### **STEP 5: Resolution**

Use the documented information and discussion with the employee to develop a problem statement that will eventually lead to a resolution of the problem. That's the ultimate goal—resolution of the problem. By working with the employee, you can look at possible options for solving the defined problem. Will additional training help? Is this a point where progressive discipline is needed? Would a referral to EAP help?

After establishing mutually agreed upon performance expectations and criteria for determining success, continue to monitor performance and that the employee implements their planned set of options.

*The following worksheet may be used for organization and planning purposes.*

## **Correcting performance problems: A supervisor's worksheet**

Employee Name:

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Date:

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Supervisor Name:

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### **I. Preparation: concerning work performance behavior**

*How does the employee's behavior impact work outcome, teams, the organization, the customer?*

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*Does the employee have the skills necessary for their role? If not, what are the limitations?*

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*Does the employee have a clear understanding of their work responsibilities? Have they been given a written job description, training, etc.?*

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*What has been documented to date regarding the employee's work performance? What needs to be documented on a go-forward basis?*

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*What policies/procedures apply to this problem? (These may be operational or HR policies.)*

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*Based on company policy, what should be my next step? Should I contact HR?*

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*Is the employee aware of company policies/procedures as they relate to their job performance?*

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*How does the employee's performance or behavior need to improve?*

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*What are time expectations for improvement and how will I monitor this?*

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**II. Stating the need for improved performance**

*Describe the work performance/behavior problem and its impact in two to three sentences.*

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*State the needed change in work performance/behavior.*

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*Identify the company policy (if applicable) that addresses the performance problem/behavior.*

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### **III. Employee perception/feedback**

*What do you believe the employee will identify as the cause of the problem? Is additional training necessary?*

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*How do you expect the employee to react to the need for improved performance?*

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*How do you plan on responding in order to remain focused on the employee's job performance?*

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*Ask the employee to identify how they can improve their work performance.*

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*Has your perception of the problem or strategies to resolve the problem changed? If so, how?*

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*What company resources are available to support you and the employee?*

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#### **IV. Next steps**

Identify steps you will take to address the problem. This might include actions required by policy/ procedures, a follow-up meeting to review performance or an informal referral to EAP.

- Set up a follow-up meeting date.
- Document the discussion and follow-up plans.



## Coaching & constructive feedback

Coaching involves meeting with the employee to discuss what is expected of them, and to point out how observed performance is failing to match these expectations. This discussion should take place at the earliest possible stage and needs to continue until the problem is resolved.



Some goals of the coaching process are:

- To identify for the employee the performance concerns in clear terms
- To discuss the specific behavior problems that you have identified
- To identify obstacles to improvement and support that is needed
- To establish objectives and time frames for improvement

### Guidelines for conducting a coaching session

- Prepare your information and discussion outline in advance, using the worksheet as an example.
- Conduct the session in a confidential setting and in a constructive manner.
- Clear your calendar and provide plenty of time for the discussion.
- Focus the discussion on specific job performance difficulties.
- Explain to the employee their job responsibilities and where performance has been failing.
- Highlight what the employee does well.
- Avoid trying to diagnose a personal problem—stick to the job performance issues.
- Ask the employee for their feedback.
- Set up a plan for improvement. Outline what you expect and set firm time limits. Be very clear about what the employee can expect if they fail to improve performance according to the mutually agreed upon plan. The plan should also include any support and/or training to be provided.
- Document your discussion with the employee and the agreed upon plan.

## **Constructive feedback**

Once you have identified problematic performance, it is critical to confront it in a timely fashion.

The goals of constructive feedback are to address the behavior, not the person, and to encourage change in behavior. The constructive feedback process works. The keys to success are planning, early intervention and follow through.

There are four elements of constructive feedback.

### **1. Non-judgmental statements of fact**

- Accurately describe the specific behavior.
- Do so based on only your own observations—what you have seen and heard.
- Focus on the behavior, not the person.
- Be objective.
- Make no judgments.
- Do not begin with a question.
  - For example:
    - “What’s wrong with you?”
    - “Do you have some kind of problem?”
- Do not make inferences or assume motives about what caused the behavior.
  - For example:
    - “You deliberately cut me off!”
    - “Is something else in your life causing this?”
    - “You must be drinking too much lately.”

### **2. Statements of effect**

- Clearly state the impact of the given facts.
- Identify how the behavior did not meet expectations or standards.
- Identify how the behavior caused other problems.

### **3. Expectations about desired change**

- Tell what you want to see happen.
- Describe the specific changes in behavior that will remedy the situation.
- Give specific time frames.
- Describe the consequences of not meeting the expectations when appropriate.

**The Sometimes Speech:** “Sometimes job problems like these are the result of things going on outside of the workplace. It may not be true in your case, and it’s really none of my business. However, because it is true sometimes, the company does have an Employee Assistance Program. It is free and confidential. It has helped a lot of people. I encourage you to contact our EAP.”

- Identify that the use and support of EAP may also be helpful.

Using *The Sometimes Speech* can be extremely helpful when recommending your EAP. The following speech is a script that can be used when recommending EAP to employees.

#### **4. Awareness and control of feelings**

- Be aware of your own feelings.
- Expect defensiveness.
- Focus on performance.
- Stay calm and relaxed.
- Be caring, but avoid getting personally involved.
- Watch your volume and tone of voice.
- Watch your body language.
- Avoid sarcasm.

## Common employee reactions

Employee reactions	Possible manager responses
<b>Promises</b> – “You have my word that I will improve.”	<p>“I believe you, but you have made that promise before. Something is keeping you from making your promise good.</p> <p>You need to use every resource available to deal with that something and return to the good work you have always done in the past.”</p>
<b>Shifting Responsibility</b> – “Why have you singled me out? Mary’s attendance is worse than mine!”	<p>“We are here to talk about your performance. Your performance is the issue we need to discuss.”</p>
<b>Anger</b> – “Why in the “#@%!” are you talking to me? I don’t have to put up with this “#@%!”	<p>“We need to discuss your performance. If you are unable to discuss it calmly, it will be better for you if I document this, and we try again tomorrow.”</p>
<b>Silence</b> – The employee just stares trying to make you uncomfortable.	<p>After reviewing the problem, ask for an explanation then wait—as long as it takes.</p>
<b>Crying</b> – The employee suddenly bursts into tears.	<p>“Take a minute to pull yourself together, and then we need to discuss your performance.” (If it happens again, do not stop—continue.)</p>
<b>Friendship</b> – “I thought you were my friend. What happened to our friendship?”	<p>“I am your friend, but I wouldn’t be much of a friend if I just let you ruin your job without saying something.”</p>
<b>Accusation</b> – “Are you saying I have a problem? What is it?”	<p>“Yes, you have a problem. You are not performing like you have in the past.”</p>
<b>Alliance</b> – “O.K., O.K.. Let me tell you what is going on at home. Then you’ll see, you’re lucky to have me here at all.”	<p>“I’ll be glad to listen, but I am not a professional. I recommend that you talk to a professional through our EAP.”</p>

## Barriers to referring employees

Sometimes our feelings and attitudes prevent us from taking the steps necessary to obtain appropriate help for troubled employees. As a result, we end up “enabling” the employee to continue their destructive behavior pattern until they are terminated. With the enabling process, everybody ends up losing.



Some common barriers to referral:

**Anger**—Are you angry with the employee because of their attendance record, deteriorating job performance or strange behavior? Do you want to “get” them?

**Sympathy**—Do you feel so sorry for them that you are tolerating poor attendance, deteriorating job performance, or bizarre behavior? Are you buying all the excuses?

**Fear**—Are you afraid that you are losing control of the situation, of yourself in the situation, of criticism from the employee, management or EAP, of breaking confidence, or that you will jeopardize the employee’s job security? Are you afraid your actions may cause their situation to worsen?

**Guilt**—Do you feel guilty about how you handled the situation before, of losing your temper, or for not being able to be correct in the situation?

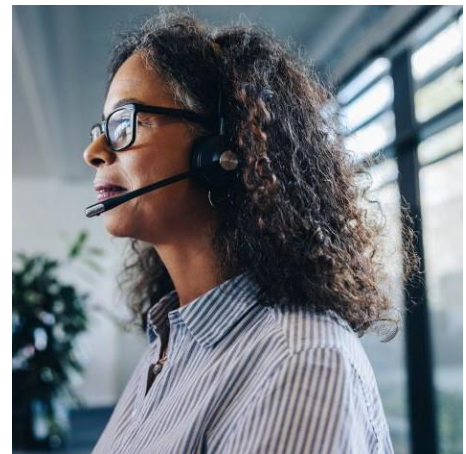
**Denial**—Are you denying that there is a job performance problem? Are you excusing them? “Best employee, when they’re here”, “Gets work done, just under the weather, now”.

**Ego-Involvement**—Are they molded in your own image and likeness? Are they your star employee? Is their failure your failure?

Whatever the reason for your reluctance, as a manager you are obligated to recognize it as an obstacle to a productive work team and a potential risk to your organization. By referring an employee to your EAP, you are taking responsibility for your staff and supporting them in resolving concerns that are affecting their productivity and overall well-being.

## EAP is there for you and your employees

EAP offers confidential services to help employees and supervisors. A simple phone call can start you or an employee on the road to getting help.



### Who will your employee talk to?

EAP representatives are specially trained individuals who listen to concerns without judging or criticizing. They are familiar with a wide range of community- and employer-sponsored resources that can help you or an employee improve the quality of life.

### Typical EAP services include:

- Referrals to child-care programs and providers
- Information on adoption
- Books, videos and other resources on parenting
- Referrals to elder-care services, such as adult day programs, meals-on-wheels programs, skilled nursing and other in-home help services
- Resources on relationships and communication skills
- Referrals to personal counselors, both in-person and virtual
- Information about drug- and substance-abuse programs
- Stress-management information
- Referrals to legal and conflict-resolution services
- Crisis-management services
- Information about other community resources



## Recognizing and addressing depression in the workplace

Depression is a serious mental health illness that affects about 1 in 10 Americans. It is marked by non-stop feelings of sadness, hopelessness and worthlessness. If untreated, it may last for months or years and become worse.

The good news is that depression is treatable. Knowing the signs and understanding your role as a manager are first steps in helping a depressed member of your team.

### Signs

Signs include:

- Nonstop feelings of sadness
- Crying frequently
- Loss of interest or pleasure in previously enjoyed activities (such as sports or family get-togethers)
- Problems with focus, thinking, memory or decision making
- Change in appetite
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Loss of energy
- Feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless
- Irritability
- Body aches and pains
- Digestion problems
- Thoughts of killing oneself or attempts to kill oneself
- Overuse of alcohol or drugs

### Impact at the workplace

People with depression may show some of these signs at work:

- Showing up late and/or not at all
- Uncharacteristic mistakes
- Problems learning new tasks or following through with work
- Decreased productivity
- Lack of initiative
- Poor relationships with co-workers or customers
- New onset of irritability

- Accidents and/or injuries
- Complaints from other workers
- Erratic work performance

### Talking with someone who may need help

Often a depressed person will not get help or tell a manager about their problem because of concerns about privacy and concerns about the impact on their job. But if one of your workers shares that they are depressed, consider taking these actions:

- Talk in a private location without interruptions.
- Give them time to tell you what's on their mind.
- Don't judge or diagnose.
- If they have not been clear, ask them what they want you to do. They may only want your support. But don't make promises you can't keep. If you can grant their request, be flexible.
- Urge them to get help from your EAP or a health care professional. Don't give them advice about the disease.
- If they mention that they have thoughts of killing themselves, take immediate action. Call your EAP or call 911 to get help about how to handle the situation.

If one of your team members exhibits a pattern of poor performance over a period of time, whether caused by depression or some other personal reason, you must deal with the problem. Here are tips to keep in mind:

- Check with your EAP before meeting with the employee. This gives you the chance to plan what you will say to the employee and talk through different scenarios.
- Meet with the person in a private location free of interruptions.
- Focus on the performance concerns only. If they share personal problems, send them to EAP for free, private and professional services. If they do not tell you about any personal reasons that have caused the performance problems, still suggest your EAP. Tell them that EAP has helped many people who had performance problems due to personal troubles.

Keep watching their performance. Get help from your human resources department regarding performance plans or discipline, and keep getting help from EAP if necessary.

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