

Employees—  
Your Most  
Valuable  
Resource

# Frontline Supervisor



■ **The EAP came to our office to provide a refresher orientation and offer stress management tips. I encouraged employees to use the program, of course. However, what two or three things should supervisors generally say about the EAP to encourage its use?**

**Emphasizing the confidential nature of an EAP** is the most important thing supervisors can say. Don't get bogged down in the nuances of confidentiality laws or try to offer explanations about the few extraordinary legal exceptions all confidentiality laws share. The EAP's brochure, a required statement of informed consent, and/or the EA professional can address these issues as and when needed. Employees worry about coworkers and managers discovering the nature of their personal problem or about effects on their job security, reputation, or promotional opportunities if they use the program. Offer reassurance and say the EAP will not be phoning you to ever share the nature of an employee's personal problems or concerns. Also emphasize that no problem is off-limits. EAPs have no "problem exclusions." Sometimes, an employee will dismiss the EAP as a resource because they believe their unique problem is not appropriate to bring to the EAP.

■ **What is "purposeful leadership" and is it something that can help me in my job?**

**"Purposeful leadership"** is a model of supervisor/management behavior that has recently gained traction in literature and research. Its focus is on manager behaviors that best help lower turnover, create happier employees, permit more job satisfaction, and produce a more engaged workforce. Research shows that supervisors personally grow to influence these outcomes by becoming leaders who employees want to follow. This goal is accomplished by examining personal ethics, being a role model, communicating well, being dedicated to self-growth, and learning to genuinely inspire employees with a unifying goal for the work unit that they can't help but covet. The EAP can help you get there. Grab a copy of the book *Purposeful Leadership for a Total Engagement Culture: Master the Six Most Important Leadership Habits in Six Months*, by Michael J Pearsall. Do an honest self-assessment and work with the EAP to see how you can elevate and improve upon skills you'll discover in this landmark contribution to management science.

■ **Is it common for drug dealing to take place on the job? I imagine that this is the last place anyone would think of selling**

**Those selling illicit drugs** are, sadly, also involved in a criminal enterprise to do it. They go to where the customers are, establish trust, seek out convenience, rely on word-of-mouth marketing, and have easy access to repeat buyers. Between the street and the workplace, what location would possess these advantages? The answer is within the walls of a

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**drugs. Getting caught would mean termination and getting arrested.**

business. On the street, risk of arrest is more likely, undercover police are ever present, less convenience exists for the criminal dealer, reporting by passersby is near certain, and getting robbed or killed is more likely. Although any business is vulnerable to drug dealing in the workplace, some organizations are more likely to experience this problem. For example, over 50% of marijuana users are under 40; 70% are male. If your organization has these demographic parameters in large numbers, the possibility of drug dealing on the job would naturally be higher.

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**■ Is there a limit to the number of times a supervisor can refer an employee to the EAP for the same performance problems that may be affected by the employee's personal problems? And at what point would repeatedly sending an employee to the EAP be considered enabling?**

**EAPs do not place** a limit on the number of times a supervisor can refer an employee to the program either for the same reason or an entirely different one. Ultimately, the manager or the manager in consultation with his or her advisors must determine what value is forthcoming from referring an employee to the EAP. If referring to the EAP reestablishes the productivity of the worker, make your decision based upon this outcome. If inconvenience, loss of productivity, and sacrifice of management time are judged to be too burdensome, then repeatedly referring the same employee to the EAP as a way of managing performance problems needs to be examined. By one definition, sacrificing the well-being of the organization for the sake of the worker without seeing change would be a form of enabling.

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**■ We just referred an employee to the EAP for performance issues related to alcohol use, and he went into treatment. I'm thankful, but his history is one of being a real manipulator. I fear nothing will change. With this history, do you think I will be proven right?**

**Nearly all EAPs** can recount incidents of recalcitrant employees who achieved long-term sobriety and became near evangelists for the EAP, the company, and recovery from addiction. So, it is impossible to say how well your employee will do. Why do some employees succeed and others don't? Certainly a part of the answer lies in effective treatment, which includes working with family members, who without help can unwittingly undermine treatment. Most success stories seem to include a dramatic shift to understanding addiction as a chronic disease process that requires rigorous self-management using a program of recovery. This includes unyielding avoidance of activities that will sabotage it. Lacking these things, relapse is more predictable. When relapse occurs, it nearly always involves neglect of elements of successful recovery.

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