SUPERVISOR INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER

For Information, Consultation and Referral Assistance Contact the Wheeler EAP at 1.800.275.3327

■ **What type of drug causes the most problems with attendance?**

Alcohol is still the number one drug that causes the most attendance problems. Affected employees are not limited to those who suffer from an alcohol use disorder, but include social drinkers who miss work because of hangovers. But it does not stop there. Those with alcohol use disorders may arrive on time for work but may leave early because of severe agitation and a craving for a drink (withdrawal symptoms), which interfere with their ability to be productive. Some may drink at lunch, outside the workplace, or they may hide alcohol to drink on the job to raise their blood alcohol levels in order to be more functional. This drinking pattern may lead to another form of absenteeism associated with availability, meaning the employee is at work but is incapable of functioning productively or is somewhere at work but unable to be found (present but unavailable).

■ **I am a new supervisor, and I would like to start developing leadership skills now rather than discover these on the job. Is there a way to explain to me how I can "think like a leader"?**

You can study leadership, but learning on the job is key to success. Some key principles of leadership are worth knowing. The following list is not exhaustive, but it's a good start. Begin by having a vision for your role and work unit. It is easier to apply leadership skills when you have goals and imagined outcomes. Be aware that employees naturally observe and analyze your behavior. So, be an example for them to follow, rather than having them gossip about you behind closed doors. Encourage employees to be proactive and take the initiative, and support them with resources where possible. Communicate and foster open and honest communication with each employee, not just the group. Discover what each one aspires to be and achieve in their career. Offer mentorship, coaching, and training opportunities. Create a supportive and inclusive work environment and intervene quickly in situations that threaten this environment. Last, but not least, strive for continuous development of yourself.

■ **Several years ago we had supervisor training for how to use the EAP, and since then I am not sure about what steps to follow, which forms to fill in, and which performance information to provide. I have an**

Yes, phone the EAP. Don't overburden yourself with the details before this call, and consider phoning the EAP anytime you have a referral need or situation that could benefit from consultive help. You were exposed to the general idea and use of an EAP. Although nothing happens at the EAP until a referral is successful, the most important part of using the EAP is follow-up after the referral. Lack of follow-up undermines any sort of counseling or treatment of any condition or disorder. And relapse resulting from failure to follow up is expensive if it leads to consequent turnover or

employee to refer. It's critical the referral is successful. Should I phone the EAP first?

calamities that cause injury or loss. Most supervisors fall short on follow-up, so ask the EAP what role you should play after referral to ensure continued progress in the performance area you need satisfied.

■ **Our recently hired employee had superior performance for six or seven weeks, but since then, everything has gone downhill with this person not producing good work. Some colleagues say to let the new employee go during the probation period, but I am not sure. Any advice?**

Consult with your human resources advisor in matters of employment, discipline, and separation. Many factors may play a part in your organization's decision about what it ultimately wants to do. An EAP would decline offering an opinion in such a matter. If your management advisors support a decision to make an EAP referral, share documentation with the EAP, particularly a detailed account of the decline in work performance. Often, employee assistance professionals can identify through performance patterns what sort of personal problems exist, especially if the performance record is available during the EAP assessment. The satisfactory work initially is a strong indicator of the worker's potential, but it may take a confidential EAP assessment to identify the true cause of the decline in performance. Avoiding turnover and

■ **My employee is telling new coworkers that I am unfair and that they should be careful in the office because I play favorites. Of course, I heard this secondhand, but I think the source is credible. How should I respond?**

Addressing this situation is important because it can adversely affect morale. Have a private meeting with this employee to discuss their concerns. Show yourself to be completely open-minded with a desire to resolve the issues. Begin the conversation by expressing your concerns about what you heard. Seek clarity because the secondhand information you received may not be entirely accurate. Listen completely, don't become defensive, and don't interrupt. It is to your advantage to support open communication, and in this regard explain or clarify the matters perceived as favoritism to the employee concerned. Share how you make decisions and any factors that influence your thinking. Emphasize the importance of employees coming to you directly rather than venting in such a way that rumors or gossip result. Ask the employee for input as to how they would like decisions made, actions taken, or changes made. Monitor employee communication for a while, and promptly address any similar instances that arise. Document the discussion.

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