



COUNSELORS & CONSULTANTS

# ERC

# FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

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***Can I learn the details of an employee's personal problems if a release is signed by the employee that allows me to have this information from the EAP provider?***

It would be discouraged and considered inconsistent with EAP policy and purpose to have an employee sign such a release. It could undermine support for the program in general, distract from your role in focusing only on performance, complicate your relationship with the employee, and even jeopardize the program being perceived as offering safe and ensured confidentiality, which is its most precious asset. That being said, nothing prohibits an employee from sharing information voluntarily with others, including supervisors, of course.

***Can a supervisor use the EAP to role-play different situations in confronting and correcting employee performance, even if they do not intend to make a supervisor referral? What's the value of doing a consultation, especially if the supervisor has decades of experience and has "seen it all"?***

A key provision of ERC's EAP core technology that defines the scope of EAP functions and practice is management consultation regarding productivity issues and troubled employees. In fact, this element is listed as number one before employee assessment and referral functions. A strong relationship in which managers are engaged with ERC's EAP is essential to any program maximizing its value to the work organization. Role-play consultation is therefore an opportunity ERC offers supervisors. It can help reduce manager stress when conducting corrective interviews, encourage supervisors' assertiveness with subordinates, increase the likelihood of earlier EAP referrals, help managers encounter difficult employees more successfully, and in a global sense, reduce risk to the organization.

***A common complaint from management advisers is that supervisor documentation is not descriptive, factual, or measurable enough, or it is filled with emotional and subjective language. What other complaints or problems often interfere with effective supervisor documentation?***

Another issue interfering with documentation's usefulness is its being created too late or too long after problems are first noticed. It's rare for performance to be an even downward line of deterioration. Rather, deterioration may waver between problematic performance and surprising levels of high achievement despite the downward trend. This choppiness is often graded by supervisors on the high side, creating delays in administrative or corrective actions. This is coupled with employees bringing attention to their achievements or requesting recognition for satisfactory performance. Both tend to drive the curve up as supervisors delay and give troubled employees the benefit of the doubt. Another observation, particularly among alcoholic or drug-addicted employees, is high levels of performance in earlier years of addiction, when hard-driving work ethic and social skills produce a strong following of admirers, most of whom will enable the addict as time goes by. When substance use finally does affect performance negatively, denial or wait-and-see approaches ensue. Supervisors that engage the EAP early on in their attempts to manage troubled workers risk fewer problems associated with delay and other forms of enabling.