



COUNSELORS & CONSULTANTS

ERC

FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

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I go through the year not knowing for sure what consultative help the EAP can give me as a supervisor. Can you suggest what some of this help might be?

Although ERC's EAP consults with managers in many ways, some of the most valuable include engaging and managing teams, offering tips for praising and inspiring workers, obtaining resources, being a sounding board, resolving conflicts, improving communication orally and in writing, handling stress, overcoming worry and isolation, improving your relationships with upper managers, helping resolve personal problems, and offering tips on observing, documenting, confronting, and following up on employees after an EAP referral. Note that our EAP will assist you within our confidential boundaries established by our program's policies. Knowing this can prompt using the EAP more often and encourage you to be forthcoming about limitations and frustrations you experience so you can resolve problems and enjoy your job more.

If an employee is showing symptoms of depression that the general public is educated to understand, why is it a problem to tell the worker that he or she appears to have depression and skip the job performance problems as the reason for the EAP referral?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) become relevant when your discussion centers on the existence of a medical problem. If your employee has not stated he or she is depressed or suffers with a condition that needs some sort of help to overcome, then it is better to focus just on the performance-related matters. You're right that most people know a few or more symptoms of depression, but missing work, coming in late, staring off in a daze, and/or not engaging with fellow workers effectively enough to manage the work does not necessarily mean major depression. What's more, these behaviors do not demonstrate that you know or should have known the worker is depressed. Acting as if the worker is depressed would also be relevant to employment laws. The behaviors listed above alone are enough for a supervisor referral. At the EAP, the issue of depression or some other condition with similar symptoms will be explored.

We had a fire at one of our retail stores. It was a close call, but no one died. Two employees were hospitalized. Should I ask the EAP to visit the employees to deal with the trauma, talk to the hospital staff, or refer the recovering employees to the EAP later?

Contact your EAP to discuss the situation and the best approach. Typically, ERC's EAP does not initiate counseling with workers, but in a crisis situation and one that is overtly public, offering help will likely be appropriate. Your EAP can also contact the hospital or medical providers and encourage them to pull the EAP into the treatment picture. You also can contact the workers and urge their engagement with the EAP. Don't forget yourself. As a supervisor, you also may be traumatized by fear, concerns, anxiety, or even guilt over some aspect of this event that you believe, even mistakenly, you could have prevented. So take care of yourself. Although you may not have been present, it does not mean you weren't affected.