



ERC

COUNSELORS & CONSULTANTS

Frontline Supervisor

Employees - Your Most Valuable Resource

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I am a new manager and in my first job as a supervisor. What problems might I encounter early that I can prepare for now? If I feel overwhelmed, can the EAP help me?

First, be sure you understand your role and responsibilities; nail down the details early. This will prevent many problems you would otherwise face from overlooking important aspects of your job. Be prepared for difficult challenges that lead you to question your ability to do the job: This is normal. If your employees are performing well, do not see this as a signal to ignore them until they need you. Be proactive and engage with them regularly. The supervisory role includes influence projected by your knowledge and abilities, and leverage naturally linked to your authority. Both dynamics influence employee productivity. ERC can help you with time and stress management; consulting on how to manage difficult employees and techniques on coaching; education on conflict resolution and managing teams; support when faced with tough decisions like terminating an employee; and, counseling to help you avoid burnout.

Beyond respect and tolerance, how can I help employees see the value of diversity and use it as a resource to support work goals and the organization's mission?

Modeling the behaviors you want employees to follow is the way to accomplish your goal. Demonstrate inclusiveness when formulating teams and delegating assignments to communicate that everyone within the work unit has value. Believe that a diverse group of workers has the potential to find better solutions to problems to show how diversity can be a tool for increased productivity. Spot ways in which diversity is not yet fully utilized in your work unit and seek ways to make it happen. If you need further assistance, ERC offers an employee personal growth programming, "Diversity in the Workplace" that can help with relaying this message.

In a few cases when I have referred employees to the EAP, they've refused to go after I've mentioned that I need them to sign a release of information. What is the fix?

Although an employee must sign a release of information if you are to learn of his or her participation in the EAP, you may not be equipped to explain confidentiality laws, the purpose of a release, its restrictions, and why it is a good idea. Any of these concerns may surface at its mention. Unless you are authorizing a last-chance agreement where obligations are spelled out, the solution is to say, "Can you please give permission to ERC to let me know that you kept the appointment?" This approach is less threatening. It also better protects the perception of EAP confidentiality. ERC professionals are experienced at explaining the purpose of a release so employees see its value as a way for the EAP to effectively communicate appropriate information to the supervisor. This reduces anxiety, which keeps clients focused on getting help.