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SOLUTIONS, LLC

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Frontline Supervisor

EMPLOYEES - YOUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE

TOPICS COVERED THIS MONTH:

- Employee Tardiness—
Creative ways to address it
- Hunches and “Gut Feelings”
regarding an employee
- Documenting behavior without
diagnosing
- Soft referrals to the EAP
- Monitoring the progress of a
formal referral

Q: I will be meeting with my employee to confront his tardiness. There have been five late days this month and it is unacceptable. I don't want to specify a number of days late as being too much because it will just encourage going to that limit. Are there any creative suggestions?

Every organization has its unique history in dealing with tardiness. Most companies have a written policy regarding attendance which includes procedures for managing tardiness. Check with your HR professional for the preferred approach to this problem. Even some of your best and brightest, hardest-working employees will adapt to leniency and come to work late if it appears that there is no consequence for doing so. If you want to get creative, use a percentage rate in the discussion with your employee. For example, if there are 21 workdays in a specific month, and your employee is late 5 days, divide the workdays in the month into the number of late days. This will produce a “tardiness score” of 24%. Call this

unacceptable. Require satisfactory attendance to be a tardiness score under 5%. Sometimes numbers like this make an impression on employees and they “get it.”



Q: I suspect one of my employees is experiencing spousal abuse at home. I have seen bruises and this person often comes to work upset. Is this any of my business as a supervisor? How can I help without feeling like I am butting into the employee's personal life?

You should exercise caution in approaching an employee about a personal problem as sensitive as this one can be, and you should definitely approach it. You could certainly say you notice the bruises and you seem upset, and ask if he/she is ok or needs anything. Don't be surprised if your employee is reluctant to open up. You could suggest that it might be easier to talk to the EAP, which is confidential. Suggest that he/she call now, and offer the time and privacy to do so.

If there are issues such as attendance, performance or difficulty in working with others, you should discuss these work-related problems and offer

resources as you would with any employee. A referral to the EAP is always appropriate, including information that EAP assists employees with both work and personal problems, emphasizing confidentiality.

Situations of domestic violence can be extremely complex. Do not give advice and do not attempt to force a referral. Victims of domestic violence already feel out of control of their own lives. It may take time to be resolved. Call your Workplace Solutions account manager to discuss the details of this situation and strategize a referral.



Did You Know?

Supervisors, managers, HR professionals can contact Workplace Solutions® for consultation on difficult workplace situations.

Call 800.327.5071 today!

“Frequent, regular communication with employees will make annual review easier to write and deliver.”



Q: I called my employee “narcissistic” in a corrective letter because it describes the behavior that I and others witness. I think this word is not diagnostic, just descriptive. Am I wrong? Will it cause problems in my documentation?

There are many health-related terms that have found their way into everyday language. Words like antisocial, neurotic, or depressive, for example, may be familiar but they interfere with your goal of correcting performance. Medical and behavioral health terminology may also invoke considerations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, which protects employees with “perceived disabilities.”

Use behavioral terms to describe your observations and concerns that have been reported to you. If your

employee inflates his or her accomplishments, or fails to consider the needs of others, devalues others’ contributions, or is boastful, then say so. Support your statements with examples.

As always, you could refer to the EAP when you are coaching or disciplining. A management referral to the EAP is not a mandatory referral. Call Workplace Solutions when you refer your employee for EAP services.

Q: My employee holds a key public safety position, and I received a report from a coworker that he is not cooperating with the EAP’s recommendations since his formal referral. My last report from the EAP is good, so should I ignore this hearsay information?

Your first consideration is safety, so approach this issue from that standpoint. Since there was a formal referral to EAP for performance problems, you should be having regular, on-going follow-up meetings to monitor progress. Ask if he is continuing with the EAP’s recommendations. This isn’t a personal discussion of his issues, it is a

business matter related to the agreement you have with him. You may also increase your direct observation of his work. Let your supervisor and the EAP know your concerns. The EAP may take some extra steps to follow up in a way that further verifies cooperation.

Q: Should I pay attention to my hunches and “gut feelings” that tell me my employee is using drugs on the job? There are no signs or symptoms, but he acts like he is proud that he is getting away with something. It’s unsettling. Perhaps my dislike of him is my problem.

“Gut feelings” about some one you don’t like should not be the basis for action. Consider discussing your concerns with the EAP and your HR professional. Several outcomes could emerge from such a meeting, including your gaining clarity on what is bothersome and valid about your concerns. The EAP will help you document problem behaviors and act according to policy to maintain a safe work environment and a productive

work group. You may also discover a different perspective on your reactions to this employee, and learn to be a better manager.

FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR