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*Both an EAP Employee Orientation and an EAP Supervisor Training are available online at the Member Access section of our web site: [www.eapconsultants.com](http://www.eapconsultants.com)*
ORIENTATION TO EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

EAP Consultants, Inc. (EAPC) is a private firm headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia that provides comprehensive, high quality employee assistance program (EAP). Services include face-to-face assessment, counseling, referral, and follow-up for any kind of personal problem that may affect an employee's job performance. There are also services that offer help for legal and financial concerns, childcare and eldercare needs, pet and academic issues and smoking cessation. EAP services are free to the employee, paid for by the employer on a capitated basis.

Counseling is provided at private offices located close to the worksite or home. All EAPC counselors are licensed and have, at a minimum, a Masters degree in the mental health field and extensive counseling experience. Counseling is kept confidential in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations. In order for any information to be disclosed about the counseling to management, the employee must give written permission, specifying what information can be disclosed and to whom.

Examples of reasons employees seek assistance through the EAP include:

- work-related difficulties
- marital and family problems
- crisis
- depression
- eating disorders
- childcare issues
- alcohol and drug problems
- financial/credit matters
- stress
- anxiety
- legal concerns
- eldercare issues

An EAP can also be an important tool for returning a troubled employee to productive work. Without an EAP, a company has little recourse if standard supervisory methods are ineffective for an employee with job performance, conduct or attendance problems. With an EAP, a company can recommend that the employee be assessed by the EAP to determine if personal issues are affecting job performance. If there is a personal problem, the EAP will help the employee resolve the problem, thereby restoring the employee to an appropriate level of functioning. Referral to the EAP can be made in conjunction with disciplinary action, or in lieu of it. However, the EAP referral is not a disciplinary action; it is a corrective action.

The EAP also supports managers and supervisors by providing consultation and guidance on how to handle troubled employees. The EAP can help the manager or supervisor to prepare for a meeting with the employee who has work performance and/or conduct problems, increasing the likelihood of a successful outcome. The EAP enables the employer to spend less time dealing with the personal problems that employees bring into the workplace. It also helps the supervisor remain in the supervisory role, and avoid the role of counselor.

When employees inform the employer that they are having personal problems, the employer can remind them that the EAP offers free, confidential assistance. This allows the employer to offer help without becoming unnecessarily involved in an employee’s personal life.
There are three ways that an employee can be referred to the EAP: self, informal, and supervisor.

- **Self-Referral**: The employee confidentially and voluntarily seeks assistance on their own through the EAP. Approximately 85-90% of all EAP referral are self-referrals.

- **Informal Referral**: The supervisor encourages the employee to contact the EAP when the employee has a personal problem, although job performance has not been affected. Examples would be when an employee has a temporary problem such as a divorce, loss of a significant other through death, or a serious illness. It is helpful for the supervisor to remind the employee that the EAP is available, free, and confidential.

- **Supervisor Referral**: A supervisor referral is made when the employee’s job performance, attendance or conduct is problematic, possibly due to personal problems. This type of referral is discussed in detail below.

**THE SUPERVISOR REFERRAL**

The EAP Management Consultant provides consultation to the supervisor about how to handle an employee with job problems, and guides the supervisor through the process of referring the employee to the EAP. The Management Consultant also advises the supervisor on how to support employees when they return to work after an extended absence for mental health or substance abuse treatment. The EAP counselor helps the employee by diagnosing the problem(s), developing a plan to resolve the problem(s), providing short-term counseling, and referring to appropriate and affordable community resources, when needed.

The supervisor has the responsibility of referring an employee to the EAP whenever there are job performance problems that cannot be attributed to (1) a lack of competence, or (2) a lack of understanding of job expectations. The supervisor first evaluates whether the employee has the knowledge, experience, and ability to perform the job. Instead of EAP counseling, the employee may simply need more training, a transfer to another job, or motivation inducements.

If the employee has the competence to do the job, the supervisor verifies that the employee understands the expectations for satisfactory job performance. The employee may not be aware that his/her performance is not meeting expected standards. In this case, the supervisor conveys the expected level of performance.

When the supervisor has ruled out that job deficiencies are attributable to a lack of competence, or a failure to understand job expectations, it is appropriate to refer the employee to the EAP. It is most effective to refer the employee in the early stages of declining job performance. When the supervisor delays in making the referral, the employee’s personal problems become progressively more severe, and job performance becomes more difficult to correct.

It is not necessary for the supervisor to know that the employee is having personal problems to make a referral, only that there is a problem with job performance or
conduct. The EAP counselor will evaluate whether job deficiencies are due to personal problems. Additionally, supervisors should not attempt to diagnose or counsel the employee. That is the role of the EAP. The role of the supervisor is to identify and document job performance, attendance, and conduct problems, confront the employee, and refer to the EAP.

**DOCUMENTING JOB PROBLEMS**

The supervisor needs to document specific attendance, conduct, and performance problems before formally referring the employee to the EAP. Documentation helps prevent the supervisor from making subjective judgments, and facilitates successful referral.

Documentation includes the date, time, and place of incident. All absenteeism, tardiness, late work, reduced production, mistakes, accidents, changes in personal appearance and hygiene, poor employee relations, long lunches, early departures, and attitude problems are to be recorded. Stick to the facts--observable behavior--do not label, judge, or diagnose when documenting. Using the “Signs of a Troubled Employee Checklist” will assist in identifying specific behaviors that need documentation.

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate documentation:

**Appropriate**

The employee was late today (date, time). She appeared out of proper uniform. When confronted, the employee became belligerent, saying, (statements or acts). She interrupted while being corrected and appeared unwilling to accept feedback, saying, (statements made). She then left the room slamming doors. The noise was loud enough to be heard by others who came to investigate. Two employees reported feeling fearful of this worker’s behavior stating, (statements).

**Inappropriate**

The employee was extremely late and obviously appeared hung over. She acted inappropriate when she was confronted and said that other employees come in later than her. The employee stormed out of the room and observers were stunned by the behavior. Two employees report that domestic problems cause her tardiness.

**REMEMBER, “IF IT ISN’T WRITTEN DOWN AND DOCUMENTED, IT DIDN’T HAPPEN.”**
SIGNS OF A TROUBLED EMPLOYEE CHECKLIST

The following serves as a guide to identifying a troubled employee. All employees exhibit some of the behaviors listed below. It is a pattern of job performance problems over a period of time that the supervisor should note and document.

**Physical Signs**
- Weariness, exhaustion
- Untidy appearance
- Slurred speech
- Sleepiness

**Absenteism**
- Multiple instances of unauthorized leave
- Excessive sick leave
- Frequent Monday and/or Friday absences
- Repeated absences, particularly if they follow a pattern
- Excessive tardiness, especially on Monday mornings or returning from lunch
- Leaving work early
- Peculiar and increasingly improbable excuses for absences
- Higher absenteeism rate than other employees for colds, flu, gastritis, etc.
- Frequent unscheduled short-term absences (with or without medical explanation)

**“On-the-Job” Absenteeism**
- Continued absences from post more than job requires
- Frequent trips to the water fountain or rest room
- Long coffee breaks
- Physical illness on the job

**High Accident Rate**
- Accidents on the job
- Accidents off the job
- Disregards safety of others

**Difficulty in Concentration**
- Work requires greater effort
- Jobs take more time

**Confusion**
- Difficulty in recalling instructions, details, etc.
- Increasing difficulty in handling complex assignments
- Difficulty in recalling own mistakes
**Reporting to Work**

Coming to/returning to work in an obviously abnormal or impaired condition

**Generally Lowered Job Efficiency**

Missed deadlines
Mistakes due to inattention or poor judgment
Wasting more material
Making bad decisions
High/Low productivity
Improbable excuses for poor job performance

**Poor Employee Relationships on the Job**

Overreaction to real or imagined criticism
Wide swings in morale/mood
Borrowing money from co-workers
Unreasonable resentments
Complaints from co-workers
Refusal to accept authority
Avoidance of co-workers and supervisor

**Mood**

Appears depressed or anxious a lot of the time
Irritable
Suspicious
Is emotionally unsteady, i.e. has outbursts of crying

**Unusual Behavior**

Temper tantrums
Physical violence
Emotional outbursts

Remember that the supervisor is not to make a diagnosis based on the employee’s behavior. Simply state to the employee the specific observed deficiencies. Let the employee know about the need to improve the deficiencies, and make the referral to the EAP when appropriate.
MAKING A SUPERVISOR REFERRAL

The supervisor is encouraged to contact EAPC prior to the actual confrontation with the employee. It is also recommended that the supervisor confer with the Human Resources department to ensure that every step of the referral process is in agreement with your company's policies and procedures.

EAPC has Management Consultants who provide unlimited supervisory consultation. Supervisors may call a Management Consultant as often as necessary for guidance on how to handle an employee with job performance problems.

The Management Consultant will help determine if the employee is appropriate for referral to the EAP, review documentation of job performance deficiencies, and discuss ways to approach the employee regarding performance problems and referral to the EAP. The supervisor will be advised on how to handle the situation if the employee refuses the EAP referral. Confidentiality requirements and regulations will be explained to the supervisor.

Often supervisors are hesitant to confront the employee fearing that it will result in anger, and/or a damaged relationship. However, a constructive confrontation is one of the most effective methods to assist an employee with on-going work, attendance, and conduct problems.

It is detrimental to the employee, co-workers, and the supervisor to ignore or cover up unacceptable behavior. Delaying the confrontation can result in the supervisor feeling more frustrated with the employee, making it more difficult to be supportive. It also hurts the employee because his/her personal and job problems will likely worsen with time.

PROCESS FOR EAP REFERRALS

Step 1: Preparation
1. Know your company's policies and procedures for performance review meetings with employees, and for implementing disciplinary actions. Don't forget to confer with the HR department if there are any questions about policies and procedures.
2. Select a time and place for the discussion that facilitates privacy and no interruptions.
3. Have all attendance, conduct, and work performance problems documented and ready to review with the employee.
4. Outline changes the employee needs to make to correct performance deficiencies. Be clear about your expectations for the employee.
5. Rehearse what you want to communicate to the employee so you can remain more in control of the discussion.
6. Be prepared to cope with employee resistance, denial, excuses, defensiveness, and possible hostility.
Step 2: Meeting

1. Be supportive--let the employee know that you want to help. Show respect and do not become angry or argumentative.

2. Review work problems with the employee. Do not accept excuses for poor work or be put off by sympathy-provoking tactics. Be careful not to give opinions about possible personal problems. Stick to specific job performance behaviors, citing concrete facts.

3. Inform the employee of what specifically needs to be done to correct job problems.

4. Explain to your employee why you are making the referral to the EAP. Base the explanation on conduct or performance issues. Emphasize that the goal is to restore the employee’s productivity. Referral to the EAP is a corrective action, not a disciplinary action. Present it in a way that the employee understands that while the referral is recommended, it is also voluntary.

5. Tell the employee that the EAP will provide problem assessment, short term counseling, and referral to appropriate, affordable community resources, if needed.

6. Specify further actions that will be taken if there is no performance improvement. Do not threaten.

7. Inform the employee that EAPC will request that a release of information form be signed, permitting EAPC to provide the supervisor in most cases with the following needed information:
   - Attendance at EAP and counseling appointments
   - Recommendations resulting from the EAP assessment

In some cases, such as when a safety-related employee is referred for an alcohol and drug abuse evaluation, or has signed a Last Chance Agreement with the employer, a release of information permitting more extensive disclosures may be requested. In these cases, the supervisor may be informed of the recommendations, compliance with the recommendations, progress in counseling, and whether any accommodations are needed, such as time off from work for treatment.

If, during the meeting, the employee admits to having personal problems such as alcoholism, support the employee for being honest. However, be careful not to be lulled into exploring the problem in more depth or taking on the role of counselor. Continue to encourage the employee to seek help through the EAP. During the meeting don’t:

- Make value judgments
- Moralize
- Question why the employee does certain things; “why” serves as an excuse
- Analyze the problem
- Make idle disciplinary threats

Step 3: Employee Acceptance/Rejection of EAP Referral

If the employee agrees to be assessed by the EAP, it is best for the supervisor to arrange the initial appointment. This allows EAPC to notify the supervisor, without breaking confidentiality if the employee does not keep the appointment. Also, employees may
delay making the appointment, or may not specify that their supervisor referred them. When the supervisor calls EAPC, it is very helpful for pertinent information regarding the employee to be shared.

Clarify with the employee whether the initial appointment is to be taken on the employer’s time, sick leave, or vacation time.

Acceptance of the EAP referral is voluntary. If the employee refuses the referral, continue to monitor employee job performance and take appropriate disciplinary measures. At each stage of the disciplinary process, encourage the employee to contact the EAP.

Document the discussion with the employee regarding job performance and referral to the EAP. A memo may be given to the employee stating his/her unacceptable job performance and specifying job standards for improvement. The memo should reiterate that it is recommended that the employee contact the EAP, and that attendance is voluntary, free, and confidential.

**Step 4: Follow-up and Monitoring**

After the employee’s first EAP session, and every subsequent session, the counselor will call the EAP Management Consultant to give an update on progress. The Management Consultant will then communicate with the referring supervisor/manager to provide feedback. Information is shared with the supervisor/manager only if the employee has signed a consent to release information. Even with a release, only relevant information is disclosed. The nature of the personal problem is not revealed.

Continue to monitor job performance and conduct and provide the employee with appropriate feedback. Please notify the EAP about changes in the employee’s job performance, or when new events occur in your workplace that are relevant to the employee or the referral you made to the EAP. Expect the employee to bring his/her work up to a satisfactory level. Even if the employee is using the EAP, he or she is not excused from meeting job performance or conduct expectations. Remember, the purpose of the EAP is to help an organization to return employees to expected levels of performance and/or conduct. Be sure to document all follow-up actions, and all follow-up meetings with the employee. It creates a record that will be important if job action needs to be taken.
EAP Supervisor Referral Flow Diagram

Supervisor becomes aware of an employee job performance or conduct problem.

Informal discussion with employee

Supervisor documents performance issues, and has corrective discussions with the employee.

Supervisor contacts EAP; may consult with Human Resources before or after contacting EAP

Supervisor discusses EAP referral with the employee

Employee receives assistance from EAP or is referred to other resources

Performance problems continue

Informal referral or mention of EAP if employee says personal issues exist

Supervisor documents performance issues, and has corrective discussions with the employee.

Performance problems resolved

Employee rejects EAP referral

Disciplinary Action

Performance problems continue

Employee rejects EAP recommendations

Performance problems resolved

Continued observation and documentation

Performance problems continue

Employee's personal issue that affected their job performance is resolved.

Note:
A supervisor or Human Resource professional may also informally refer an employee to the EAP whenever they become aware of an employee that may benefit from EAP services, even when there is no job performance issue.
SCRIPT FOR ADDRESSING WORK PERFORMANCE/CONDUCT PROBLEMS WITH AN EMPLOYEE

Thank you for meeting with me today. Let me explain the purpose for our meeting. I want to give you some important feedback on your work. I’ve been looking at my records for the past ____ months. Let me start by covering the positive areas in your work performance.

LIST POSITIVE AREAS IN EMPLOYEE’S WORK PERFORMANCE.

We are very appreciative of the hard work you have done in these areas, and value these assets you bring to the company.

There are, however, a couple of areas in your work that have not been as strong, and are not up to the standards that we need to see from you. I’d like to go over these areas with you, and then see if we can work out a plan to bring these areas back up to the expected level.

LIST SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREAS, SUPPORTED BY DOCUMENTATION.

These are the areas in which we’d like to see improvement. Before we move to developing a plan for improvement, I want to find out if you had any questions or comments.

GIVE THE EMPLOYEE A CHANCE TO GIVE FEEDBACK OR RAISE QUESTIONS BEFORE MOVING TO THE NEXT STEP.

The first part of developing a plan is to clarify what expectations need to be met.

CLARIFY JOB PERFORMANCE OR CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS.
CLARIFY THE TIME FRAME IN WHICH CHANGES NEED TO OCCUR.
WORK WITH THE EMPLOYEE TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO MEET THESE EXPECTATIONS WITHIN THE SPECIFIED TIME FRAME.

I need for you to be aware that the company is serious about the need for these changes to occur. If this plan is not successful in bringing your work up to the level that we need to see, there may be consequences in accordance with the company’s policies and procedures for progressive discipline.

OUTLINE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES IF THE EMPLOYEE DOES NOT CHANGE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE POLICY.

At this point, I want to offer you some additional help and support in meeting the company’s expectations. I am referring you to the Employee Assistance Program. If there are any personal matters that are affecting work performance, they will offer you counseling help and support.
I can’t require you to go. The EAP is a voluntary program. It’s not a part of the disciplinary process. Instead, it is an offer of help, made by the organization in good faith. The EAP is also confidential, even when the referral is made in this way. The EAP can provide me with information only if you give written permission. Only relevant information is provided, not personal information. For instance, with a signed release, the EAP will let me know if you are attending the EAP sessions, and if you are working on a plan to get your job back up to the expected level.

Whether you go to the EAP or not, we are going to get back together in ____ weeks to see what progress has been made in your work performance.

Are there any questions?

**DOCUMENTING AN EMPLOYEE REFERRAL TO THE EAP**

Each employee meeting and referral to the EAP should be carefully documented. The documentation should include all the following information:

- The date and time of the meeting with the employee
- The name and title of all participants in the meeting
- The name and position of the employee
- The nature of the work performance or conduct problems leading to the confrontation, including the documented times and dates those problems were observed
- Employee comments or feedback on the work performance or conduct problems discussed
- The plan for improving the work performance or conduct problems
- The name of the EAP consultant contacted in preparation for the EAP referral, and any recommendations made by the EAP consultant
- Information about whether the EAP appointment has been scheduled by the supervisor, or will be scheduled by the employee
- The date and time of the first EAP visit, if known
- Any disciplinary measures enacted, with reference to the relevant policies and procedures
- The date of the next scheduled follow-up meeting
- Any additional comments
- Supervisor’s name and signature

In addition to documenting for the maintenance of good employee records, it is strongly recommended that a memorandum be given to the employee recording your intention to refer him or her to the EAP. This memo should include a description of the problems necessitating the referral, as well as important information about the purpose for the referral. A sample of a memorandum to the employee is included in this supervisory guide.
SAMPLE MEMO TO EMPLOYEE FOR A SUPERVISOR REFERRAL

Date

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN EMPLOYEE

SUBJECT: Referral to the Employee Assistance Program

I am writing this memorandum to advise you that deficiencies have been noted in your conduct and/or work performance over the past ___ months. In order to help you to improve your work performance and/or conduct, I will address each area of concern, and clarify my expectations for improvements.

To provide you with additional help in resolving these work performance and/or conduct problems, I am referring you to the Employee Assistance Program. This program provides professional assessment, counseling and referral services to help employees who are experiencing work problems. The program is administered by EAP Consultants, Inc. Their telephone number is 1-800-869-0276. Your use of this program is confidential, and no information can be released to me or anyone else without your written permission.

I will now list the areas of concern that have necessitated these actions:

1) (List problem area one). (Example: Unexcused work absences)
   (List dates and times when conduct or work performance problems were noted)
   (Example: on 12/12/00, at 9:00 A.M., you left work for the day without securing permission for the absence.)

   (Describe expected improvement) (Example: It is my expectation that there will be no further unexcused absences for the remainder of this year.)

2) (List problem area two). (Follow same approach for each problem area – list dates and times when problems noted, then clarify expectations for improvement)

We will meet on __________ (date) at ________ (time) to evaluate your progress in improving your work performance and/or conduct. It is my hope that you will contact the EAP and make use of their services to assist you in correcting the concerns that have been addressed in this memo.

The referral to the EAP is not a disciplinary action; it is a corrective action. You will not be disciplined if you elect not to use the EAP. However, you may be subject to disciplinary action if your professional behavior and performance do not improve - whether or not you decide to use the EAP.

Please see me if you have questions about any of the information contained in this memorandum

Signature ____________________________

I acknowledge receipt of this letter.

________________________         Date

John Employee
MISTAKEN BELIEFS ABOUT THE SUPERVISOR REFERRAL

Misconceptions that can interfere with the supervisory referral to the EAP are described below.

Belief: “Someone as intelligent (nice, etc.) as Joe couldn’t have these problems.”
Effect: If the supervisor has defined the employee as having characteristics not usually associated with chemical dependency, it’s difficult to see that employee as having job problems that may indicate chemical dependency.

Belief: “Taking action would be so painful, it’s just better to leave the situation alone.”
Effect: Believing that a confrontation would be worse than just putting up with the problem greatly limits the supervisor. The belief is mistaken, too. The situation won’t simply continue as is; it will get worse.

Belief: “Referring the employee for counseling and treatment will damage their career.”
Effect: Any supervisor who believes that making a referral will harm an employee’s career will naturally be reluctant to do so. Fortunately this belief is erroneous. Actually, supervisory referrals are confidential, as are all EAP referrals.

Belief: “The management system here doesn’t encourage supervisors to get involved in personal problems.” Some of the barriers that supervisors may perceive in the system include:
- Complex disciplinary procedures
- Unsupportive upper management
- Unclear performance standards
Effect: This behavior promotes low motivation in the supervisor. Even if some barriers exist, supervisors must take action. Failure to do so may result in a decline in the employee’s performance and an increasing number of problems in the work group. As others become affected and the total quality of work decreases, the supervisor’s own performance becomes impaired. Then the supervisor really has a problem.

ENABLING BEHAVIORS TO AVOID IN THE WORKPLACE

- Don't ignore problems because of your own worries about doing confrontations
- Don't ignore or avoid problems until they reach the critical stage
- Don't avoid confronting employees because of your personal relationship with them
- Don't accept excuses for ongoing job performance problems
- Don't transfer an employee to "fix" the problem
- Don't allow employees to talk you out of using the EAP and into using "their own solutions" for taking care of personal problems that affect job performance
- Don't threaten disciplinary actions without following through
HELPING AN EMPLOYEE UPON RETURN TO WORK AFTER AN EXTENDED ABSENCE FOR TREATMENT

The supervisor, employee, and co-workers may experience discomfort when an employee has taken time off from work for the treatment of alcoholism, drug addiction, or psychological disorders. There may be concern about the well-being or stability of the employee, as well as fear of saying or doing the wrong thing. The employee may feel embarrassed over the possibility that others know their personal problems. The supervisor and co-workers may be skeptical that the employee can adequately do his/her job. The EAP can advise the employee and supervisor on how to help make a smooth transition back to the job.

The supervisor can help the employee re-adjust to the work site in a number of ways:

- Show interest and concern for the employee without being sympathetic or over-protective. At the other extreme, do not be overly demanding.
- Provide reinforcement for improvements in job performance, conduct, and attendance.
- Encourage the employee to follow through with any EAP recommendations for aftercare such as twelve step groups and counseling.
- Treat the employee like an employee, not like an alcoholic or drug addict. Keep the focus on job performance.
- Do not share personal information about the “troubled” employee with other employees. Limit your comments to remarks such as “Joe will be returning to work on Monday.” If employees ask questions about Joe, instruct them to discuss the matter further with Joe.
- Do not overlook any job problems that resurface. It may indicate that the employee has relapsed on alcohol or drugs. Again, refer the employee to the EAP for additional aftercare support.

After an employee completes EAP counseling or treatment services, there are often immediate on-the-job changes. Attendance and punctuality may greatly improve. The employee may be more energetic, cooperative, and polite. Many employees are able to perform their job remarkably well in a short period of time. However, some alcoholics and drug addicts experience neurological impairment that can take up to one year to fully recover. The employee may experience difficulty remembering, concentrating, and sleeping. Consequently it may take awhile before there are significant improvements in job functioning. However, there should be a pattern of steady improvement in job performance.

Because the supervisor can have a positive impact on the employee’s recovery, it is helpful to learn about alcoholism, addiction, and recovery. The EAP is available to provide this information.