

+ MAKING A MANAGEMENT REFERRAL TO THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Talking Points for Managers

A manager's communication with an employee about the reason for the EAP referral and expectations for behavior is equally as important as the actual EAP sessions. Here are some suggestions for that conversation:

Present the topic as a performance problem

- + Summarize any previous discussions identifying the need for improved performance.
- + Present the management referral as an effort to retain, not dismiss, the employee. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is designed to help employees resolve performance issues.
- + Name the performance issues in objective, measurable language. For example, clearly identify observable problems, such as, excessive absences, argumentative with coworkers, difficulty meeting deadlines, violation of company drug/alcohol policy.
- + If applicable, note any improvement or efforts you have seen since implementing an earlier performance plan.
- + Outline the specific expectations for follow-through in the management referral process. For example, "We expect you to attend all scheduled EAP appointments, to comply with the process and to follow through with any recommendations made by the EAP provider."

- + Use performance-based language. Avoid saying the employee "needs help" or "counseling" or any other terms that imply mental health problems. Don't try to diagnosis the employee. For example, avoid saying "I think you are depressed" due to potential liability issues. State that they will meet with an Employee Assistance Professional versus a "counselor" or "therapist."
- + Express confidence in their ability to improve. State how improvement will be measured. Explain what the possible consequences will be if improvement isn't shown.

Discuss confidentiality

Explain that the EAP release of information form is to protect their confidentiality in accordance with federal and state confidentiality regulations. Emphasize that the only information you will receive is outlined on the form.

Explain the referral process

- + Inform the employee of the number of sessions available through their EAP benefit and that this benefit is provided to the employee free of charge.
- + Give the employee specific time frames to call their EAP number for referrals (usually within 24 to 48 hours) and to set up an appointment with an Employee Assistance Professional (usually within 7–10 days, depending on the professional’s availability).
- + Explain to the employee that they need to identify that they are calling as a part of a “Management Referral” when they call their EAP number for provider names.
- + Coach your employee that they need to call their EAP number back to receive an authorization number to bring to their first appointment. This is so the Employee Assistance Consultant can contact the EAP provider regarding the reason for the management referral.
- + Inform your employee that if the EAP provider recommends the employee access additional assistance in resolving the performance problem, they may incur some cost through co-payments or fees.
- + Prepare your response, if the employee declines to sign the release of information form. The consequences of an employee’s decision to decline participation in the management referral process should be determined prior to meeting with the employee.