

Frontline Supervisor



Information for Managers, Team Leaders, and Supervisors

■ **One of my employees likes to engage in such horseplay as play kick-boxing. I will admit that he is sometimes amusing; however, coworkers find him distracting and sometimes a bit threatening. Can the EAP help him compose himself?**

The EAP can help him control his behavior and act more appropriately in the workplace. For example, he may learn to channel his physical energy into tidying up the workspace rather than play boxing. Once he realizes how his actions can work against him—that peers may lose respect for him and bosses may overlook him for promotions—then he's more apt to motivate himself to tame his wild or playful impulses. Consider the risk of allowing him to continue his on-the-job horseplay. In a recent Denver case, a bakery worker who pretended to kick a coworker wound up slipping and injuring his wrist and developing a hernia. The Colorado Appeals Court said he could receive workers' comp benefits, even though the injury resulted from his horseplay.

■ **I hired an employee, but she isn't a good "cultural fit" at our company even though her work ethic is good and she's a nice person. This can't be an EAP referral—or can it? I feel stuck with this person.**

When a new hire doesn't mesh with the organizational culture, it's usually because the individual is used to working in a different environment with different values, people, and standards of acceptable behavior. Some employees have the ability to self-correct after an adjustment period. In your case, the EAP can work with your newcomer to compare your culture to her past workplaces. Through this process, she can identify how the behaviors that she developed in past jobs may no longer work to her advantage. For example, an employee may have been accustomed to giving her opinion and reporting observations about others' work freely, but within a new work culture, communicating this information should be done discreetly and formally. Employees are often capable of changes more readily than many supervisors think. This makes referral to the EAP a good move.

■ **How can I encourage utilization of the EAP?**

As a supervisor, manager, or team leader, it is your responsibility to keep nformation about the EAP in front of employees. When someone is in a difficult situation they will often forget about the resources available to them. Be sure to have the phone number and website address handy. Keep copies of the employee newsletters so that you can forward them to employees or print them out easily. Human resources can provide you with posters for your department and other printed information for employees. Make reminder announcements often in meetings, and remind employees in every

disciplinary situation that the company provides a resource for them if they wish to use it.

■ **After I referred an employee to the EAP for his anger, he refused to meet with an EA professional and said he just called the program to "chat." So there is no release. The EAP wouldn't fall for this, would it? Doesn't an employee have to meet in person to become a client?**

What matters most is that the employee develops better strategies to manage his anger. This is more likely to occur if he remains in contact with the EAP. If he's only willing to make phone calls to the EAP, that's better than nothing. Meanwhile, the EA professional will try to persuade the caller to come in for a meeting. Any releases of information allowing the EAP to communicate with management should be signed at the workplace BEFORE the employee speaks to the EAP. This way the EAP can give you feedback. Coordinate these type of referrals with your human resources department. A less threatening form of EAP referral is known as an "informal referral". You let the employee know that you are discussing your concerns about his or her job performance with the EAP, but it is up to them to determine if they want to use the program, and you will not receive any feedback. Your HR department has forms for making "informal referrals".

■ **Our newly hired, recent college graduates are full of energy, but their adolescent style of talking (using "like" and phrases like "Oh, my gosh" continually) lacks professionalism. What's the solution so that we don't project an improper image to our customers?**

You get what you measure. So identify inappropriate words or phrases that you'd like your employees to avoid with customers. Then start counting the number of times they lapse into "teen talk" mode by observing your staff when they interact with customers. Most of the new employees will be able to adapt once they understand why these are not professional ways to speak in a workplace setting. However, you may find that a few will require some further management intervention, and maybe a referral to the EAP for further discussion of how language affects professional image.

Be Sure All Employees Know About the EAP!

(800)256-1575 or (504)832-1170

www.EAPWEBSITE.com