

FrontLine Supervisor

Employees — Your most valuable asset

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In case you
missed it

Q: I have two employees who don't get along. It's starting to create friction within the department. I don't want battle lines to be drawn among the other employees. This is my last shot to end the problem, but how and when do I involve Continuum EAP?

A: **Personality conflicts can lead** to quarrelsome relationships. They typically do not respond to classic attempts at problem-solving and negotiating like other workplace conflicts. Ending the quarrelsome pattern requires self-discipline and resolve because it has typically become habitual. The warring parties must understand that management is determined to take action if the employees' behaviors do not change.

Your most important role is to make employees aware that change is nonnegotiable and that you are committed to identifying a solution to help them work better together to benefit the whole team. Continuum EAP consultants can work with you to sort out the behavioral changes expected and can discuss if our conflict resolution services would be appropriate.

Q: When an employee is discharged from a drug and alcohol treatment program and the EAP follows up, how does Continuum help the employee in ways that the treatment program cannot?

EAPs know that going to treatment is just the start down the path to recovery. They work closely with the treatment provider during the treatment process to monitor progress and then offer ongoing support during the posttreatment phase. None of this interferes with treatment, but instead supports ongoing recovery. This activity often spots signals of potential relapse. This could be something as small as the patient going to four AA meetings one week instead of the required five. The EAP then uses motivational counseling to encourage better follow-through. Such interventions make EAPs enormously cost-beneficial, especially when relapse and loss of a worker are prevented.

This information is provided by Continuum EAP. If you would like more information on these or other topics, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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“IRO PROGRAM

The IRO program gives my fellow firefighter brothers and sisters resources to deal with stressors we encounter on the job... so that when we leave the job we are OK.

Interested in learning more? Read this entire member-company spotlight on Continuum EAP's blog at 4continuum.com — Search: "IRO Program."



Q: I referred an employee to Continuum two years ago. A lot of problems with absenteeism occurred at the time. Things have gone great since then, but suddenly, he is not coming to work. He is missing some days and is late on others. What is my next step — call Continuum EAP again?

Speak with your employee in a corrective interview and find out why he is missing work. Refer to your documentation. Note that asking why your employee is coming late to work is not an intrusion or diagnostic query. The employee may disclose something personal, but do not attempt to engage in solutions. Leave that to the EAP professionals. Regardless, it is your decision about how you wish to proceed. A formal referral back to the EAP may return another two or more years of great work, or based on the history, your organization may have a disciplinary action in mind. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis that weighs returning your employee to a satisfactory level of performance versus an action that would include dismissal. Sometimes the understandable frustration management feels toward relapses leads to decisions not fully in management's own interest.

Q: Perhaps others won't admit it, but I am hesitant to confront an employee who might be under the influence unless it is pretty obvious. A lot of employees drink, but if someone looks sober and is functional, that's what matters to me. Is this approach wrong?

If you are trained to identify signs and symptoms of an employee who may be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, it is crucial to follow the guidelines of your drug-free workplace policy. Employees in mid-stage alcoholism, even if their blood alcohol level is relatively high, do not necessarily appear drunk. They are, of course, still at risk for accidents and injuring others. These employees eventually discover maintenance drinking, where they consume alcohol in small amounts to maintain a blood alcohol level that prevents the agitating effects of withdrawal that are noticeable to others. When you do confront your employee, anticipate potential resistance and defensiveness because you have overlooked this problem for so long. Talk to Continuum and request help preparing for a successful, constructive conversation.