

FrontLine Leader

Employees — Your most valuable asset

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In this issue:

Anxiety issues
at work

*

Fear of
retaliation from
a terminated
employee

*

EAP referral
follow up

*

Employee
attitude
problems

*

Communicate
effectively

Q: I recently read that anxiety is common among workers of all ages, but especially younger workers. What symptoms would indicate an employee suffers from an anxiety disorder?

Looking for mental health symptoms is not an efficient way of identifying troubled employees from a management perspective. Focusing on performance standards you want improved and then considering a referral to the EAP when they do not get better is the way to go. Are you puzzled by an employee who turned down a promotion for the third time? What about an employee who always avoids the annual holiday party? These employees may be exhibiting symptoms of two quite different forms of anxiety — or they may not be symptoms of anxiety at all. There is a wide spectrum of anxiety disorders. Everyone experiences some anxiety from time to time, but many with severe forms of anxiety may perform in a superior fashion.

Q: I have an employee who gets into fights with customers. He's had run-ins with co-workers, DUIs, and other scrapes with the law. He's a classic hothead. I want to fire him, but I fear violent retaliation. Can Continuum EAP help or tell me what to do?

A: In this situation it is important to identify the behaviors that are impacting the employee's ability to successfully complete his job. Once you have looked at those specific behaviors you can then work with your organization's management to determine if you would like to continue his employment. If you do decide to maintain his employment, it will be important to clearly identify the behavioral changes that will need to occur. A management referral to Continuum could be part of a plan to help the employee make the needed changes. Coordinating with Continuum by having the employee sign a release of information will be an important part of the organization working together with the EAP to ensure performance improvement. If you are concerned about your or others safety, you should always consult with your organization's management or human resources department.

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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Q: After making a formal management referral, why is further communication about participation and cooperation necessary from the EAP? My concern is change or improved job performance. I either see it or I don't.

Communicating with the supervisor following a formal referral for performance problems represents best practice for EAPs in managing troubled workers. It recognizes that employees are motivated, in part, to follow through because of concern over their job security. Eliminating this dynamic may reduce accountability and invites a loss of urgency on the part of the EAP client. Services provided to a formally referred employee does not equate to counseling. It is a programmatic approach to help troubled workers struggling with performance issues, which may or may not be caused by personal problems. The two approaches are radically different helping systems. An EAP exists because of its primary business purpose, which is helping the workforce remain happy, healthy and productive. Part of this must be motivating the most difficult and most troubled workers to follow through with its recommendations.

Q: My employee's work is good, and frankly he is the most skilled team member. There is nothing to document regarding performance, but he has a bad attitude with his gruff style, lack of humor, isolation and cynicism; he does not mesh well with us. Can Continuum help?

Yes, Continuum can help. You do have job performance issues that you can document and upon which you can base a referral. It's attitude at work. Attitude can be described in a way that makes it measurable. Continuum's EAP professionals can consult with you on useful language to consider in documentation, and they will do so with you confidentially. The task is to describe the manner in which your employee conducts himself, the disposition and temperament he displays, and most important, the impact on others. This is key to effective documentation — describing the harm or cost to the organization in lost productivity, lower morale, conflict, lost team cohesion, etc. This information may also help the employee better understand the affect his behavior has on his co-workers, which could spur change. A management referral to Continuum may help address these issues before it leads to the loss of a skilled and valued worker.

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

If you find yourself struggling to be understood or to understand others, it can make every conversation stressful and even harder to achieve your goals.

Continuum EAP can help develop your communication skills, which will enable you to strengthen the relationships in all areas of your life.

Contact us today to schedule a free, confidential appointment with one of our EAP professionals.



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Continuum EAP services are made available to you and your immediate family members by your employer.