

THE CONTINUUM EDGE

INFORMATION FOR LEADERS



Can a supervisor effectively implement a structured debriefing after a workplace incident? Or should we rely on the EAP to help manage these types of events?

A: Continuum EAP is available to help organizations communicate with workers and address the emotional impact of traumatic events. Call upon them when a serious accident, an assault, a robbery, the death of a co-worker, or exposure to such events and the resulting secondary trauma affect your workplace. Secondary trauma means that even employees who were not directly involved may

experience anxiety, irritability, sleep problems and changes in work performance. Early EAP involvement helps employees normalize reactions and reduce long-term impact. In the meantime, consider talking with Continuum EAP about your role and your work unit's needs in advance of an incident. Also review your organization's critical incident policies and procedures, if available.

(Do not wait for an incident to occur before diving into this material.) Conceivably, an incident may require you to take a leadership role in managing a workplace response, and having clarity about expectations, resources and procedures beforehand will help you step in to manage the situation appropriately and bridge the response until EAP assistance can be arranged.



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How can managers distinguish between performance problems due to skills deficits and those arising from unmanaged mental health problems?

A: This is one of the classic questions supervisors ask when first learning about EAPs, but the good news is that you don't have to distinguish between the two to take appropriate action. Keep your focus on attendance, quantity of work, quality of work, attitude, conduct and availability (being ready and able to work). In other words, simply be a good supervisor and help employees perform to the best of their ability.

If problems emerge, persist, fluctuate or reappear after your coaching and corrective actions, consider referring the employee to Continuum EAP. Use the procedure recommended by the EAP or established by your organization. Your referral to Continuum should always be based on performance issues, not mental health or other health problems you think explain an employee's behavior or performance decline.



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What strategies optimize EAP engagement when employees are reluctant to use external resources due to confidentiality concerns or fear of judgment?

For specific marketing ideas and materials to further promote EAP services to your team, reach out to Continuum EAP today.



A: EAPs attract employees struggling with personal problems because they are perceived as professional, convenient, at no cost, confidential and nonjudgmental. These elements should be promoted among supervisors and the organization, with top management especially underscoring them and visually supporting the program. This is how the effective marketing of an EAP occurs.

Promoting Continuum EAP is much like marketing any other product — it requires consistent, meaningful communication that builds trust and highlights the program's value. The issue that creates the most concern is whether the EAP is confidential, and the frequent marketing of this aspect of the program is what drives EAP utilization and prevents the erosion of perceived confidentiality.

Q:

What is “Lone Ranger syndrome” as it pertains to supervisor practices and using the employee assistance program (EAP)?

A: Lone Ranger syndrome describes a pattern of behaviors commonly attributed to supervisors who believe they are responsible for managing employee performance problems and helping troubled employees resolve personal issues, typically without relying on organizational resources like Continuum EAP. In short, it refers to a strong, often misguided, sense of independence. These supervisors view themselves as solid and loyal performers, but risk becoming overwhelmed and easily subject to burnout.

Their inability or unwillingness to ask for help is viewed as a risk to the workplace. The term was coined in the 1970s by federal Office of Personnel Management Employee Relations Manager Art Purvis in a widely published and circulated monograph. Examining Lone Ranger syndrome helps supervisors gain self-awareness and understand the value of Continuum EAP in relieving them of the impossible burden of involving themselves in employees' problems. The key hurdle is convincing oneself that it is OK to ask for help.

