

## **“EAP Referral Road Blocks”**

Supervisors, working with troubled employees, are sometimes reluctant to involve the Employee Assistance Program. Using the EAP as a resource can reduce supervisor anxiety and improve productivity as well as the general work environment.

Listed below are some common supervisor pitfalls in referring to the EAP.

### **Overly Protective Supervisor**

Often, Supervisors are hesitant to refer an employee to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for fear of labeling the employee as a problem. Involvement in the EAP is a positive and proactive opportunity for the employee to resolve issues that may be impairing his/her work performance. As the supervisor, you may be in a unique position to notice employee difficulties. Supervisors who refer someone to the Employee Assistance Program demonstrate concern for the well-being of their employees.

### **Good Worker**

Sometimes supervisors do not refer to the EAP because the employee has had been a good performer in the past. Other times, supervisors fear that they will lose the employee if a referral is made. Again, the ultimate goal of the EAP is to retain productive employees. Furthermore, not making a referral may be denying an opportunity for assistance. The EAP and supervisors share the same goal of retaining and supporting good employees.

### **I Can Handle It**

Some supervisors feel that referring an employee to the EAP is an admission of their own personal failure or shortcoming as a supervisor. Supervisors may go to great lengths to handle and address any and all problems themselves. Unfortunately, this may only delay assistance and help for the employee. Nothing is gained by supporting an impaired employee.

### **Time Cures All**

The old saying “time cures all” is not always true. Ignoring a problem and hoping that it will resolve itself often does not work. Delaying in addressing a problem in some cases may only allow problems to get worse without some intervention. Problems such as depression, anxiety alcohol and drug use often worsen over time.

### **Fear of Making a Mistake**

Often, Supervisors do not engage the EAP for fear of making a mistake. Supervisors may be uncertain of how to initiate assistance or document a problem. The EAP is a resource that may be helpful in planning what to do. Supervisors that are unsure of how and what to address are encouraged to contact the EAP for a consultation.

## **Supervisor's Own Problems**

Supervisors are human. They experience the same life stressors and challenges. At times, a supervisor may see themselves in their employee's difficulties. Self Awareness is needed in not overly identifying with either the employee or their problem(s). Yes, the Supervisor may have even experienced the same problem as the employee but this should not preclude the Supervisor from avoiding their professional responsibilities. This is perhaps the biggest road block in referring to the EAP.