

# NOVEMBER NEWS 2022

A worksite newsletter for supervisors provided by your Employee Assistance Program.

## Q + A for Supervisors

**Q. I have an employee who I think is going through something big and traumatic in their personal life. What is my role and responsibility as a supervisor?**

A. Almost every person will go through a severe personal crisis at some point in their life—e.g., the death of a child, a contentious divorce, a major health scare, or a mental health episode. Despite our best attempts to separate the personal and professional, personal issues can still come up at work. If the employee comes to you, be sure to focus on them, listen respectfully, don't interject with advice or resolutions until they ask for it. If they ask you for advice or help, remember that you are their supervisor and not a friend or a therapist. Keep it professional and related to appropriate adjustments that can be made at work to help them during the crisis. If an employee does not come to you with the personal problem, but their work performance is impacted then it may be necessary to call a meeting. Again, keep it professional and related to work behavior and performance. Be respectful and be compassionate. Also, the EAP is here to help. You can speak with the EAP about how to handle the situation and if a mandatory referral is appropriate.



800.395.1616

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## Support & Resources

**Q.** I've heard that employees are often afraid to go to the EAP for help because of privacy and confidentiality concerns. What can I do or say to help employees get the support they need?

**A.** Mention EAP services clearly and regularly to your employees, and when you mention EAP services (like short-term counseling), reassure employees about confidentiality. If an employee voluntarily elects to meet with a counselor, then in almost all instances all communication is protected and private just like any other communication with a healthcare provider. This means that in almost all instances, counselors CANNOT share information at all with an employee's supervisor, company, or anyone else outside of the EAP Care Team involved in the EAP services. There are three main instances when voluntary EAP counseling would not be confidential: 1) when a member is actively suicidal and shares that information with their counselor, 2) if the member reveals they are aware of child abuse or elder abuse then counselors are mandated reporters who are required to report the abuse, and 3) if a counselor has been subpoenaed by a court order. All three are pretty rare, and the last is very rare. Even when subpoenaed, a counselor can try to challenge the subpoena to protect someone's privacy. If an employee feels like they understand the rules of privacy and confidentiality around EAP counseling, then they may be more likely to seek the support they need.

**Q.** When I make a formal referral to the EAP, should I try to reduce the tension associated with constructive confrontation by having the meeting outside of my office? Would the employee's office be better, or perhaps a quiet spot in a more neutral area?

**A.** It is important to recognize that having one's work praised and/or one's lack of satisfactory performance corrected is a normal, healthy, and essential part of managing worker productivity. These activities should not be viewed as regrettable or disadvantageous. Referring employees to the EAP is likewise a complementary step in this process, periodically, and one designed to help employees address personal problems that may be preventing change. None of this is to say that meetings to correct performance can't be successfully held in other locations. Be aware that your concern about having the most accommodating location, and that this element is essential to the meeting's success, may be motivated by your fear of conflict along with your desire for acceptance. It's great that you are willing to be accommodating, but remember it is the employee's responsibility to change, no matter where the meeting is held.



## The EAP can help.

Q. How do EAPs help supervisors manage stress? Is it more important to think about our own engagement with the EAP stress-related services like counseling and stress management courses? Or is the more valuable service how EAPs can help improve the behavior of the employees we supervise?

A. They're both very important! EAPs help managers with their personal stress, which could be stress unrelated to work (such as relationship concerns or a big personal life change) or it could be working through how to manage on-the-job stress. But EAPs can also help supervisors through management referral services. In a management referral, supervisors refer an employee who may need help to the EAP for counseling and support. Any performance issue that is not improving is a potential referral to the EAP. This step is a de-stressor because the EAP can share the burden of helping an employee correct a performance problem. When supervisors refer employees to the EAP, they are, in fact, referring them to correct performance issues, not mental health issues or other personal problems. Frequently, it is determined that some personal issue impedes performance (but not always). In those cases, EAPs have been known to then refer employees to every sort of help imaginable, even language classes, pet sitters retirement planners, public speaking courses, reading improvement programs, and local colleges to finish degrees or acquire courses to improve skills and abilities.

Q. What is meant by "equitable workplace"? I'm hearing the phrase a lot lately. Is this an abstract idea or is there a clear and concrete definition? As a supervisor, what do I need to consider in terms of an "equitable workplace"?

A. An equitable workplace is a work culture or environment where everyone, regardless of their background (ethnic origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, physical abilities, or neurodiversity), believes they receive fair treatment and equal opportunity but also have the right to be different than others. The term evolved from diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, and the term equitable workplace and DEI in general have become very common place in today's workplace. The reasons for non-equitable conditions vary depending on the industry and organization, so there is not a defined process for all workplaces to achieve an equitable workplace. The most important thing is a commitment to change that is clear throughout the entire organization. Managers can play significant roles in enhancing workplace equity by being willing to have difficult conversations, creating safe spaces where people can bring up DEI-related topics appropriately, designing processes with diversity in mind, letting employees weigh in regularly and often, and attending DEI-related educational events.



## Resources & Events



### *This Month's Personal Advantage Webinar*

#### **Mindset for Success**

Mindset has a huge influence on physical and emotional wellbeing, relationships, and personal success. You will leave this webinar armed with strategies for making simple shifts in thinking that can lead to great change.

*The monthly webinars with Personal Advantage are available on the 1st day of each month and past topics are available for viewing at any time. To view the webinars, log into the Uprise Health member site with your assigned Access Code and click "Work-Life Services." Certificates of Completion are available by setting up a personal login and password within the Personal Advantage site.*

### **Lung Cancer Awareness Month**

Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer in the United States and worldwide, and smoking is the most common cause of lung cancer. In November, organizations and leaders across the U.S. stand together against lung cancer. With nationwide support, we can turn the tide against this type of cancer.

#### **The Great American Smokeout is November 17, 2022**

This event started in the 1970s when Arthur P. Mullaney, a high school guidance counselor, asked people to give up cigarettes for just one day and donate the money they saved to a high school scholarship fund. This event has grown dramatically over the past 50 years and is now an event that focuses on helping people quit smoking. "You don't have to stop smoking in one day. Start with day one." November 17th can be the day that starts you on your journey toward a smoke-free life. It helps reduce your risk of lung cancer and COPD. Resources can help

<https://link.uprisehealth.com/quit-smoking>

### **Members Love Our Webinars!**

*"I didn't know what to expect, but got some great information in the short time of the webinar! Looking forward to doing more of the activities and using the app. Thank you!"*