eap

WASHINGTON STATE

A Supervisor's Guide to the Employee Assistance Program

Contents

Appendices

This manual is available in alternate format upon request. If you are a person with a disability and need special accommodations, please contact the Washington State Employee Assistance Program at 1-877-313-4455.

Introduction

What Is the Washington State Employee Assistance Program?	The Washington State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary, confidential service that helps with personal or work-related problems that may be affecting work performance. The service is available to all state employees and their adult family members, as well as to those at most state colleges, universities, and other governmental programs that contract with the EAP.
Purpose	Washington State EAP focuses on work productivity and performance. The purpose of the EAP is to help employees prevent or resolve personal problems that may interfere with job performance. Supervisors also use EAP as an alternative or adjunct to discipline in order to assist a troubled employee to return to an acceptable level of productivity.
Services	- Consultation with human resources, managers, supervisors, labor and employees - Assessment and short-term problem solving for employees and adult household members - Referral to appropriate resources - A variety of presentations on health and wellness topics designed to assist managers, supervisors, and employees - Critical Incident Management Services - Consultation and referral regarding fit for duty and IME (Independent medical exam) - Case management - Online resources for supervisors (www.eap.wa.gov)
Confidentiality	Confidentiality is the foundation of the Washington State EAP. Client confidentiality is guaranteed by federal and state law. See Appendix A for the EAP Statement of Understanding regarding confidentiality.

The Iceberg Concept

(of Persistent Employee Performance Problems)

Employees who are adequately trained, equipped, and coached by their supervisors usually work effectively. When a person exhibits continuing and persistent job performance problems, those problems often are symptomatic of complex, underlying personal problems. Such problems are much like the "tip of the iceberg." These are warning signs that other serious problems may be present.

## Patterns of Job Performance Deterioration
Attendance
- Absenteeism/tardiness

Performance
- Decrease in quality/quantity of work
- Difficulty completing tasks or meeting deadlines
- Erratic work patterns
- Errors in judgment

Conduct
- Accidents/safety violations
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Reporting to work in abnormal condition
- Resistance to change
- Threats/workplace violence
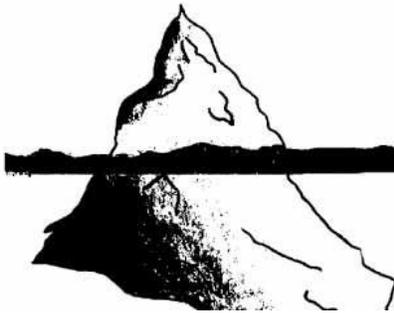
Complex Underlying Personal Problems
- Alcoholism/abuse/misuse
- Anger/stress
- Domestic violence
- Drug addiction/abuse/misuse
- Financial problems
- Grief and loss
- Legal problems
- Marital/family problems
- Mental health issues

Identifying and confronting employee job performance problems are supervisory responsibilities. Diagnosing and attempting to treat the complex underlying causes are not supervisory responsibilities. Referral to the EAP aids the employee in finding the professional help needed to manage personal problems. A supervisor's intervention can motivate an employee to make serious efforts to resolve performance issues.

The Art of Giving Feedback

Put the focus on behavior, not personality

Focus on your employee's behavior, actions, statements, and results when giving feedback, rather than on the person. Feedback is much easier to accept when the person receiving it doesn't feel his or her personal worth is being criticized. Feedback is much better received when stated positively rather than negatively. At least, be tactful. Then, offer suggestions on how to improve performance.

It's how you say it that counts

For example: 1) when you say someone was "boring" while giving a presentation, that labels him or her negatively. Instead, identify the parts of the presentation that could have been better and suggest ways to make it more interesting; 2) be specific. It isn't helpful when you say, "your presentation wasn't very interesting." Instead, say, "your presentation could be improved by changing your delivery and by offering details to hold the listener's attention." Then make suggestions, e.g., "Mary, if you speak louder and put more energy into your presentation delivery, people will feel your passion. 3) tell your employee what worked well, e.g., "The presentation was just the right length."

Good things come in threes

Employee educators often advise that when giving feedback, "give three to glow on and one to grow on." Don't overwhelm your employee with too much criticism. Focus only on one or two important points. Let your employee hear at least three things you appreciated so that he or she knows you value his or her efforts despite the constructive criticism you're offering.

Resistance isn't futile; it's a good sign

Listen calmly to what your employee has to say in response to your feedback. Refuting feedback is often a first step toward an employee's acceptance of it. It doesn't automatically mean your employee is in denial; refutation is a normal reaction we experience to protect our egos. The remarks he or she makes should lead to further discussion. You may find that your employee had valid reasons for doing what you criticized. Use the phrase, "I understand" often. Soon your employee may accept that his or her efforts could be improved by your suggestions.

When the feedback doesn't fit

When it's your turn to receive constructive criticism, listen carefully, rephrase their comments in your own words for clarification, and ask questions. If they don't give you specifics, ask for them. Ask for suggestions as well. Don't let your ego get involved! If you feel you had a valid reason for the action they are criticizing, state the reason calmly and ask, "Do you think I should have handled that another way?" When they finish, thank them and tell them you will think carefully about the feedback. You may discover that they have given you excellent ideas for improving performance.

Types of EAP Referrals

A. Formal Referral

A Supervisor or Human Resource representative refers an employee to the EAP for work performance problems and notifies the EAP prior to employee contact. The supervisor/HR will be notified of the employee's contact with the EAP.

B. Informal Referral

A Supervisor or Human Resource representative suggests or refers an employee to the EAP, but the referral is not for work-performance problems. Supervisor/HR will not be notified of EAP contact without the employee's written consent.

C. Self Referral

An employee or family member independently decides to contact the EAP for a confidential appointment. Job performance problems may or may not exist. The supervisor/HR will not be notified of EAP contact without employee's written consent.

Remember that the EAP is a voluntary program. "…Participation or non-participation by any employee in the Employee Assistance Program shall not be a factor in any decision affecting an employee's job security, promotional opportunities, corrective or disciplinary action, or other employment rights…" (RCW 41.04.730)

A Coordinated Effort

Correcting job performance difficulties requires a coordinated effort by management, the employee, and the EAP.

The key role played by management, as a member of the intervention effort, is to identify the performance or behavioral difficulties and use the authority of the management position and reliance on "Progressive Discipline" and "Just Cause" to motivate the employee to seek expert problem-solving assistance through the EAP.

Recognizing and Addressing Job Performance Issues

Observation/Recognition

Through active supervision, you observe employee job performance problems. If ignored, the chances are high the problem will get worse. Identify specific behaviors and their impact on job performance. Don't turn your back on them.

The following are some classic signs of job performance deterioration, which should be observed, documented and confronted.

All employees exhibit some of these job performance problems occasionally. It is repetition or a pattern of behaviors and job performance problems that you observe, document, and take action to correct.

Attendance

Patterns of absenteeism and/or tardiness:

- Unauthorized leave
- Repeated unscheduled absences
- Excessive tardiness, especially following weekends or when returning from lunch
- Peculiar and increasingly improbable excuses for absences

"On-the-job" absenteeism, such as:

- More absences from work station than job requires, such as:
- Long or frequent coffee or cigarette breaks
- Excessive use of telephone or computer for non-work related business
- Frequent disruptive socializing

Performance

- Lowered job efficiency
- Missed deadlines
- Mistakes due to inattention, poor judgment or lack of attention to detail
- Wastes material
- Makes irrational decisions
- Complaints from co-workers, other state employees, and/or general public
- More time and effort is required to perform less work
- More effort is required to perform less work

- Difficulty in recalling instructions, details, procedures, etc.
- Difficulty handling complex assignments
- Difficulty in recalling own mistakes
- Inattention to detail

Conduct

Accidents/safety violations

- Accidents on the job
- Accidents off the job (but affecting job performance through absenteeism or inability to function)
- Safety violations as delineated in WAC 296-800-110 "Safe Place Standards" and other agency safety regulations
- Violations of Drug Free Workplace standards or Department of Transportation regulations

Interpersonal conflicts

- Disruptive friction with co-workers
- Friction with supervisors
- Angry outbursts, yelling, throwing things
- Complaints from co-workers, other state employees, and/or general public

Unusual behavior

- Rigidly maintains need to follow old procedures, habits and/or patterns
- Reports to work in abnormal condition
- Comes to work in a "changed" condition (i.e., slurred speech, motor coordination, personality, cleanliness/grooming)
- Appears to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs

Threats of violence

- To self
- To others
- To property

Documentation

Careful documentation is essential to effective monitoring of work-performance issues.

The Work Performance Calendar found in Appendix B is ideal for use in this process. The visual presentation of performance problems combined with the written record is very effective in helping the employee understand workplace concerns. You can obtain the record for the current year and make as many copies as you desire from the EAP website at www.dop.wa.gov/eap.html. To be consistent, include a record or calendar in each employee's file.

Notes include references to performance expectations set forth in your employee's Performance and Development Plan (or other written performance expectations), position description and agency or institution-published policies and rules.

Specific, ongoing documentation both clarifies and supports formal actions when necessary. The employee may be unaware that his/her job performance is affected. Providing specific examples may help the employee understand the problem and possible consequences.

Remember to respect your employee's privacy. You may consult with your manager, Human Resources, and EAP to determine if your documentation is clear and appropriate.

Action

The supervisor's discussion with the employee concerning job performance problems is crucial. The supervisor communicates that he/she values the employee and wants to help resolve the performance problem(s) if possible. The initial discussion with the employee will be based on specific behavioral and performance data rather than vague references to unsatisfactory work.

It is important for the supervisor to not attempt to diagnose or counsel the employee regarding personal problems.

Preparation

- It is recommended by the EAP that you use the Work Performance Calendar for documentation of specific incidents of poor job performance behavior.

- Review your employee's PDP and be prepared to reference appropriate Performance Expectations, including Key Competencies not being fulfilled.

- Be aware of your own expectations. What is acceptable or unacceptable job performance? How much deviation is acceptable? Is the employee aware of your expectations?

- Be consistent with all your employees. Maintain the same expectations for all employees you supervise.

- Before any action is taken, contact your HR staff to ensure you are following all contractual responsibilities regarding formal actions.

- Consider agency policies and bargaining agreement requirements. Consult with HR if in doubt.

- Avoid criticism in the presence of co-workers. Select a private place and time for the discussion.

The Discussion

- It is helpful to preface your discussion of performance deficiencies by pointing out to the employee that you and others in the agency recognize his/her value.

- Be firm, honest and specific.

- Focus the discussion on job performance and workplace behaviors, rather than on the person.

- If the employee blames the poor performance on some off-the-job problem, avoid personal involvement. Refer the employee to the EAP for problem-resolving assistance.

Follow-Through

- Explain your agency's or institution's procedures and where the employee is in that process. This will communicate the seriousness of the matter.

- Develop a plan for improvement, including specific expectations. Obtain a commitment from the employee to follow the plan. Set a time frame and meet periodically to evaluate performance. Document this process.

Referral

An EAP referral is appropriate to assess issues that may be impacting job performance. Experience shows that most employees accept the referral when the EAP is presented in a positive way of helping the employee.

Referral to the EAP gives everyone involved a chance to resolve the problem at the earliest level. The goal is to correct and not punish. Keep in mind that participation in the EAP is voluntary.

The Supervisor's Role

- Call the EAP and explain you are making a referral.

- Meet with employee (See Appendix C).

- Emphasize the confidentiality of the services provided by the EAP, and give the employee a brochure. For further information, refer to the section on Confidentiality on page 1.

- Explain that you have notified the EAP of your referral and that the EAP will provide you with the following information about the referral:
  - Whether the employee made and kept the appointment with the EAP.
  - What time the employee arrived and left the EAP office.
  - If the employee has further appointments scheduled with EAP.

- Notify the EAP by phone, fax or written correspondence when a referral has been made. Written information regarding the reason for the referral and any action taken helps the EAP to clearly understand the situation.

The Employee Assistance Professional's Role

- Provide consultation for management on how to best help the employee resolve performance problems and provide follow-up services while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

- Provide a professional assessment of underlying personal problems.

- Motivate and assist the employee or management to develop a workable problem-solving plan.

- Refer the employee or management to appropriate professional services.

- Provide supportive follow-up services.

Follow-Up

The supervisor follows the employee's performance and progress.

The follow-up process is one of the most easily overlooked or ignored. It is, however, one of the most important aspects of the entire process. The lack of follow-up could negate or diminish 9 efforts that have been made thus far. Once expectations have been clearly stated, it is vital for the supervisor to follow up in a constructive way to determine that expectations are being met.

Progressive Discipline/Just Cause

The decision to discipline is made by the supervisor and agency management. Our recommendation is to make a referral and encourage the employee to use the Employee Assistance Program any time you take action up to and including termination.

Important Note: *Referral to the EAP is not a part of discipline, but works as an adjunct or effectively complements progressive discipline and just cause to achieve desired changes in employee behavior. The Employee Assistance Program can be an alternative to help an employee improve work performance without disciplinary steps. Your goal, and that of the EAP, is to improve job performance. Your EAP may be able to help the employee resolve issues that are underlying causative factors of job performance problems. If the employee comes to accept responsibility for the job deficiency and improves to meet the job standards, this goal has been reached. If the standards are still not met, further disciplinary steps can still be taken. The EAP is not a substitute for discipline. An employee must always be held responsible for substandard job performance or unacceptable behavior.*

- Recognize that it takes time for the situation to normalize.

- Spend sufficient time with the employee going over work objectives and expectations. There should be no question as to what is expected of the employee and what action will be taken if those expectations are not met.

- Observe, monitor, and document work performance problems.

- If the employee fails to correct performance problems, follow through on established disciplinary procedures, consulting with management and/or HR.

- If the employee slips back into unacceptable job patterns, this may only be temporary. Continue to address performance issues and refer again to the EAP.

- If you receive confidential information from a treatment provider, call your EAP for further information and guidance.

- Individual Bargaining Agreements may be in place for your agency or bargaining unit. It is essential to act in accordance with that agreement in effectively addressing employee job performance and behavior concerns. This can include appropriate coordination with your Human Resources Department and the Employee Assistance Program to insure job performance standards are clear and understood, and to effectively bring work standards and behavior up to those standards.

Notify the Employee Assistance Program when you make a referral

By notifying your EAP, you maximize the motivational effect of your discussion with the employee. The employee needs to know that your concern about job problems is real, and your desire to help is genuine. You can facilitate this by notifying the EAP of your referral by phone, fax or written correspondence.

APPENDIX A
Suggested Language for EAP Referral

This can be given in verbal or written form to your employee. It is also very helpful to give the employee an EAP brochure when making the referral.

"Job difficulties such as those you are experiencing are often the result of personal problems of one type or another. Recognizing this fact, I am suggesting that you voluntarily contact the Employee Assistance Program at _____(fill in the number of your regional EAP office). Attached is an EAP brochure that describes their services. I urge you to discuss with them any problems you might have that may be affecting your work and follow the recommendations they make. I believe the kind of help they can give you will assist in bringing your work performance back up to standard."

APPENDIX B

Effective July 1, 2005

WAC 357-31-325 Must an employer grant leave with pay for other miscellaneous reasons such as to take a state examination?

(1)　Leave with pay must be granted to an employee:

(a) To allow an employee to receive assessment from the Employee Advisory Service (aka Employee Assistance Program), or

(b) When an employee is scheduled to take an examination or participate in an interview for a position with a state employer during scheduled work hours.
　(i) Employers may limit the number of occurrences or the total amount of paid leave that will be granted to an employee to participate in an interview or take an examination during scheduled work hours.
　(ii) Employers may deny an employee's request to participate in an interview or take an examination during scheduled work hours based upon operational necessity.

(2)　An employer may grant leave with pay for an employee to perform civil duties i n c l u d i n g but not limited to firefighting, search and rescue efforts or donating blood. In the department of natural resources, leave with pay equivalent to one regular work shift may be allowed for the purpose of rest and recuperation after ten (10) consecutive
calendar days performing emergency work under an incident command system, defined in RCW 38.52.010.

[Statutory Authority: Chapter 41.06 RCW. 05-08-138, § 357-31-325, filed 4/6/05, effective 7/1/05.]

NOTE: If your agency is not part of general government, please check with your Human Resource Office.

Get in Touch

eap.wa.gov

877.313.4455

HELP STARTS HERE.