



Volume 24, Issue 1

Solutions

A newsletter for managers, supervisors and human resource staff eligible for Kepro services



The following questions and answers are designed to help provide assistance related to issues that supervisors may be facing. Kepro, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides confidential consultation to managers seeking guidance related to a variety of workplace challenges.

I'm worried about stress and burnout among my employees after the strain of the past few years. What do you suggest to help support them?

Start by acknowledging the challenges of the past few years and remind employees about the availability of counseling to help with stress reduction. Make sure that employees are aware that they have access to free and confidential counseling services through the EAP. You can periodically let them know that your organization has invested in an EAP because it recognizes the importance of supporting mental health wellness. Being willing to speak openly about the benefit will also help normalize counseling.

Is it appropriate for a supervisor to raise mental health issues with employees, such as pointing out that an employee “looks stressed out”?

Although it is not uncommon for a manager to use phrases such as “you look a little stressed out,” those might be misinterpreted by your employee. In this situation, consider reframing with a business purpose, such as “you appear rushed and are fumbling with your work. Is there something I can do to help? Is everything alright?” If this prompts the employee to mention that something personal is going on, that is their choice, in which case you can respond by recommending the EAP as a resource. Mental health in the workplace has received much attention in business news recently. Supervisors should avoid probing mental health issues or become diagnosticians. Focus on performance issues that don't resolve and refer these employees to the EAP based on your organization's policies and procedures.



I have always struggled with being assertive. As a new supervisor, I can imagine some problems this might cause and am wondering what I could do to become more assertive?

Supervisors who struggle with assertiveness often fear saying no. Rather than stating unequivocally to their employees that something won't happen or can't happen, and risk disappointment or anger, they may give the impression that there is hope or that they will "look into it." Whether it is about a pay raise or some other question, they give employees the expectation of an affirmative outcome. For the supervisor, the goal at the time is avoiding anger or conflict with workers. Their strategy is to "wait and see" with a middle-of-the-road approach. Later, when the desired outcome does not materialize, anger and accusations of broken promises occur. Trust is lost among staff. Unassertive supervisors often know they are setting themselves up for these conflicts, but the need to avoid conflict or please others in the moment overrides their better judgment at the time. If you struggle with this level of assertiveness, contact the EAP.

On several occasions over the past year, I was told that my documentation was not sufficient to support an employee's disciplinary action. What are the most important issues in documentation for supervisors?

Most supervisors have heard repeatedly that writing "the facts" and details—what, where, when, and who—are the critical parts of documentation. The parts to avoid are your opinions, analysis, and psychological appraisal of the employee. Less discussed, however, is timeliness of documentation, which refers to the lag time between the incident and putting it in writing. You may be busy, but as more time passes between an event and documentation, the less accurate that documentation will tend to be and the more likely it will contain judgments and overtones of your emotional response to the incident and the employee's personality. The reason is that you will remember how you feel and emotionally respond to the employee or incident longer than you will remember the facts and details of what actually occurred.

How do I document an attitude problem so there is no uncertainty later about what I mean? What really bothers me most is the cynicism, eye rolling, and sighing.

Behaviors such as rolling one's eyes, sighing, and huffing may be triggering but are difficult to document. Do words like arrogant, aggressive, cynical, critical, indifferent, or rude describe your employee's attitude? If arrogance is descriptive, documentation might be: "John often demonstrates an

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Kepro's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Program through Kepro assists organizations and their workforce in managing the personal challenges that impact employee well-being, performance and effectiveness. Kepro's life management consultants employ a comprehensive approach that identifies issues impacting the employee and assists them in developing meaningful solutions.

The Employee Assistance Program can be accessed any-time, for free, confidential support from a professional consultant or online resource. Call or log on today.

 **Phone:**

 **Website:**

 **Company Code:**

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exaggerated sense of his importance or abilities. For example, on (date, time) he remarked that 'everyone in the office is too lazy to do xyz, so they rely on him'. Such a statement has a negative effect on office morale and creates conflict." Note how this example does not label the employee as "arrogant." You are using the definition of it followed by an example. This is more effective. Formulate attitude documentation with 1) behavior associated with the attitude, 2) a description of what was said or what happened, and 3) its adverse impact. If you're struggling to document, the EAP can offer assistance.

What is the best way to develop loyalty among staff? I feel like my team respects me, but what do I do to earn their loyalty?

A good way to look at loyalty versus respect is to see that loyalty is a layer of dedication to your leadership that has been built on respect over time. Your employees may respect your position, authority, skills, and abilities, but whether they go the extra mile is a question associated with loyalty. Loyalty is earned by respecting your employees over time and is nurtured by understanding the needs of each of your employees and what they need to be happy, healthy, and productive. Loyalty is the dividend of investing yourself in the relationship you have with each of your employees. Loyalty is currency to get things done. When your employees respect you as a leader, they may deliver 100%. When they are loyal, they'll reach even further.