

Workplace Supervisor

June 2017

Testimonials

Here are some quotes from HR Managers who recently called on CONCERN for a Management Consultation:

“This was my first time using CONCERN for my team. I was very impressed with the quick response and amount of support from both the clinical manager over the phone and our in person counselor. I am so appreciative of this service and my team was as well!”

“The clinical manager has been very helpful with connecting me to the correct people in order to ensure we are setting up sessions to assist our employees. He has been great with follow up as well.



FAQs for Managing Employees

Q. The best supervisors in my career did not just supervise; instead, they raised employees up, attracted their loyalty, and inspired their desire to be part of a cohesive and close work unit. I think this is a learned skill, not just charisma. Am I correct?

A. Yes. You are describing the qualities of a good leader. The following are a few contrasts between being a supervisor and being a leader. Instead of simply administrating, look for ways to innovate and improve systems within your work unit. Place your focus on people and developing them, rather than only paying attention to the letter of their job descriptions. Take safe risks with your employees' abilities and talents, rather than pigeon-holing them into who should do what. This inspires trust between you and them. Think about the future of your work unit, not just what is happening from day to day. When employees complain, pay attention to their needs. Do not see making changes as giving in to demands, but rather as challenging the status quo. You have unique talents. Know what they are, and how you will elevate your work unit and organization with them. Focus on doing the right thing for your employees, rather than thinking “we can't do it that way because it has never been done.” Stepping outside of the structure will cause you to make some mistakes, but leadership means you will lack one attribute: being perfect.

Q. I have always been a little resistant to referring my star performers to CONCERN. Instead, I have discussed personal problems with them. This is not the right approach, but I fear the word might get out and damage their careers. Can you help me with this issue?

A. There is an important dynamic worth understanding when it comes to helping employees you supervise with their personal problems. This is the “dual relationship” conflict, where the employment relationship interferes with your ability to play the role of a counselor or problem solver. You cannot successfully alter this dynamic. Playing roles of both boss and counselor interferes with employees' ability to share complete information that is potentially critical to resolving their problem. You may hear only 95 percent of what's going on, and therefore offer the wrong advice, discuss the wrong problem, or at best facilitate half-measures that make the problem worse. You may also find it difficult to objectively manage an employee with whom you also have a helping relationship;

the needs of the employee and those of the organization may not always match. A better approach is to encourage your employees to phone CONCERN and make their own decision. Confidentiality rules associated with EAPs are the strictest of their kind. Consider talking with CONCERN about confidentiality. You'll discover how truly safe EAPs are for employees to use.

Q. I read that fatigue is an important health matter employees should monitor, and that it results from too much work and difficulty separating work and home life. Do supervisors have any role in identifying employees who are experiencing fatigue, and in getting them help?

A. You should not diagnose employee problems or refer employees for specific conditions you think you have identified. Fatigue can be caused by many things, including medications; medical and health problems like diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, and sleep disorders; and even depression. Suggest instead that employees seek self-referral to CONCERN based on how they appear or what they have shared with you about their problems. This may include obvious signs and symptoms of being tired. When employees look tired, ask them how they feel, recommend they get some rest, and make it easy for them to get it. At work, you may notice the effects of fatigue on someone's behavior even before you identify clinical symptoms of the fatigue's effect on the body. These effects include problems with an employee's mood or difficulties in the way the employee interacts with others. You might even see an employee appear to be asleep during work hours.

Q. How can supervisors support employees who suffer from depression? I know at least two within my group of workers who are on medication. I don't pry or get personally involved, but I don't want to be completely unaware of what might be helpful to them.

A. Recognize that depression is a disease like other chronic illnesses, and that it is managed, usually with

the help of a medical doctor. The patient and doctor work together to reduce symptoms in order to prevent interference with social and occupational functioning. Simply be aware that depression can have its impact. Symptoms may lead employees to be less assertive about their needs or less forthright when discussing their thoughts, feelings, or ideas around a project or work problem. Do not misinterpret this as laziness or unprofessionalism. And know that if your workplace is under stress and serious changes are at hand, this can make depression worse. Encourage all employees to be open with you about their needs and how you can support them. Remind them as appropriate to reach out to CONCERN, but also hold employees to the standards reasonably expected for their positions. This can help troubled employees in general seek help sooner from the EAP, no matter what their problem might be.

Q. Some of my employees are college students who party on the weekends, and they come in late to work sometimes. Frankly, I am lenient because I was young once and these guys stay late when necessary to get their work done. Am I managing this issue incorrectly?

A. There are inherent risks with your approach. If your employees know you are lenient with their time, they are likely to continue with this pattern and allow it to grow worse. Other drawbacks include limits on your ability to plan the workday, engage with them more effectively, and enhance your work organization. You can end up accommodating their less-than-satisfactory mental and medical state if they come to work hung over. Although intervening with alcoholism is not your job, a lack of structure will by default enable a potentially alcoholic employee to continue abuse of the system, and you won't have a means of measuring poor attendance, which may be necessary leverage for a referral to CONCERN. Don't enable this pattern of attendance. It will only increase risk to your organization, and possibly to the individual's own health and well-being.

CONCERN: EAP teams with Human Resources to provide another resource for managers and supervisors to consult about how to manage issues with individuals, within and between work groups, and across departments. When you call CONCERN: EAP, ask for a Management Consultation or request to speak to a Clinical Manager.

Call: 800.344.4222
www.concern-eap.com