

Workplace Supervisor

April 2016

Testimonials

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

"I had a wonderful experience with CONCERN and am so grateful we have these services available for the hard times our employees face. The clinical manager provided an incredible service to the team."

"The service was great. I was very impressed at the promptness of CONCERN in providing us with information that was important for our employee. Thank you for all your help!"

"The clinical manager was really great. She provided me with guidance that was thoughtful and made a lot of sense for the particular situation. Having never dealt with issues like this, it was definitely helpful to get her input and advice on how to move forward."



FAQs for Managing Employees

Q. I plan to make a supervisor referral to CONCERN of an employee who chronically comes to work late. Should I also probe the reasons why? I don't think it really matters, and I probably won't get the whole truth, so why risk getting bogged down in excuses?

A. On the one hand, you are right - coming to work on time is a requirement for most jobs and it is a measurable performance issue. It is indeed the employee's responsibility to manage his or her time. On the other hand, asking your employee why he or she is coming to work late may help rule out any issue that could be work-related over which you have control or influence to change. If your employee discloses a work-centered reason for tardiness, try to address it. If your employee mentions a personal problem that you may be able to accommodate, do so at your discretion. Otherwise accept the answer, but recommend CONCERN as a resource for proper help. Be clear about your expectations and the employee's responsibility to meet them.

Q. Supervisors want to avoid conflicts with employees, which is why many of us do not hold them accountable. I know lack of accountability is a significant complaint of top management, but this avoidance of conflict helps manage stress.

A. Seeking to reduce conflicts is a worthy pursuit, but this is different from being "conflict avoidant." Conflict avoidance is a dysfunctional approach to conflict management that seeks to evade or steer clear of disagreements, quarrels, and the work needed to resolve them. Problems therefore grow worse, rather than being transformed into opportunities that can lead to more efficient work systems and higher productivity. Conflict avoidance requires a decision by the supervisor to abdicate his or her responsibility for resolving conflicts. Supervisors who avoid conflict are typically unaware that systematic steps and procedures for resolving conflicts exist, and that conflicts can ultimately become success stories, not bad memories. EAPs garner much experience in conflict resolution and can often play a consultative role to supervisors. Reach out and encourage your supervisor peers to do the same.

Q. I am a new supervisor. I can see right away I am the “one in the middle”, with my supervisor above me and the employees below me each needing different things. Tell me the number one mistake I am likely to make as a new supervisor.

A. The number one mistake that you are likely to make as a new supervisor is failing to see your role as a “teacher” instead of a “cop”. This slipup results from stereotypes you might hold of what supervisors do, insecurity about your supervisory skills, and fear of not being taken seriously. To reduce the likelihood of making this mistake, develop individual workplace relationships with everyone you supervise. Begin to understand five things about each employee—what their key skills are, what they want to learn more about, what motivates them, how much feedback they want or need, and their preferred form of communication. Down the road, check in to ensure these assessments are indeed correct. This will prevent a “barrier” from forming between you and your employee caused by slow, simmering resentment toward you for not meeting his/her needs. If you are unsure about how to approach employees or communicate with them, talk to a CONCERN clinical manager and devise a plan or approach before things get worse. And about being “the one in the middle”? Treat your supervisor as a teacher, not a cop, and a partner in getting things done as well.

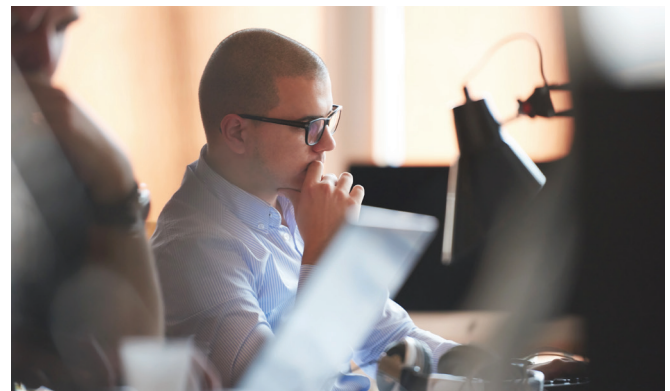
Q. I have an employee whom I consider lazy, but referral to the EAP for this problem doesn’t sound like the right thing to do. Do you have recommendations about dealing with “laziness”?

A. Some employees may appear disinclined to work or slow to exert themselves to accomplish required tasks of their job. They may even appear sluggish. You are correct that a referral to the EAP is not the right step initially, but it may come later after you attempt the following work-centered interventions. Hold a discussion with your employee about how he/she feels about the job. Seek to uncover his or her attitudes toward it. Also, ask about his

or her personal goals in relation to the work. Be honest, and say you have noticed a slow-moving work style, trouble taking initiative, not always getting things done on time, or other measurable behaviors. Don’t label the employee as lazy. Stress the value of the employee’s position in the organization, and see whether you can elicit a higher level of excitement. If this step fails, then arrange an EAP referral. Note that this is not a diagnostic process, but one focused on clarifying performance expectations.

Q. My employee has been seeing a CONCERN counselor once per week for about a month. I am not seeing changes in his attitude or attendance. Should I phone the EAP to let them know, take the administrative action I promised, give the situation more time, or what?

A. The answer depends on what you are willing to tolerate or postpone. Speak with the employee first. Provide your observations and encourage the employee to take them back to the counselor. Offer to provide written feedback if that would be helpful. Supervisors often observe behavior changes – or the absence of change, that the EAP may not, or the employee may not report. EAPs can’t tell managers how to respond administratively in “fail to thrive situations,” but with a more complete picture made possible by communication they may be more helpful. Ultimately it is up to you and your perceptions of the employee’s performance and motivation to change that matter most.



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