

# Workplace Supervisor

March 2018

## Testimonials

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

*"The clinical manager provided expert and compassionate advice. We are very grateful for his services."*

*"I appreciate the clinical manager's assistance. He was very helpful and patient."*

*"The clinical manager followed up with me several times to check on how things were going. He was very supportive and concerned about the situation."*



## FAQs for Managing Employees

### Are Your Employees Sleep Deprived?

Sleep is often one of the first things to go when people feel pressed for time. Many regard sleep as a luxury and think that the benefits of staying awake longer outweigh the costs. But a good night's sleep is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle. In fact, sleep is as important to health as eating, drinking and breathing. Yet according to the National Sleep Foundation, 40 million Americans suffer from sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, insomnia and restless leg syndrome, and 60 percent of adults report having sleep problems a few nights a week or more. Over time, that sleep debt can impact your employees' health and affect performance, social behavior, relationships and the ability to lead and inspire others. Other sleep deprivation problems include being more accident prone, an inability to think clearly, and health issues such as increased risk of heart disease, weight gain, and depression. **Sleep Awareness Week** (March 11 to 17) might be a good time to "bring sleep to work." Let your employees know about any sleep promotion options your company may have, such as designated rest areas that allow them to take short restorative naps, flextime, or sleep packages in your company's overall wellness plan. For other tips and tools to improve the quantity and quality of sleep, suggest they check out the sleep toolkit on CONCERN's Resilience Hub at <https://www.concernresiliencehub.com/toolkit/get-your-zzzs>

**Q.** Employees self-refer to CONCERN for any type of personal problem. If the problem is primarily about the supervisor, however, will the EAP urge the employee to sign a release so the other side of the story can be obtained from the supervisor?

**A.** CONCERN's counselors work with the information provided by employees to guide them toward a workable solution. Complaints about supervisors are common, but EAPs do not need "the other side of the story" from the supervisor to help employees navigate their way to a better relationship. If such information is needed, the employee can supply it or CONCERN can request it. You may feel uncomfortable imagining your employees at the counselor's office talking about you, but you should understand that EAPs are hosted by organizations. This means EAPs seek healthful and productive resolutions that benefit employees in their roles as workers without dismissing the primacy of the organization or undermining your role or position. They understand the one-sided nature of what they are hearing.

**Q.** All the mass shootings in schools and in the workplace—it's frightening. I read that hundreds of employees are shot in the workplace each year. What are the latest statistics, and which employees are most at risk? What can supervisors do? How can the EAP help?

**A.** About 450 homicides occur in the workplace each year in the U.S., and about 85% of these are shootings. An equal number of victims are also shot, but survive. The latest government statistics (2015) show that first-line supervisors of retail employees are at the highest risk of getting shot. Next are cashiers, followed by law enforcement officers and then taxi drivers. Robbery is the most common reason for shootings. Men are five times more likely than women to be a victim of a shooting, but women are 10 times more likely to get shot when the assailant is a domestic partner, lover, or acquaintance. Supervisors should bring any awareness of disgruntled or threatening employees to the attention of their managers and HR. They should know that domestic violence victimization circumstance sometimes shared or known by others at work. It is therefore crucial to refer these victims of abuse and violence to the EAP and not become a private confidant. Only a proper assessment will offer the best chance of identifying the level of risk that might exist, and what to do next about it. <https://www.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/cfoi/workplace-homicides.htm>

**Q.** Do employees self-refer to EAPs for help with alcoholism, or is this the type of personal problem that will ultimately require an alternative and perhaps administrative strategies?

**A.** Self-referrals do occur, but they typically result from drinking-related incidents, not simply the awareness of alcoholism. Like other illnesses with behavioral aspects to them, enabling and denial act as forces making self-diagnosis difficult. A DUI, the fear of divorce, or a "close call," among other situations, may motivate self-referrals. Alcoholics often seek help for a "drinking problem," even in these circumstances—they hope to regain control over their drinking. They often

have ruled out the possibility of alcoholism based on their own unique definition, which excludes them. This is where expertise is crucial in the assessment process. Stay focused on the work performance consequences of their drinking, and as needed, refer to CONCERN as a resource or in tandem with a disciplinary process. The counselor may have only one shot at helping these employees understand the nature of what they are dealing with and motivating them to take the next step. The client must be sold on the benefits—the promises of recovery—that result from proper treatment. Some clients are ready for this message, while others are not. The window of motivation is short. The good news is that the predictability of future crises almost guarantees them another chance to hear the message and accept help.

**Q.** I think supervisors who share information about their lives, personal foibles, and the real problems they face at home and at work are less mysterious. Does this help elicit more cooperation from troubled workers and motivate them to feel closer and perform better?

**A.** Demonstrating vulnerability will tend to improve relationships in your personal life, but it can undermine your supervisory role in correcting worker performance. The reasons are not mysterious. The employment setting operates with a different set of dynamics than your personal life. Because a paycheck passes downward in an organization to employees and a hierarchy exists to ensure productivity and workflow, there are natural differences in status that exist between workers and those who supervise them. With their higher status, supervisors possess influence and leverage that allow them the power to correct problems, guide employees, judge performance, and discipline and reward workers. But these forces can be undermined. One way to do that is to convince employees that you and they are equal in status. Self-disclosure (being too close and personal) produces this result. If you are perceived as a friend rather than a boss, your employees lose the sense of urgency needed to work under your direction. Coaxing and pleading become faulty tools of persuasion. The same dynamic occurs when parents forgo discipline to become friends with their children.

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 Consultant or request to speak to a Clinical Manager.

**Call: 800.344.4222**  
**[employees.concern-eap.com](http://employees.concern-eap.com)**