

Workplace Supervisor

November 2017

Testimonials

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

"I can't express the gratitude we feel for having the benefit of CONCERN support. You have been SO supportive and comforting to our staff. It's a wonderful service you provide at a time we had nowhere to turn. We are grateful for the work you do and the service provided, all done with heartfelt concern for our staff. Thank you immensely."

"Very well received by Staff. Appreciate the flexibility and assistance. It was great!"

"The onsite counselor was informative, responsive and very helpful! Thank you for your support!"



FAQs for Managing Employees

Q. Sexual harassment prevention has been in the news lately. But I do not know anything about other types of harassment. What other sorts of issues associated with harassment and unwanted behavior should supervisors be aware of so we can confront these issues early?

A. Behavior that is intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people is considered harassment. Characteristically, it is unwanted. So, notice and do not tolerate unwelcome or offensive conduct of any kind. Harassment can be illegal when it is based on sex (including sexual orientation, pregnancy, and gender identity), race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, and/or even genetic information. Do you see behavior that can be considered detrimental to an employee's work performance, professional advancement, and/or mental health? Examples include offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name-calling, undue attention, physical assaults or threats, unwelcome touching or contact, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, constant or unwelcome questions about an individual's identity, and offensive objects or pictures. Consult with your manager and/or HR adviser for clarification on matters concerning harassment. Referring employees to CONCERN who participate in these behaviors, and documenting corrective actions, are crucial.

Q. How can a supervisor become less fearful of confronting an employee whose performance is unsatisfactory? I think many of us live in denial, or rationalize avoidance of these unpleasant tasks. We want to be leaders, but this responsibility is the most distasteful. How can the EAP help?

A. Most supervisors temporarily get away with ignoring employees who are not performing satisfactorily. Unfortunately, however, such problems grow worse, as do the risks they present. Helping supervisors understand the chronic, persistently irritating nature of unresolved personnel issues can create an urgency to act sooner, before a crisis makes confrontation unavoidable. The trick can be to remain unemotional and a source of the truth, remembering it is your job to monitor employee performance and their job to perform. Be specific, cite examples, and avoid generalities and broad stroke judgments about how they are not meeting expectations. Let them know what they can do to improve. Supervisors' reluctance to confront employees is often based on fear. This might be fear of being lashed out at by the employee, disliked, or labeled unfair. The reticent supervisor's goal is to avoid an undeserved reputation as an oppressor. If this sounds familiar, contact CONCERN for counseling and support, and practice some tough role plays with the EA professional. You will be astonished at how such exercises can enhance one's fortitude to act.

Q. What is the most important thing a manager can do to help prevent workplace violence?

A. Instructing supervisors in spotting signs and symptoms of potential violence, promoting fair work practices, and resolving conflicts are strong “to dos” in helping managers prevent workplace violence. However, the most effective overarching piece of advice is “get to know your employees.” This requires possessing or developing a natural sense of curiosity, aided by a strong belief that employees are your most valuable resource. Whether you discover employees being bullied, feeling treated unfairly, facing domestic conflict, not bonding with coworkers, suffering from depression, or even showing signs of being under the influence, a supervisor has numerous opportunities to discover and address with employees smaller issues that can lead to tragedy down the road. Communication is critical. And, of course, CONCERN is always there as a resource you can encourage employees to use.

Q. I was hired to replace a supervisor who left the organization. There is a history of conflict, and I need to earn trust. I can tell this won't be easy due to past experiences. How do I get employees to trust me?

A. Although your employees had experiences with the prior supervisor that created a sense of distrust, it is human nature to trust another person over fearing them. The benefits of establishing a trusting relationship far outweigh your employees remaining distrustful. For now, their distrust is about self-preservation, so you have the natural urge to trust on your side. Allow trust and approachability to naturally emerge by practicing several behaviors recommended for any supervisor: Do not allow the sense of distrust to cause you to avoid your employees.

Engage with your direct reports and share “small” but personal things about yourself. Your employees, will make a mental note of these interactions and your willingness to be vulnerable. This demonstrates that you are initiating trust with them first, which is naturally reciprocal. Beyond personal engagement, demonstrate trust in other ways by backing and supporting your employees. Take chances with their abilities and capabilities. Be clear and consistent in sharing your expectations for how they make you happy, and provide direct and supportive feedback when they don't. Some of your employees may resist trusting you longer than others do. Resistance from some individuals due to past experiences and personal issues may occur. The EAP can consult with you on these issues to help you build the winning team you want.

Q. I oversee EMTs and firefighters. Many of them deny being under any stress. Is it a waste of time to have them attend a stress management class? Will they learn anything? I inquired, but most of them seemed to indicate no interest in a class or were noncommittal.

A. It seems there are two issues common among these employees where a duty to serve requires a selfless commitment to others and a willingness to place others' well-being ahead of their own: recognizing stress, and acknowledging it. With CONCERN's help, educate employees about stress anyway. Include what stress is, how it works, how it harms, how to manage it, symptoms associated with ongoing stress when it is ignored, and the physiologic response of the body when it becomes chronic. They will most likely listen despite how it appears. Even if they do not, you've done the right thing.

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
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