

# THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

*Helping You Manage Your Company's Most Valuable Resource -- Employees*

State Employee Assistance Program 1-877-237-8574 (Toll Free)

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■ **My employee says she is bored with her job. She comes to work late, she doesn't complete assignments, and says she doesn't have the energy to be the performer she used to be. I can't refer her to the EAP for boredom, can I?**

You can't refer your employee to the EAP for boredom because it is not a measurable performance problem, but you can refer her for attendance, incomplete assignments, and unsatisfactory performance. It is a misstep in managing a troubled employee to accept at face value the employee's self-diagnosis ("I'm bored.") because there is no way to confirm it, and it can leave you feeling at a loss about what to do. Your employee might be bored, but she could also be depressed. Many other issues may contribute to what appears to be boredom. As a first step, encourage your employee to visit the EAP as a self-referral to address her feelings of boredom. Also ask what she needs from you to feel more enthusiastic about work. If she is unwilling to consider using the EAP, she has not done everything reasonable to improve her performance. Don't accept a lower standard of performance because of boredom.

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■ **Two groups of employees in our organization are in ongoing conflict. The negative impact on productivity is very clear. I know the EAP works with individual employees, and coworkers in conflict, but what about larger "inter-group" conflict?**

Examine the conflict between the two work groups, then meet with the EAP to see if its capabilities and scope of services match your intervention needs. Inter-group conflict may be fueled by organizational issues that members have little control over, specific underlying needs and personal issues of individual group members, or both. The EAP may be appropriate for any part of the conflict, or it may refer you to other intervention services within your organization. Discuss with the EAP the issues of the conflict, the fighting and making-up pattern between the groups, how they retaliate with each other, the role of individual employees, and the degree to which employees feel fatigue and desire for resolution of their conflict. Bring these issues to the EAP. Together, you and the EAP can identify a strategy for helping resolve the conflict.

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■ **My employee is a good worker, but he's a "clock-watcher." He always leaves on time. His behavior has a negative impact on morale because other employees must pitch in and take**

If your employee watches the clock to leave on time, he obviously either must leave on time, or experiences a positive incentive to leave and not stay longer to do more. You may have little control over these factors. It is more important to be concerned about the morale of coworkers. You may have more control and influence over this issue. Consider rewarding or recognizing employees who put in extra time and complete more work. Making this recognition public in front of peers is a proven morale booster and motivator. There is no guarantee

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**care of unpredictable work demands. Is there a way to intervene?**

that your employee will stay longer by witnessing the rewards given to others for going above and beyond the call of duty, but it should have a positive impact on morale. Eventually, you may wish to recognize initiative or quantity of work accomplished on performance evaluations so employees who do more feel appreciated.

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■ **My employee says services to which she was referred by the EAP are too far away from home. Her performance has not improved since I referred her to the EAP. Is it fair to use discipline or accept less from her if she can't get help for her personal problems?**

It is unfortunate that your employee cannot obtain the services she needs where she resides, but her performance problems can't be excused because of it. If this were the case, she could eventually become unqualified for her position. It is your employee's responsibility to perform satisfactorily. It is more likely that your employee has not informed the EAP that services are too far away, or her motivation to accept help has waned. Recommend that she meet with the EAP again to solve the problem of her inability to access needed services. It is unlikely an EAP would accept the inability to help an employee. It would find a creative solution before it allowed an employee's personal problem to grow worse.

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**NOTES:**

Don't forget to sign up for one of the June EAP supervisory training classes.

