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EAP SUPERVISOR ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



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**DEER OAKS EAP PRESENTS:
Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series**

*Strengthening
the Team*

Date: August 29, 2022

Time: 1:00-2:00 PM CT REGISTER

Active Shooter: Recognizing Potential Workplace Violence

An active shooter in your workplace may be a current or former employee, or an acquaintance of a current or former employee. Intuitive managers and coworkers may notice characteristics of potentially violent behavior in an employee. Alert your human resources department if you believe an employee or coworker exhibits potentially violent behavior.

Indicators of Potential Violence by an Employee

Employees typically do not just “snap” but display indicators of potentially violent behavior over time. If these behaviors are recognized, they can often be managed and treated. Potentially violent behaviors by an employee may include one or more of the following (this list of behaviors is not comprehensive, nor is it intended as a mechanism for diagnosing violent tendencies):

- Increased use of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism
- Vague physical complaints
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene
- Depression or withdrawal
- Resistance and overreaction to changes in policy and procedures
- Repeated violations of company policies
- Increased severe mood swings
- Noticeably unstable, emotional responses
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation
- Suicidal behavior
- Comments about “putting things in order”
- Behavior that is suspect of paranoia (“Everybody is against me”)
- Increasing talk of problems at home
- Escalation of domestic problems into the workplace
- Talk of severe financial problems
- Talk of previous incidents of violence
- Empathy with individuals committing violence
- Increase in unsolicited comments about firearms, other dangerous weapons, and violent crimes

Managing the Consequences of an Active-Shooter Situation

After the active shooter has been incapacitated and is no longer a threat, human resources or management should engage in post-event assessments and activities, including:

- An accounting of all individuals at a designated assembly point to determine who, if anyone, is missing and potentially injured
- Determining a method for notifying families of individuals affected by the active shooter, including notification of any casualties
- Assessing the psychological state of individuals at the scene and referring them to health care specialists accordingly
- Identifying and filling any critical personnel or operational gaps left in the organization as a result of the active shooter

Lessons Learned

To facilitate effective planning for future emergencies, it is important to analyze the recent active-shooter situation and create an after-action report. The analysis and reporting contained in this report is useful for:

- Serving as documentation for response activities
- Identifying successes and failures that occurred during the event
- Providing an analysis of the effectiveness of the existing emergency action plan
- Describing and defining a plan for making improvements to the emergency action plan

Sources

Center for Personal Protection and Safety. (2007). Shots fired: When lightning strikes (DVD).

Security Management Group International (SMGI). (n.d.). Workplace violence desk reference. Dublin, Ireland: Author.

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA). (2001). How to plan for workplace emergencies and evacuations (OSHA Pub. No. 3088). Retrieved June 9, 2022, from <https://www.osha.gov>

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2008, October). Active shooter: How to respond. Retrieved June 9, 2022, from <https://www.dhs.gov>

Workplace Goal Setting Worksheet

Directions: Goal setting is important for any measurement related to performance improvement. This worksheet is intended to help workplace teams establish appropriate goals for individual measures and also for performance-improvement projects. Goals should be clearly stated and describe what the organization or team intends to accomplish. Use this worksheet to establish a goal by following the SMART formula outlined below. *Note that setting a goal does not involve describing what steps will be taken to achieve the goal.*

Describe the business problem to be solved:

Use the SMART formula to develop a goal:

Specific

Describe the goal in terms of three “W” questions:

- What do we want to accomplish? _____
- Who will be involved/affected? _____
- Where will it take place? _____

Measurable

Describe how you will know if the goal is reached:

- What is the measure you will use? _____
- What is the current data figure (i.e. count, percentage, rate) for that measure? _____
- What do you want to increase/decrease that number to? _____

Attainable

Defend the rationale for setting the goal measure above:

- Did you base the measure or figure you want to attain on a particular best practice/average score/benchmark?

- Is the goal measure set so low that it is not challenging enough? _____
- Does the goal measure require a stretch without being too unreasonable? _____

Relevant

Briefly describe how the goal will address the business problem stated above.

Time-Bound

- Define the timeline for achieving the goal: _____
- What is the target date for achieving this goal? _____

Write a goal statement, based on the SMART elements above. The goal should be descriptive, yet concise enough that it can be easily communicated and remembered. Tip: It’s a good idea to post the written goal somewhere visible and regularly communicate the goal during meetings in order to stay focused and remind employees that everyone is working toward the same aim.

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (n.d.). Goal setting worksheet. Retrieved December 15, 2019, from <https://www.cms.gov>

Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.

Q. Should it be part of a supervisor's responsibilities to help employees pursue work-life balance? This is something that extends beyond the workplace and is personal for employees.

A. Technology can turn a job into a 24/7 experience, so a lack of work-life balance can be a challenge. This strain contributes to lower productivity and burnout. It's up to employees to "hit the off switch," but some are better at doing it than others. This makes awareness and education about work-life balance a worthy pursuit. Practice establishing traditions that facilitate work-life balance. One tradition might be having everyone agree to not respond to emails and work-related texts after business hours, except in specific circumstances. (This could influence employees to get more done during regular business hours.) Brainstorm other work-life balance ideas. Celebrate and reward participation in these practices. A Web search of "ways to achieve work-life balance" will lead you to many ideas. Consider input from your human resources advisor, too. Suggest the EAP to employees who demonstrate struggles with work-life balance. Note that motivating employees to practice work-life balance won't be effective unless you are doing it yourself.

Q. I have known supervisors who were great listeners and advice givers. But what if the supervisor actually has professional counseling experience? Does this create an exception to the rule of avoiding delving into an employee's problems and taking on the counseling role?

A. Employees who raise concerns about personal problems with supervisors often have more than one reason for doing so. One, of course, may be a sincere desire to find a solution. But consider the high likelihood that similar discussions have taken place many times before with others outside the workplace, particularly with family and friends. It follows that an employee's desire to focus on solving a personal problem is in part motivated by a need to shift attention away from any performance issue

and its consequences. A discussion about the nature of a personal problem and its resolution would certainly be more satisfying. Even if the supervisor has the skills to help the employee, engaging in the problem-solving process ultimately requires follow-up. These include, motivational counseling, relapse prevention, and detection by the counselor as to whether treatment is being accomplished, or whether it is being resisted or applied in only half measures. It is unrealistic for a supervisor engage in these elements of problem resolution, and risk increases when supervisors play the counseling role.

Q. If my employee is experiencing frequent absences from work and I make a supervisor referral to the EAP, is it enough to let the EAP know the employee is being referred and the reason? What other information would be helpful for the EAP to know?

A. EAPs have extensive experience helping employees with problems, many of which are associated with different absenteeism patterns. The more information you provide about the history of the employee's attendance issue and your attempts to resolve it, the more effective the EAP interview will be. This means a faster resolution to the problem. Problematic employee absenteeism may be ongoing and consistent, cyclical, or sudden and unexpected. Each includes different degrees and forms of communication (or lack of it) with the employer concerning the absences. This history gives the EAP clues about the nature of any personal problem that may be associated with the absences, even when an employee is not completely forthcoming in an interview. For example, an employee who suddenly does not show up for work and does not phone in, and whom you can't reach, will have a personal problem far different than that of an employee who phoned you the night before with notice that they were taking unapproved leave without pay.

Information contained in this newsletter is for general information purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. Some of it might not apply to your particular company policies and available programs. This information is proprietary and intended only for eligible EAP members. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.

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