



Maryland's Largest School District

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential



Volume 25, Issue 1

Solutions

A newsletter for managers, supervisors and human resource staff eligible for Kepro services



The following questions and answers are designed to help provide assistance related to issues that supervisors may be facing. Kepro, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides confidential consultation to managers seeking guidance related to a variety of workplace challenges.

I promised a couple of my employees that I would address the bad attitude of one of our office staff. I am procrastinating because I am not sure how to go about it. Is there a recommended approach?

Consider having a private meeting with the employee of concern and explain the problem with examples of the behavior you have witnessed. Instances you've witnessed are better than hearsay, because employees with attitude problems are well versed at denying second-hand reports of their transgressions. Clearly communicate what is expected in terms of attitude and behavior. Ensure you are clear about next steps if the behavior is not corrected, which may include possible disciplinary measures. A key part of your intervention should be giving feedback. Feedback should be provided regularly, be specific, and highlight the positive changes, but also any continuation of the concerns. Ask the employee to come to you with any issues or concerns about the job, work environment, or even other employees. The goal is to eliminate the likelihood of the employee aggressing against fellow workers. The EAP can be a resource for both the employee and manager in this situation.

I need to confront my employee about a performance issue. What are the most common mistakes supervisors make that tend to not only undermine effectiveness of confrontations, but make them more stressful?

Inadequate planning and not having suitable documentation prepared for a meeting with the employee are perhaps the key issues that make confrontations difficult and stressful. One mistake supervisors make is not meeting with the employee in a timely fashion after an incident of concern happens. The dislike of confronting employees can lead to postponement or procrastination, and risk that it will not happen at all, which can allow the problem to grow worse. Delayed meetings can be awkward because details are not fresh in the mind of participants and cooperation may be lessened. An employee may also have more time to prepare mentally for a defensive position. The EAP can help a supervisor prepare for these difficult conversations with employees.



What can I do to be a better manager? Over the past few years we've dealt with a pandemic while the pace of work has been steady or even busier than normal. What can I do as a supervisor to support my employees?

In June 2022, a survey group found that employees are more desirous of, and more productive with, a boss who is empathic, authentic, emotionally available, and willing to be flexible in responding to the needs of workers. Forbes has also written about this topic, labeling it “human leadership.” It’s hard to say if the pandemic contributed to a desire for employees to experience this type of leadership, or whether this need has always existed. Today’s employees might be more responsive to authority figures who are more in tune with their teams on these levels. We know supervisors play significant roles in facilitating employee engagement and that engaged employees are more productive—research shows them to be up to 27% more productive. Currently only 29% of employees report having a humanistic supervisor. Focusing on building human leadership skills could help improve employee engagement and satisfaction in the workplace.

Source: www.gartner.com [search “identifies human leadership evolution”]

What is the language specifically that I can use to encourage an employee to utilize the employee assistance program before I make a formal referral? What I am looking for is firm language that motivates the employee as a self-referral without me being demanding.

Success at motivating an employee to voluntarily use the EAP often depends on the nature of the personal problem. Problems associated with strong denial, enabling, and secrecy are not likely to seek out assistance on their own, but it does happen. For example, it is a myth that employees with serious drug or alcohol use disorders never self-refer. Certainly, their decision to get help is often preceded by a crisis that generates great urgency, but anyone who has worked in an addiction treatment program will tell you that it happens regularly. Here is a script that motivates most workers to use the EAP, and it is a firm approach: “John, I’m concerned about you and feel it is possible that a personal problem may be contributing to your impaired performance. The EAP is a great resource available to you and I would strongly encourage you to contact them for support [hand John a flyer or brochure]. I really hope you utilize the EAP but regardless, I will be meeting with you in [number of days/date] at [specific time] to consider the next step if there is no significant improvement with [job performance issue].”



My employee was recently treated for an alcohol use disorder and is back at work. Absenteeism was a serious issue in the past. The EAP was not involved because he went to treatment on his own. Can the EAP help with this now? We're a little worried about future absences.

If attendance problems are no longer an issue, a reason for a formal referral no longer exists, but you can still strongly recommend the EAP based on the circumstances. Recommend use of the EAP voluntarily as a means of ongoing support. There is a strong chance he will accept because employees new to recovery are both grateful and highly cooperative. With EAP participation, the professional will learn about the post-discharge treatment plan and more fully understand the scope of treatment and issues associated with it. Recovery and follow-through would be monitored. If your organizations policies allow for it, the EAP would encourage that a release be signed to provide limited information to you. The EAP would also be able to assess any obstacles or family matters that could undermine the recovery program. The upside will be less concern on your part if the employee calls in sick for a seasonal illness.

My employee mentioned in a casual conversation that she is being treated for depression by a psychiatrist. She added, "but don't worry about me, and don't think you need to alter my work schedule." We are entering our busy season. Should I make some adjustments and lighten her load anyway?

Although your employee mentioned her medical condition, there is no need to alter her workload because no accommodations have been requested. If such requests were made, it would be important to bring them to the attention of your human resources advisor so any appropriate administrative procedures could be followed in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Anytime an employee mentions a personal problem, even in

passing, it is an opportunity to suggest the EAP as a confidential, helpful resource. Even if an employee mentions treatment or being under the care of a medical doctor, the EAP can still be a resource.

The Montgomery County Public Schools Employee Assistance Program assists with workplace issues or personal challenges that may impact the well-being of employees and family members.

Working in partnership, the In-House EAP and the external EAP, Kepro, provide employees a confidential and comprehensive approach to identifying issues impacting the employee and assist them in developing meaningful solutions.

The MCPS In-House EAP services are available 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday – Friday year-round at 240.314.1040. Kepro EAP services are available 24/7/365 through its toll-free 866.496.9599 access line. Both options offer counseling and guidance to employees and family members. MCPS supervisors should contact the In-House EAP for workplace Consultations.

In-House EAP Phone: 1.240.314.1040

In- House

Website: www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/eap/

External EAP

Kepro Toll-Free: 1.866.496.9599

Website: www.EAPHelplink.com

Company Code: MCPS



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