

# FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

## Questions



Did the EAP fail to work if performance problems remained after the employee went to the program and cooperated with the EAP? What's next now that problems remain?



I've an employee who doesn't participate in any after-hour activities that the other employees attend. She's a great performer, but I tend to think more highly of employees who join in the fun. Should I inquire about why she doesn't join in? Maybe there's a personal problem.

## Answers



Not every employee referred to and seen by the EAP resolves personal problems or performance issues. Still, the EAP serves the valuable purpose of providing you with an alternative to tolerating or terminating troubled employees by offering them a resource with which to address their issues. Ideally, employees return to prior levels of performance or even better, but even if not, the Program still worked as a service for the employee and as a management tool for you. Decide on your next step. The EAP can't advise you about what that administrative response should be, but it can serve as your sounding board. Unless some agreement with your employee exists, nothing precludes making another Formal Referral. The EAP worked as intended, but employees are in control of whether they use its services and benefit from them.



Employees who don't participate in social activities are often judged harshly for what appears to be their avoidant or "antisocial" style by those who feel annoyed or rejected by their absence. More often than not, these employees aren't demonstrating struggles with work-life balance or mental health issues associated with social avoidance. Instead, they may have close and valued relationships away from work that more effectively meet their needs. Many dedicated workers don't see potential gains in undirected social activity. Some prefer closer, more intimate associations and are unmoved by peer pressure to join in other social opportunities. Some employees simply prefer their own company and the solitude of their creative thoughts. If her participation in social activities is important to you, try sharing how much you would personally like this employee to join you and the group. Emphasize the creativity or new ideas that often emerge in a less-pressured setting, and share how much others would value his or her company. This direct invitation may break the ice. However, since she's a great performer – which most supervisors want above all - consider reevaluating the importance of participating in after-hour activities when valuing employees' worth.

# Frontline Supervisor

## Questions



My employee argues with me in ways that I wouldn't have dreamt of when I was his age 25 years ago. What can I do about a disrespectful employee? Is this part of the "transformational" world we live in, or do I need to be more assertive?



I know the EAP is confidential, but when I attempted to refer my employee recently he resisted, saying that he didn't trust the program. I feel stuck with this excuse. How should I respond? Should I permit or recommend another source of assistance?



I referred my employee to the EAP for performance issues, but was asked, "What will the EAP do or say to me?" I know the EAP helps employees, but I couldn't be specific. I think the employee is worried about sharing too much with the EAP.

## Answers



Some things shouldn't change. One of them is respect and civility. Assert your authority with an employee who's disrespectful. Meet with your employee and list incidents that are unacceptable. State that those behaviors will incur consequences if they continue. If your employee claims that he isn't being disrespectful, you'll need to define the standards of behavior and expected change. The good news is that you'll probably be successful in correcting this behavior in one interview because most employees heed direct messages of this sort. The EAP can help, but don't let these behaviors continue too long before making a referral. Other issues may contribute to an inability to control this behavior, and the EAP can help sort them out.



As a supervisor, your role, of course, is to assure the work is done and done well. By referring to the EAP, you are offering your employee a resource to help him or her resolve whatever issues that are interfering with meeting work performance expectations. The EAP is there to help. Rather than accepting your employee's perspective, encourage him to review the [EAP website](#) for information about its confidentiality policies and operations, and to call with questions (877-313-4455.) Make it clear that regardless whether your employee takes advantage of the EAP or any other resource for help, improvement is required.



The EAP works with clients to help them with factors contributing to performance issues. It uses a protocol of assessment, short-term problem-solving, and referral to appropriate resources. An assessment is a dialogue between the client and the EA Professional in which the client shares whatever he or she thinks is relevant. EA Professionals ask questions that gather only necessary information: the client controls how much and what they share. For more information about the EAP, refer your employee to the [EAP website](#) or suggest they call.

## Notes: