

# FRONTLINE

**EAP.WA.GOV**

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

## Questions



Is it helpful for a supervisor to disclose that he or she is a client of the EAP, and even to offer an encouraging stand-up testimonial at a group orientation to support the EAP and encourage its use by employees?



One of my employees is facing a major personal crisis at home and desperately needs to speak to someone. I've suggested she contact the EAP, to speak with a professional counselor, but she isn't comfortable sharing her information with a stranger. How can I assure her that whatever she says to the EAP is kept confidential?

## Answers



There is no need to disclose your participation in an EAP as a way of encouraging employees to use the program. Some CEOs have made such announcements in larger public forums like EAP orientations, and it may be more impactful the higher up the manager is placed in the organization. However, there is no research that demonstrates such announcements improve utilization. More helpful to employees' likelihood of using an EAP is speaking positively about the program regularly and reminding employees about its confidentiality provisions. This word-of-mouth promotion works with any product or service. Frequently repeating a positive message about the EAP produces more results than a single, major announcement of acceptance by a key manager. Your office can also request an EAP orientation at your next all-staff meeting by emailing [eap-trainings@des.wa.gov](mailto:eap-trainings@des.wa.gov).



Trust is one the biggest issues that keeps many people from seeking help. Fortunately, the EAP and its staff are all bound by federal and state laws to maintain client confidentiality. This allows EAP clients the opportunity to freely talk about their situation to a professional, who may have resources/referral information the client needs. It also provides people the opportunity to express any frustrations they might have to another person, without any ramifications to the client's personal/work life. [Click here](#) to learn more about EAP and client confidentiality policy

# Frontline Supervisor

## Questions



I received an anonymous note stating that my employee was once again drinking after a referral to a treatment program. The employee is performing satisfactorily. Should I throw the note away as “unread”? Should anonymous notes be discarded?



I know supervisors should play a role in reducing stress, but my big fear is that the penalty for helping employees reduce stress is lower productivity. Isn't it a catch-22?



My boss wants me to deal with my “anger issues” and suggested anger management classes. I admit that under pressure I sometimes act like a hothead, but isn't my boss being an “armchair diagnostician” by saying that I have anger issues?

## Answers



Getting an anonymous note is a frustrating experience because you are usually stuck with information you can't act on. The subjects of anonymous notes often deal with coworkers, management practices, and safety issues. These secretly passed messages often are attempts to manipulate the supervisor. Although taking formal action with anonymous notes is ill-advised, they're not necessarily useless. If you're concerned about the contents of an anonymous note, then processing it with your manager is a smart move. You can also discuss its contents with the EAP. There are no absolute answers on what to do with anonymous notes. They are simply a reality of managing employees in the workplace and should be handled on a case-by-case basis and scrutinized as to their underlying purpose.



Many supervisors fear that if they are proactive in helping employees deal with stress, everyone in the workplace will slow down, thereby harming productivity. According to the 2016 Work and Well-Being Survey released in June by the American Psychological Association, the five most stressful problems facing employees are long hours, low pay, lack of opportunity for growth and advancement, too heavy a workload, and unrealistic job expectations. The survey shows that at least 40%-50% of employees report either “very significant stress” or “somewhat significant stress” associated with these factors. Supervisors obviously have varying degrees of control, but simply by talking with your employees, you will discover ways to reduce their stress but not their productivity. In fact, reducing employee stress is more likely to increase productivity!



Your boss can see and experience your anger. This makes it an observable and legitimate problem for him or her to address. As with absenteeism and disorganization, angry behavior that is disruptive can be quantified by the number of incidents and its effect on others. So your boss is not acting as an armchair diagnostician with such a statement. However, interpreting the cause of your anger, suggesting the type of counseling needed, or making a decision that you need anger management training instead of the EAP, would all be examples of acting as an armchair diagnostician. Anger management counseling helps a person gain control over his or her reaction to feeling irritated and annoyed. You can always contact the EAP to speak with a counselor, who can lead you to the right form of help.