TIPS FOR SUPERVISORS

IDENTIFYING AND ASSISTING TROUBLED EMPLOYEES

WorkLife Programs Employee Assistance is designed to aid staff members in seeking professional assistance to resolve employee problems. Early intervention prevents the problem from having a permanent impact on the employee’s job performance. Employee Assistance is a resource for supervisors to help retain valued employees, who with proper help can regain full productivity.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to become involved. Supervisors have a legitimate right to intervene when an employee’s behavior is interfering with job performance.

GUIDELINES

1. **Establish objective** levels of work performance. For example: John Doe is expected to keep the kitchen dish area clean.

2. **Measure, evaluate and record** job performance. Specific, behavioral criteria are necessary. For example: John Doe will wash all dishes and sweep the floor.

3. **Be consistent** in your expectations of employees. For example: All employees with this classification will complete these tasks within the work day.

4. **Prompt feedback** to employees to communicate dissatisfaction and to seek solutions.

5. **Focus on performance; be specific**: “John I noticed that you did not sweep today.”

6. **Be firm**: Offer the staff member assistance. Avoid being an “armchair psychologist.” For example: 
   **Supervisor**: “John I have noticed that you walked off the job today before the dishes were clean. This is the third time this week that you have done that. Are you having a problem which interferes with your getting the job done? If you are, we have an EAP who will help you. You can contact them yourself, or I will help you. You don’t have to go to the EAP; however you do have to improve this problem.”

7. **Be honest**, speak with authority. **Supervisor**: “I value you as a person, however I expect you to complete your job duties of washing all the dishes and sweeping the floor.”

8. **Prepare** to cope with resistance, denial, defensiveness, and even hostility. **John**: “You are always picking on me.” “It’s not my fault; Mary won’t give me the dishes and then leaves me with a mess.” **Supervisor**: “It may seem that I am picking on you; however, I need to know if you are having a problem that is getting in the way of getting your job done. No matter what Mary does, it is still your responsibility to wash the dishes and sweep the floor.”

9. **Get the employee to accept responsibility** for making behavioral changes in job performance. 
   **Supervisor**: “I want to clarify that it is your responsibility to get the dishes washed and sweep the floor. You can get help at Employee Assistance with any personal problems you have.” **John**: “I don’t need Employee Assistance, just because Mary won’t give me the dishes!” **Supervisor**: “Going to Employee Assistance is your choice, but Mary’s job performance is my responsibility.”

10. **Get a commitment from the employee to improve specific behaviors**: **Supervisor**: “Here is a list of your job expectations, I will give you a copy and I will keep one. Do we have an agreement?”

11. **Follow-up**: Meet with employee after a specified amount of time. **Supervisor**: “We will meet next Friday to review your progress.”