COMMON SUPERVISOR PITFALLS

Supervisors working with troubled employees are sometimes reluctant to involve the WorkLife Programs Employee Assistance Program. Using Employee Assistance as a resource can reduce supervisor anxiety and improve productivity as well as the general work environment. Listed below are some common pitfalls.

1. OVERLY PROTECTIVE SUPERVISOR
   Sometimes supervisors think that referring someone to Employee Assistance may label the employee as a problem. The purpose of Employee Assistance is to help employees function better at work. The supervisor is often the first person who notices an employee with problems. Supervisors who offer Employee Assistance to their workers show that they care about the well-being of their employees.

2. GOOD WORKER
   Some supervisors shield employees because of past work performance. The supervisor think he/she could lose a “good worker” if a referral is made to Employee Assistance. These attitudes are unrealistic and unfair to the employee. Our common goal is to retain and support good employees.

3. “IT’S MY PROBLEM, ‘I’LL SOLVE IT”
   Some supervisors believe it is their responsibility to handle and correct all problems in their area. Individuals with this perspective may view making an Employee Assistance contact as an admission of personal failure. This can result in a needless delay in getting an employee help. Supervisors should consider the financial cost to the University, as well as the personal liability they undertake by supporting an impaired employee.

4. THE TIME EXCUSE
   A supervisor may hope a problem will work itself out given enough time. In the case of a temporary crisis that may be true. However, delaying a referral may increase the severity of some problems including depression, anxiety and alcohol or drug abuse.

5. FEAR OF MAKING A MISTAKE
   Supervisors who are uncertain about the source of a performance problem may fail to take action. Employee Assistance can be helpful in planning a course of action. If you need help with a particular case, call WorkLife Programs Employee Assistance at 494-5461.

6. STEREOTYPES
   Commonly held beliefs about alcoholism and mental illness make supervisors reluctant to refer an employee for help. The stigma regarding these medical conditions can be overcome by education. Employee Assistance counselors are licensed mental health practitioners and can assess the problem, make referrals as necessary and educate employees about mental health issues.

7. SUPERVISOR’S OWN PROBLEMS
   Supervisor’s may experience similar problems to those confronting employees. A supervisor with personal problems may be uncomfortable making a referral to Employee Assistance.