

When and How to Refer an Employee to Your EAP

It's not always easy to know when to step in—but timely support can make all the difference to an employee who's struggling. As a leader, your approach matters. This guide offers practical tips to help you navigate difficult conversations and refer employees to your EAP.



Responding Effectively in Challenging Situations: As a manager or supervisor, you may need to speak with an employee whose personal or work issues are affecting their performance. These conversations can be challenging, so it's important to approach them with empathy and a focus on support. Referring the employee to your EAP (Employee Assistance Program) can be a helpful step when appropriate.

Step in Early: Don't wait for a problem to escalate. Early intervention shows you care and can help prevent ongoing performance issues. Raise your concerns based on observed behaviour, and avoid making assumptions about what might be going on. Keep questions respectful and non-intrusive.

Observe Changes: Look out for signs such as changes in appearance, absenteeism, reduced productivity, mood shifts, or interpersonal conflict. If you notice something is off, check in privately and ask if everything is okay.

Listen to Understand: If an employee seems frustrated, withdrawn or upset, focus on understanding their perspective before discussing solutions. Active listening can help build trust and encourage openness.

Foster Conversation: Opening the door to talk—without pressure—can be a significant step forward for someone struggling. Be approachable, supportive, and let them know you're available if they need to talk.

Respect Confidentiality: If an employee shares something personal, reassure them that their information will be treated confidentially. You're not expected to solve their problems—avoid giving personal advice, especially around finances or relationships.

Offer Flexibility: Mental health challenges can affect concentration, energy, and focus. Where possible, consider simple adjustments to help employees stay engaged and productive.

Encourage EAP Support: Let the employee know that your EAP is a free and confidential service, and that using it is entirely their choice. If they prefer you to call and make an appointment on their behalf, they must be present to confirm their consent with your EAP customer support team.

Formal Referrals Manager-Initiated: Sometimes a formal referral to counselling is needed to address issues like poor performance or inappropriate conduct. Set clear goals with the employee—these will guide the sessions. Personal matters stay confidential, and any feedback you receive will relate only to progress on the agreed goals.

Support for Managers: You don't have to manage these situations alone. The AWS Manager Support Line is a confidential service that provides guidance on how to support staff wellbeing, including how to refer someone to your EAP.

To book an appointment with one of our counsellors, call or scan the QR Code



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