



THE EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE MANAGER/SUPERVISOR NEWSLETTER



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

NOV.
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About the Employee Advisory Service (EAS)

*Life Can Be Hectic. EAS Can
Help You Find Your Balance.*

EAS is always available to you and your household members. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact EAS by calling the Helpline.

November Manager/Supervisor Webinar

*How to Respond Effectively
to Difficult Employees*

This session will share valuable insights into the mindsets of difficult to manage individuals, and provide several practical considerations and strategies for effectively interacting with them. The topics covered will include how to manage your own stress response, ways to stay positive during challenging conversations, and proactive approaches to dealing with difficult employees over the long-term.

Wednesday, November 29th
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Register here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/798926426047190275>

Take a Free Mental Health Screening

Stressed?

Take a free anonymous mental health screening at:

<http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/NJEAS>

Phone: 866-327-9133
Web: www.state.nj.us/csc
Email: EAS_help@csc.nj.gov

Managing Employee Stress



Stress—physical, mental, and emotional wear and tear—is a health risk and a serious hazard in the workplace. Employee stress can take many forms and have a significant impact on both individuals and organizations. It can manifest as anxiety, aggression, irritability, dependency, withdrawal, or depression. Regardless of the form it takes, stress results in reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, employee burnout, high turnover, increased medical expenses, health insurance costs, and stress-related compensation claims.

Work to Counter Stress

It is important for companies and their managers to begin to treat workplace stress like any other work-related health hazard by taking an active stance to prevent and manage it. Simply dealing with the symptoms of stress when they arise isn't enough. It is most important to address the causes.

The first step is identifying sources of stress in your organization. Possible stressors include high workloads, organizational changes, lack of employee control, the organization's culture and operating style, emphasis on competition, fears of job loss, increased technology, and the push for multitasking. The best ways to gauge the sources of stress are to observe trends during high stress periods, and to speak with employees.

Once you have identified your workplace stressors, you can take steps to alter or eliminate those elements.

- Review and work to change policies, procedures, and practices that undermine employees' personal power, sense of control, or motivation.
- Make changes in the work environment that increase employee involvement and give them as much control as possible over their tasks. Involve them in setting goals, making decisions, and solving problems.
- Adopt new cultural and communication styles that encourage open sharing of ideas and that avoid misperceptions.
- Make sure employees are clear about expectations, what tasks and activities take priority, and why.
- Keep employees apprised of changes and how those changes will affect their work in both the long and short term.
- Supply employees with the resources needed to get the job done.
- Consider physical changes in the work environment to make it more comfortable and user-friendly.

Building Stress Resilience

Helping employees learn to cope with personal stress, to balance their home and work lives, and to build stress resistance can benefit everyone.

There is evidence that strong stress management skills result in improved ability to cope with work pressures. Consider helping employees by doing the following things:

- Offer training programs that teach stress management techniques, relaxation, time management, positive thinking, and assertiveness.
- Institute flexible work schedule or telecommuting options if possible.
- Be flexible, within reason, in allowing employees to take time away from work to deal with personal and family issues. Unresolved personal, health, and family problems are a considerable source of stress.
- Consider providing a relaxation space in your workplace.
- Be aware of yourself as a role model. Try to demonstrate good coping and stress reduction behaviors.
- Encourage and support employee self-care efforts by promoting the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle and the building and use of solid support systems. This might include the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other benefits.

Be aware of the danger signals of acute stress.

Chronic anxiety, apathy, feelings of hopelessness, withdrawal, alcohol or drug problems, or depression all can indicate the need for immediate help. When an employee is in acute stress, the situation may warrant a call by the manager to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or the company's medical department, if applicable, to decide how best to proceed. (Some signs of acute stress can also be signs of serious health problems which might require immediate medical help.) You may need to insist on a referral to your employee assistance program and even help the employee contact the EAP office. If you are unsure of how to deal with an employee who appears to be in acute stress, seek help from the EAP.

All organizations will have some degree of stress among their employees. Stress is a part of life. The keys are in seeking solutions that target the sources of workplace stress, and teaching people to cope with those personal and professional stressors that are inevitable. Offer your employees a variety of stress prevention and management techniques. Doing so will benefit your employees and your organization.

Source: Workplace Options. (Reviewed 2017). Managing employee stress. Raleigh, NC: Author.

Ask EAS!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making referrals to EAS. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to EAS for a management consultation.

Q. EAS notified me that an employee I referred is not following through with its recommendations. The employee signed a release, but there are no disciplinary issues. Is there any reason to meet with the employee, even though I can't discuss the personal problem?

A. Yes. Sit down with your employee. Explain that you are in this meeting not to discuss any personal business related to the EAS referral, but to address the performance or conduct matter that led to the referral in the first place. Your expectation is the resolution of that problem or concern regardless of follow-through at EAS. Let your employee know what the consequences are for a continuation of the problem, and encourage him or her to reconsider participation in the EAS along with its recommendations. Follow up and meet with your employee in the weeks ahead to reinforce any successful work performance or address any return to the performance issue. Whether you refer to EAS again (if problems return) would be up to you, but talk with EAS if that happens.

Q. My employee is in pain when he bends over or gets out of a chair. We avoid giving additional assignments to him. This is a medical issue, so is an EAS referral appropriate? My assistant has a great arthritis doctor, and we were thinking about giving this employee the physician's phone number.

A. There are several reasons to consider recommending that your employee visit with EAS. These include the EAS providing help with ancillary problems associated with the condition and the workplace, relationship stress in the office, secondary problems the condition has created at home, a need for general support, pursuing ideas the employee may have to help cope with the condition at work (special accommodations, etc.), and other problems still unknown. A good medical practitioner may be needed, of course. Provide this information to the EAS, which will pass it along. The EAS will follow up, offer encouragement, connect with referral sources, and provide ongoing services to help ensure effective treatment or resolution of other problems. This is a good example of how EAS can help employees with problems that at first glance may not appear to benefit from help through the Employee Advisory Service.

Q. I am feeling burned out. I am exhausted, apathetic, and frustrated. Should I go to my boss first or visit the EAS for answers on how to get out of this state of mind?

A. Whether you approach your boss or the EAS is your decision, but here is how EAS can help: 1) Assess the degree to which burnout is affecting your physical health (a medical referral may follow). 2) Identify the ways in which burnout has affected your work-life balance, with the goal of planning a return-to-wellness strategy, particularly with regard to depression. 3) Offer suggestions for intervention strategies outside of work that can help you return to a more fully functioning state of engagement with your organization. 4) Help you examine on-the-job interventions, some of which may require discussion with your boss in order to implement them. 5) Follow up with you to facilitate, monitor, and help you implement your return-to-wellness plan.

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