

QA We have an employee who has been sober for many years. He has no performance issues but previously used the EAP/PAP. He has shared that his doctor is recommending marijuana to help with insomnia and depression. I am concerned about the risk of relapse. Should I contact the EAP/PAP?

Yes. Your first step should be to contact the EAP or PAP to confidentially discuss your concerns. How you proceed will depend on whether the position is safety-sensitive and on your organization's policies regarding marijuana use, disclosure, and impairment at work. If appropriate under company policy, you may also need to have a conversation with the employee about expectations related to substance use, workplace safety, and performance. As always, continue to monitor attendance, conduct, and work performance just as you would with any employee. Since there are no current performance issues, your role is limited to consultation and observation rather than intervention. This is where the EAP/PAP is especially helpful. While the EAP/PAP cannot reach out to the employee without his consent, you may consider encouraging him to reconnect with the EAP/PAP so he can discuss this decision in a confidential and supportive setting. Your concern is reasonable. For individuals in long-term recovery, the use of psychoactive substances can increase the risk of relapse even when job performance appears stable. Consulting with the EAP/PAP helps you respond appropriately, stay aligned with policy, and support both workplace safety and employee well-being.

QA If I call the EAP/PAP to consult about an employee's situation, is that conversation confidential even though I'm not an EAP/PAP client?

Yes. Your consultation with an EAP or PAP professional is confidential. These conversations are encouraged and are especially helpful before making a referral. A pre-referral consult allows you to discuss performance concerns, workplace behaviors, and next steps without breaching employee privacy. Consulting with the EAP/PAP ahead of time helps you understand how the referral process works, what communication to expect, and how to approach the employee effectively. It also reduces uncertainty about follow-up and timing, so you are not left wondering what happens next. In many cases, EAP/PAP consultation provides coaching and practical strategies that help supervisors address performance issues early and successfully. Sometimes, that guidance alone resolves the concern and a formal referral is not needed. Calling the EAP/PAP for guidance is always appropriate and confidential.

QA I feel guilty considering disciplinary action for an employee with ongoing performance issues when they're also working with the EAP/PAP on personal problems. Being told to "just focus on performance" doesn't make that any easier.

This is a very common and understandable concern. EAPs and PAPs serve two important purposes. They provide compassionate, confidential support to employees while also helping organizations maintain performance and productivity. These goals are not in conflict. While the EAP/PAP supports the employee, it remains the employee's responsibility to meet job expectations. Empathy is a strength in supervision, but it does not require lowering performance standards. Sometimes discipline is viewed as punitive rather than supportive, which can make supervisors hesitant to act. In reality, clear expectations, timely feedback, and appropriate consequences often provide structure that helps employees succeed. If you are unsure about next steps, consult with the EAP/PAP and HR to review whether you have provided adequate support, such as clear communication, coaching, or a performance improvement plan. Doing so can help you move forward with confidence, knowing you have acted fairly, compassionately, and in the best interest of both the employee and the organization.

Q A I tend to be too lenient with rule violations, tardiness, and poor performance because I want to avoid tension and conflict. Can the EAP or PAP really help me be more assertive when it's such a short-term service??

Yes. The EAP/PAP can be very effective in helping supervisors build confidence and assertiveness, even in a short period of time. When you begin setting firmer expectations, some resistance from employees is normal, especially if they are used to a more lenient style. That reaction does not mean you are doing something wrong. EAPs and PAPs specialize in brief, solution-focused counseling. Rather than long-term therapy, the focus is on practical skill-building. You may work with the EAP/PAP on specific actions, such as addressing tardiness promptly and calmly within a set timeframe, and then reviewing how it went. The EAP/PAP can also help you practice difficult conversations through role-play and reflection. This allows you to examine what you said, how you felt during the conversation, and how the outcome compared to what you expected. Many supervisors find that their confidence and effectiveness improve noticeably within just a few sessions. With guidance and practice, you can shift your supervisory style in a way that reduces anxiety, strengthens accountability, and improves overall workplace clarity and fairness. Assertiveness is a skill that can be learned quickly with the right support.

Q A An employee's negative attitude is clearly a performance issue, but it can be hard to describe because it feels subjective. How can I document it effectively??

You are right that attitude can be difficult to document if it is described too generally. Vague statements leave room for disagreement and can weaken your message. The key is to focus on specific, observable behavior rather than personal interpretation. A simple two-step approach can help. First, clearly name the attitude you are observing, such as pessimism, rudeness, disengagement, sarcasm, resistance, or entitlement. Second, describe the exact words, actions, or tone that demonstrate that attitude. For example:

- Judy demonstrates a pattern of pessimism. She frequently makes statements such as, 'This will never work,' or 'Good going, genius, now we'll never meet the deadline.'
- Bill demonstrates an attitude of entitlement. He stated to the team, 'You are all wasting my time. This is not what I was hired to do.'

Whenever possible, include the impact on coworkers, customers, or team outcomes. This strengthens documentation and keeps the focus on how the behavior affects the workplace, not on the employee's personality. Clear, specific documentation helps employees understand expectations and supports fair, effective performance management. Document what you hear and see, not what you think or feel.

Continued EAP/PAP Challenge for the top Supervisors, Managers, and HR Professionals:

Your organization has received new EAP/PAP brochures with a Company Passcode to access **My Stress Tools** – a new suite of helpful tools on our website to manage stress. **Your homework:** (1) Go to the EAP website either by scanning the QR code on the new brochure or going to <https://eapacific.com/employees/my-stress-tools.html> and **Register** for My Stress Tools (call our office if you need your organization's Passcode, or it is on the new brochure); (2) **Take the Stress Profiler** and discover what small thing(s) you could do to reduce your stress this year; (3) **Start** doing that; and (4) **Promote** this to your employees so they reduce their stress and burnout and have a better year!