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Using the EAP

The Family Service, Inc. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential counseling and referral service to help you and your employees balance the demands of home and work.

Call for help with:

- Family/marital problems, substance abuse, parent/child problems, stress/anxiety, depression, coping with illness.
- Counseling and referral for employees and family members (locations in Merrimack Valley and Southern NH)
- Information and referrals for legal, financial and other support services.
- 24 hour a day, 7 days a week crisis support.

Contact us by calling
1-800-683-9544

Or visit
FamilyServiceInc.com/EAP

FLU PREPAREDNESS

With flu season approaching, the addition of H1N1 flu has the potential to create problems in the workplace, including increased absenteeism, employee stress, and possible work closures. It is yet unclear how severe the H1N1 virus will be this fall and winter, so it is important that every workplace have a flexible plan to respond in any eventuality.

In addition to having a plan of action, one of the most important actions an employer can take is to encourage sick employees to stay home or leave work if they become sick. The CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F) without the use of fever-reducing medications. In busy workplaces, employees often feel pressure to come into work even if they are sick, but it is important for everyone to be aware that this can cause many



more problems due to increased levels of transmission of the flu virus.

Employees may be experiencing fears about H1N1, and they may be questioning whether to vaccinate themselves and their children. Employees can access information that may ease their fears and help them decide whether vaccination is right for them. www.flu.gov is a helpful

website.

There are many resources for businesses to access for help with preparing for H1N1 and seasonal flu:

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/

www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/pandemicflu/index

www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/h1n1flu/

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

As with flu preparedness, the most important action an employer can take to deal with Workplace Violence is to have a plan. Every workplace needs to have a written plan to prevent and respond to workplace violence.

Often, when we think of workplace violence, we think of stories we see on the news about an employee entering his or her current or former workplace and physically harming or killing coworkers. However, these types of

incidents, while more high profile, are relatively rare. According to ASIS International, workplace violence can be categorized into four types:

- Type 1: The perpetrator commits a violent

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act at a worksite in the context of committing another crime.

- Type 2: The perpetrator has a relationship with the business, as a client, customer, or patient and becomes violent while receiving services from the business.
- Type 3: A current or former employee harms or threatens to harm another employee.
- Type 4: The perpetrator has a personal relationship with the employee and the violent incident takes place in the workplace.

There are many reasons for businesses to be actively working to prevent workplace violence. Workplace violence is costly to businesses, not only financially, but also in terms of morale and productivity. In addition, employers are obligated by law to maintain a safe working environment. Unfortunately, not all incidents of workplace violence can be prevented, but many can be if an employer takes an active role in managing the risk.

It is important that managers and employers have a basic awareness of warning signs for potential violence. While there is no one predictor that can signal whether someone will become violent, there are some warning signs that can alert management to problems that may require investigation and/or intervention. These warning signs often coincide with job performance problems and are as follows:

- Threats or excessive angry outbursts.
- A history of threats or violence.
- Fascination with weapons or violent events.
- Verbal abuse of coworkers and/or customers.
- Behaving in a bizarre fashion.
- Blaming others, holding grudges, difficulty accepting and handling criticism.
- Chronically complaining about injustice, persecution.
- Joking about violent acts.

Domestic violence can also become a workplace issue. The abusive partner can seek the employee out in the workplace, harassing, threatening, or even physically harming the employee at work. If you suspect that an employee is the victim of domestic violence, it is important to address the issue, while maintaining the employee's right to privacy. Here are some ways to assist the employee:

- Refer the employee to the EAP.
- Find out if the employee has sought a restraining order.
- Work with the employee to provide time off to work with the legal system.
- Modify the employee's work space to decrease the chance that the abuser can access it.

While maintaining the employee's privacy as much as possible, inform other employees so they can block calls or keep the abuser out of the workplace.

There are many resources available to assist you in preventing violence in the workplace. The EAP can be a valuable source of information, so if you have any concerns about violence in the workplace, give us a call.

Other resources include:

- "Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Guideline," from ASIS International, www.asisonline.org/guidelines/guidelineswvpvfinal.pdf
- "Violence on the Job," a free DVD disseminated by the CDC, can be found at: www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/video/violence.

USING THE CORRECTIVE LETTER

There are many methods supervisors use to change employees' behavior and increase productivity, from verbal communication up to disciplinary action. A method that can be highly effective in managing employees' inappropriate behavior or productivity is the corrective letter. The corrective letter is a measure to use when disciplinary action is not yet necessary, but changes do need to be made.

An effective corrective letter states the problem and the reasons that the employee's behavior negatively affects the workplace. In the letter, reference any previous conversations you have had with the employee about the problem. Remember to note any positives about the employee's work, and when doing so, provide an incentive for the employee if their behavior or performance improves. For example, you can simply state that there may be exciting opportunities for them in the future.

In addition to providing a possible reward, include the consequences that may occur if improvements are not made. State expectations of the employee clearly, and make plans to meet in a set period of time to discuss whether the employee is meeting expectations.

Finally, use the letter to remind the employee that the EAP is available to them if personal problems are contributing to the problem, and provide the phone number to the EAP.

The corrective letter is an important tool in documenting and communicating expectations with employees. If you have any questions about writing a corrective letter, please feel free to call the EAP.

