

Identifying Troubled Employees

A Supervisor's Tip Sheet



It is a supervisor's job to ensure that the staff is working up to its capacity. This starts with a manager learning how to determine who needs help and what kind of help is needed.

Marginal Performance

If the performance of an employee is marginal, then find out why. Reasons may include confusion about expectations, lack of skills or knowledge, the worker's sense of being overqualified and under-challenged, lack of commitment, confusing goals, co-worker tensions, or ineffective systems. After identifying the sources of discontent, work to resolve the situation and give positive feedback if work performance improves.

Personal Problems

An employee's job can suffer because of personal worries. There may be marital problems, difficulties with children or financial problems. Job-related stress and workplace conflicts can also cause noticeable changes in an employee.

Employees abusing drugs or alcohol will eventually do poor work. Some early clues for

abuse might include lack of alertness, diminished coordination or impaired judgment and decision-making. Other signs are memory lapses, mood swings, anger, apathy, inability to stay on task, abuse of break times, avoidance of co-workers, absenteeism, tardiness, procrastination, inattention to details and extreme sensitivity to criticism.

When To Step In

Be a good observer. If there is a decline in performance and you suspect personal problems are contributing to that decline, then it is time to step in.

Proceed quickly before the problem magnifies. Start with an informal talk about the declining job performance. Give specific examples of changes that have occurred, such as diminished alertness or increased absenteeism. *Don't try to diagnose the problem.* Instead, document your conversation and refer the employee to the *Work 'n Life Matters* program. Assure the employee that their participation is confidential. Obtaining help is the employee's choice, but doing inadequate work is not.

If the employee's work fails to improve, consult with your Human Resources representative or *Work 'n Life Matters* specialist if you are going to start corrective action. The HR staff will help you proceed according to company policy. It is important to be fair and consistent in treating the employee and in accurately documenting important information. Continue to follow up on the problem until there is some resolution.

When The Employee Seeks Help

Give support to any employee who accepts help. If the employee requests release time during work hours and that request is granted, give assurance that the absence will remain confidential. Ask if help is needed with sick leave, personal leave or Family Medical Leave Act.

Throughout the process of supporting your staff in working up to its capacity, consult, consult, consult, H.R. and *Work 'n Life Matters* staff are here to help.

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To contact a *Work 'n Life Matters* specialist, call 310/423-6447 or 800/319-8111

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