

Can the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) draft corrective or referral letters for supervisors to help motivate employees to use the EAP when performance concerns require a formal referral?

The EAP does not draft disciplinary, corrective, or performance-related documentation on a supervisor's behalf. Preparing performance documentation is a core supervisory responsibility and is typically completed in consultation with human resources. That said, the EAP can provide valuable consultative support. EAP professionals can offer guidance on effective documentation practices—such as focusing on observable behaviors, using clear and neutral language, organizing information logically, and ensuring expectations and consequences are well defined. This coaching can help supervisors communicate concerns more clearly and consistently, which often leads to better employee understanding and receptiveness. By remaining in a consultative role rather than authoring corrective documents, the EAP preserves its credibility as a supportive and confidential resource. This separation helps prevent the EAP from being perceived as disciplinary or adversarial, increasing the likelihood that employees will accept formal referrals, engage with EAP services, and use the support to improve performance and overall well-being.

I don't want my employees to be overly stressed, but I have limited control over current workplace demands. Stress isn't new, but is there something different today about its impact—and the risk of complaints against employers?

Yes. While workplace stress has always existed, its nature, intensity, and legal implications have changed. Today, stress is no longer viewed solely as an individual coping issue; it is increasingly recognized as an organizational risk factor. Regulatory agencies, including the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, report a rise in complaints where chronic stress, workload pressure, and unmanaged workplace conditions intersect with claims of harassment, discrimination, or failure to accommodate. Much of this risk stems from workplaces struggling to adapt to rapid changes in how, where, and how much people work. As a result, the roles of supervisors and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) have never been more critical. The good news is that stress-related complaints rarely come out of nowhere. Early warning signs often appear long before formal issues arise. These may include irritability, frequent yawning or fatigue, skipping breaks, eating at one's desk, working excessive hours, headaches, increased tardiness, or disengagement. Supervisors can reduce risk—and support employees—by being proactive rather than reactive. Simple, evidence-based practices make a difference:

- Encourage and model brief breaks, even five minutes at a time.
- Hold short (10–15 minute) team huddles to share updates, recognize wins, and build connection.
- Use informal “stress temperature checks” by asking teams how they're doing and what support would help.
- Regularly remind employees about the EAP and clearly reinforce its confidentiality.

Most importantly, avoid supervisory behaviors that increase risk: ignoring warning signs, allowing excessive or unmanageable workloads, failing to provide reasonable support, or relying on high-pressure or fear-based management tactics. Consistent, visible support—combined with early EAP engagement—can significantly reduce stress, improve morale, and lower the likelihood of complaints.

I'm often told I'm a micromanager. I check in frequently after delegating work, but I don't see that as micromanaging. What am I missing?

Micromanaging isn't just about what you do—it's about how it's experienced. When supervisors frequently insert themselves into delegated work, it can unintentionally signal a lack of trust and reduce team confidence, even when the intent is support. Delegation is harder than it looks. True delegation means allowing a *(continued)*

(continued) team to work independently, with the quality of the final product speaking for itself. When outcomes fall short, learning happens, often more effectively than when corrections are made midstream. Frequent checking is often a response to a supervisor's own anxiety—concern that mistakes will reflect poorly on leadership or lead to loss of control. Over time, this “checking in” can undermine productivity rather than improve it. Continue practicing delegation, set clear expectations up front, and resist the urge to intervene unless it's truly necessary. The EAP can help supervisors identify patterns that get in the way of effective leadership and build confidence in letting go. Strong delegation leads to stronger teams—and higher productivity.

I referred an employee to the EAP and their attitude improved, so I assumed everything was fine. Why is follow-up still so important?

An EAP referral is not a one-time fix. Follow-up reinforces accountability and keeps workplace expectations clear after the referral. Without it, urgency fades and old patterns can quietly return. When supervisors check in, monitor performance, and stay engaged, employees are more likely to follow through on EAP recommendations and sustain improvement. Successful EAP outcomes depend on this paired oversight—support from the EAP combined with consistent managerial follow-up. Staying visibly engaged after the referral helps prevent setbacks and reduces the risk of future crises.

An employee returned after treatment for alcohol use disorder, and coworkers invited him to a bar as if he were “cured.” Should I correct or educate the group?

Not automatically. A key part of recovery is learning to navigate these situations independently—such as declining invitations or suggesting alternatives. Many similar situations will occur outside a supervisor's awareness. Before intervening, consider the context. Was the invitation well-intended, uninformed, or meant to undermine the employee's recovery? That distinction matters. In small or close-knit teams, a quiet, respectful conversation may be appropriate if you believe coworkers were simply unaware. Your primary responsibility is to ensure a supportive, nondiscriminatory workplace and a smooth return to work. If the employee raises concerns or feels pressured, that provides a clear reason for managerial action.

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

Your organization has received new EAP 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>;
- (2) Register for My Stress Tools (call us if you need your organization's Passcode, it's also on the new brochure);
- (3) Take the Stress Profiler and discover what small thing(s) you could do to reduce your stress this year;
- (4) Start doing that; and
- (5) Promote this to your employees so they reduce their stress and burnout and have a better year!

Your stressed employees probably won't do much if you don't believe it will help. Using **one small free tool** to reduce YOUR stress will help them be much more likely to take advantage of your experience and recommendations!



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