



PATHWAYS

May 2025

The Newsletter of the BOCES Employee Assistance Program Supervisors

■ I suggested to one of my employees they should contact the EAP for help with a performance problem. Although they initially agreed, they appear to have changed their mind, and the issue at work remains unresolved. The EAP is highly trusted, what would be the most likely explanation?

There could be many reasons for the employee's loss of motivation. It appears your direct conversation sparked a willingness to act, it is also possible they agreed in the moment just to please you and to avoid any deeper confrontation—especially if they are feeling exposed or uncomfortable with a personal problem they did not want discovered. Once the meeting ends, the motivation to follow through often fades even if it was sincere. Suggest an employee make the call from your office when making a referral because the momentum of your discussion is fresh. It might feel awkward, but the phone call will improve the chances of follow-through. It reduces the risk of an employee's problems getting worse, which could be costly. This phone-now approach helps overcome second thoughts, helping the employee accept using the EAP, seeing it as a strength, not a weakness or cause for shame. However, keep in mind confidentiality and suggest limiting the conversation to scheduling and appointment. Then follow through to get a release to confirm if the appointment was honored.

■ I believe an employee may have relapsed following treatment for an alcohol use disorder. While I don't have direct evidence, my concerns are based on past incidents and a longstanding working relationship. What is the appropriate way to address this situation?

The short answer is stay steady, neutral, and focused on workplace impact. Given your knowledge of the relapse and your history with this employee, it's critical to take a professional approach with boundaries in mind. Even if your instincts are correct, focus only on what is verifiable. Do not confront the employee about the relapse directly unless it has impacted performance or behavior, or violated a workplace policy. Instead, contact your EAP and explain the situation. Even without an active release form, the EAP professional can advise you in general terms about how to proceed. If the relapse has affected workplace conduct or performance, document those changes and address them. Discuss your observations. The EAP professional will help you articulate what is quantifiable for documentation. Avoid personal commentary or raising past grievances with your employee. Let the EAP and organization policies guide your next steps.

■ I have an employee who is reportedly sabotaging others—like withholding key info, giving vague instructions, or taking credit for others' work. I haven't seen these behaviors personally, how can I say something and get the benefits of confrontation without being accusatory?

When you haven't personally observed the behavior, the key is to address the impact without framing it as an accusation. Focus on what you *do* know—specific outcomes or disruptions. Use neutral, factual language to open the conversation. For example: "I've heard of a few situations where teammates weren't given complete information, it created delays. Can you help me understand what happened?" Notice how this approach keeps your tone professional and curious rather than confrontational. Your goal is to raise awareness and give the employee a chance to explain, correct, or

clarify. At the same time, take the opportunity to reinforce clear expectations around communication, collaboration, and accountability with the entire team. This is important. If the pattern continues, escalate appropriately by involving HR in guiding your next steps or initiating a performance improvement process. This early intervention approach with its focus on outcomes, not accusations, involves communicating in a concerned tone may prevent the behavior from continuing.

■ **I am concerned about two people in our office distracting others and interfering with productivity because of their romantic relationship. How do I handle this with tact?**

Handling this matter is important, as you indicate, it must be done with respect and sensitivity. Your goal is to protect workplace productivity while maintaining the dignity of the couple and gaining their cooperation. Stay professional. Begin by meeting with the two employees and reminding them how important it is to maintain a professional environment—this means keeping their personal relationship separate from work. This is not something you need to negotiate, your approach should still foster cooperation and align with the needs of the office. You're still the supervisor, and while the issue is sensitive, it's ultimately about behavior and conduct. Be clear in communicating boundaries and defining what you consider acceptable workplace behavior. Talk with them about ways to reduce the impact of their relationship on others in the office. After the meeting, continue to monitor their behavior, simply noting whether it stays appropriate and in line with your expectations.

■ **An employee recently asked to borrow \$500. I didn't show surprise or make them feel uncomfortable, but internally, I was caught off guard. I referred them to the EAP, knowing they were likely dealing with something serious. A part of me wanted to give them the money, knowing they were in crisis and this made it hard to say no.**

You made the right decision. Unfortunately, when an employee turns to their supervisor for a loan, it often means they've run out of others to turn to—family, friends, or even payday lenders. Merely asking signals a serious financial issue and is almost always related to another problem. This could be a substance use disorder, gambling, or threats from another lender to whom the employee owes money. The \$500 requested is likely just a portion of the total amount the employee needs, and it's possible they may approach others for additional assistance to meet the full financial burden. way to address this situation. A referral to the EAP, who knows how to properly assess and discover the latent problems your employee faces, is the right support needed in this situation. Apart from these problems, lending money risks blurring professional boundaries, complicates your leadership role, and, at worst, could pull you into the employee's serious personal struggles in other ways.



BOCES Employee Assistance Program
1741D North Ocean Avenue, Medford, NY 11763 (631) 289-0480
154 Commack Road, Suite 210 Commack, NY 11725 (631) 218-5445
188 W. Montauk Hwy, Ste. E1, Hampton Bays, NY 11946 (631) 728-2008

