MANAGER’S GUIDE FOR THE WORKPLACE:
THE TROUBLED EMPLOYEE

Administered by

COPE
incorporated
# Table of Contents

I. Overview of the Workplace Assistance Program (EAP)  Pg. 3  
II. The Employee Assistance Program  Pg. 4  
III. How to Recognize Troubled Employees  Pg. 6  
IV. How to Assist Troubled Employees  Pg. 8  
V. How to Conduct a Corrective Interview  Pg. 10  
VI. Do’s & Don’ts in a Corrective Interview  Pg. 12  

## Appendices

Appendix ‘A’  
Employee Feedback and EAP Referrals (Quick Overview)  Pg. 13  

Appendix ‘B’- EAP Forms  
Appointment Verification Form  Pg. 14  
Authorization for Release of Confidential Information  Pg. 15  
Supervisory Referral Form  Pg. 16
Overview of the Workplace Assistance Program

What is Workplace Assistance?
Workplace Assistance is a work-site based service that provides counseling and consultation to individuals and managers on issues that affect job performance and morale. At COPE, we apply our knowledge of human behavior and workplace dynamics to four core areas:

- Employee Assistance
- Management Consultation
- Risk Management
- Training and Development

Service is not limited to individual counseling. Organizational consultation and education around issues adversely affecting the workplace are also provided. Consultation to supervisors and managers concerned with the performance of a specific employee, as well as organizational interventions for matters such as Critical Incidents, Change Management, Stress Management, and Integrating Health and Wellness Resources to reduce costs and absenteeism are broader organizational challenges COPE can assist you with.

About COPE, Inc.
Since 1978, COPE, Inc. has partnered with companies nationwide to improve workplace productivity by removing the barriers that prevent people from doing their best. COPE services provide effective, targeted and short-term solutions to the health, work and personal concerns of employees at every level of the organization.

Headquartered in the nation’s capital, COPE is uniquely qualified to assist companies from governmental agencies to single owner enterprises.
The Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

How does the EAP work?
An employee, family member, or organization representative may call the EAP to receive immediate consultation from a Master’s level EAP Professional. The EAP Professional taking the initial call will assess the immediate need and make a determination as to the services required. Persons seeking services are either scheduled an appointment, or given telephone consultation if appropriate.

What types of problems can the EAP assist with?

Work-Related:
- Job Stress
- Conflicts with Co-workers/Supervisors

Personal:
- Family & Marital/Relationship
- Legal & Financial
- Personal Adjustment (Grief & Loss, etc.)
- Substance Abuse
- Emotional Problems (Depression, Anxiety, etc.)
- Elder Care
- Child Care

What additional service does the EAP offer?
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD)
- Crisis Intervention
- Risk Management
- Training & Seminars
- Management Consultations
Who can refer an employee to the EAP?

- Self Referral
- Suggested Referral
- Formal Supervisory Referral

Who Uses the EAP?
Most calls for assistance are the result of a call from the employee – a full 73%.

- Self Referral – 73%
- Suggested Referral by Manager – 14%
- Referred by Other (Coworker, Family, Health Unit or Fitness Center) – 13%

When a Personal Problem becomes a Personnel Problem
Occasionally, a troubled employee’s personal problems intrude on the productivity and morale of others at work: the personal problem becomes a Personnel problem. In these circumstances a formal referral is made by the supervisor or manager to COPE. The formal referral is the first step in a process that includes:

- Problem identification
- Constructive confrontation
- Corrective interview(s) and follow-up
- Referral for diagnosis and treatment
- Return to work or termination
How to Recognize Troubled Employees

Managing the performance of employees is a difficult and time-consuming task, even in ideal, uncomplicated situations. When an employee’s performance is impaired by emotional or personal problems, the management of job performance can become much more complex. All employees have occasional difficulties, but when conduct becomes consistently problematic or performance frequently fails to meet expectation, a serious personal problem may be contributing to the job performance decline. *A pattern of job performance difficulties that exist over time indicates the need for supervisory action.*

Many types of personal problems can affect an employee’s performance. Common life problems such as marital strife, financial difficulties, or childcare complications occasionally affect many people. More serious difficulties such as a developing or existing substance abuse problem or a serious emotional conflict may also be the cause of a more serious performance decline.

An employee with a personal problem that is affecting behavior or conduct usually does not respond to management techniques that might otherwise be effective. This lack of employee improvement can contribute to *feelings of frustration, guilt, anger, inadequacy, or fear within the supervisor.*
Performance problems usually fall within three categories:

**The availability of the employee**

- Absenteeism
- Tardiness
- Early departures
- Extended lunch periods
- Frequent leave of work station

**The productivity of an employee**

- Lower quality of work
- Erratic work patterns
- Decreased productivity
- Failure to meet schedules
- Increased errors
- Impaired judgement or memory
- Inability to concentrate
- Inability to get along with co-workers, customers, managers

**The demeanor of an employee**

- Avoids supervisor or co-workers
- Loss of interest or enthusiasm
- Unusually sensitive or hostile to advice or constructive criticism
- Less communicative
- Frequent mood swings
- Threats of violence and/or harm to others
- Disregard for safety
- Unusually critical of supervisor or co-workers
How To Assist Troubled Employees

Step 1.

Acknowledge your feelings
It is usually helpful for a supervisor to first acknowledge feelings of frustration, guilt, anger, inadequacy, or fear and then to consider how such feelings might affect the objective assessment and monitoring of a problem employee.

Step 2.

Seek support from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
Advance preparation and organization can enhance the effectiveness of a corrective interview, but anxiety about confronting another individual is natural. It is often difficult for supervisors to be objective, and supervisors are not trained as counselors. The COPE counselor can assist the supervisor in objectively reviewing the employee’s declining performance issues. The counselor can then assist the supervisor in developing a plan to address declining performance or inappropriate conduct. Role-playing is sometimes a useful technique to deal with a supervisor’s anticipatory anxiety.

Step 3:

Initiate a corrective interview with the troubled employee
Once the supervisor has identified the performance decline and developed a plan for addressing the inadequacies, the employee can be confronted.

The first corrective interview is a discussion between the supervisor and employee that is designed to accomplish the following objectives:
Objectives of the Corrective Interview

- To clarify existing performances standards and/or conduct expectations.
- To identify the indicators of performance decline or a problem with conduct or demeanor.
- To develop a plan to address the existing problem.
- To communicate the consequences of a continuing problem.
- To set a date for a follow-up discussion to assess progress.
- To modify the plan, or to initiate consequences for lack of improvement.
How to Conduct A Corrective Interview

Preparation for the first corrective interview should involve taking time to develop a plan, documenting facts on which to base the ensuing discussion, consulting with an Employee Relations Specialist regarding any discipline or administrative action, and arranging for an appropriate time and place to conduct the meeting privately.

It is helpful to make an outline of corrective interview. If the employee is referred to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a consultation with a COPE counselor, at least by phone, should be conducted.

Conducting the corrective interview early in the day is best. Privacy without interruption is important. It is essential to remain rational and to avoid meeting anger with anger. It is helpful to comment on an employee’s contribution to the workplace and to focus on the importance of improvement.

Employees may be resistant, hostile and defensive. Employees with problems may try to offer excuses or to focus attention on the supervisor as a diversion from the main issue. It is best to avoid discussing personal problems in this context. It is more helpful to concentrate on performance. If, however, the employee suggests that a personal problem exists, this provides an excellent opportunity for the supervisor to recommend use of COPE’s EAP. The employee and supervisor may then develop a plan, which may include the EAP, to address the problem.

A follow-up meeting needs to be scheduled to monitor progress. It is helpful to end the meeting by focusing on the importance of improvement. Often, a single corrective interview is sufficient to elicit a sustained, positive employee response. If the performance improves and the improvement is sustained, this is an optimum outcome.
If there is no improvement, or only temporary improvement, a second corrective interview may be required, which would be of more serious tone. Each corrective interview should convey an increasing sense of urgency in encouraging the use of the EAP. Advise the employee that it is important for you, the supervisor, to be notified to confirm participation in the EAP. Other administrative action may also be necessary according to your organization’s policies. Document each corrective interview.

An employee cannot be forced to utilize the EAP, but it is often helpful. The crucial issue to be emphasized is that performance must improve. Assure employees that:

- Participation in the EAP will not affect future employment or career advancement.
- Participation is confidential and does not become part of an employee’s personnel record.
- It is a free benefit provided by the employer.
- Any information shared with management is shared only with the written release by the employee. Information can be court ordered under specific, limited circumstances.

Although constructive confrontation is never easy, devising a plan and sticking to it can facilitate this process. Dealing with problem performance promptly and firmly will provide the employee with an optimum opportunity to correct a performance deficiency and to retain employment.
**Do’s & Don’ts In A Corrective Interview**

**DO** set aside enough time  
**DO** conduct it in private without interruptions  
**DO** consult with Personnel and/or the EAP before the corrective interview  
**DO** prepare an outline  
**DO** have facts on performance or conduct  
**DO** stick to the facts on performance or conduct  
**DO** listen carefully to the employee’s response  
**DO** emphasize that participation in EAP is *voluntary* and *confidential*  
**DO** have action steps at the end  
**DO** document the interview  
**DO** schedule a follow up interview to evaluate the employee’s progress

**DON’T** conduct it on the spur-of-the-moment  
**DON’T** moralize  
**DON’T** stray into personal issues  
**DON’T** lose your temper  
**DON’T** try to figure out what is wrong with the employee  
**DON’T** be distracted  
**DON’T** delay or cover-up  
**DON’T** threaten discipline unless willing to carry it out
Employee Feedback and EAP Referrals

As a supervisor, you have many responsibilities. Part of your job is to work with your employees to get a job done. When a job isn’t getting done, as it should, you are going to hear about it from your manager. You know your employees have a life outside of work. As much as we all try to leave our personal business at home, there are times when personal issues affect work. As a supervisor, you try to be understanding and take your employees’ personal lives into some consideration. However, when an employee allows a personal problem to interfere with his or her ability to do their job, it affects the entire team or department.

If you haven’t been keeping accurate records regarding your employees’ attendance, performance, and behaviors, now is the time to begin. Document what you see and when you see it. Are they coming in late, taking extended lunches, missing every Friday/Monday, calling in sick on payday? Are they focused, meeting deadlines, working to capacity? Have they lost interest, having mood swings, or seeming less communicative?

Supervisors can be reluctant to use the EAP. Many supervisors feel as though they are betraying or hurting the employee. They are aware of all the employee’s personal problems and feel some obligation to help the employee. After all, supervisors are people too. Sometimes supervisors are facing similar kinds of problems and aren’t sure what to do for themselves, let alone the employee. Some supervisors fear retaliation from the employee.

In reality, a deeply troubled employee happens rarely while thousands of regular EAP referrals happen every day. Remember, the COPE EAP is designed to help supervisors and employees.

When you decide to discuss the issue with your employee, there are several things we suggest you keep in mind.

- Be direct.
- Identify the problems.
- Stick to the objective data—attendance, performance, and conduct.
- Don’t share your own personal issues.
- Tell the employee your expectations of them.
- Don’t moralize or try to diagnose what you think may be the problem.
- Don’t threaten the employee.
- Be objective in your handling of the situation—keep your personal feelings out.
- Stay focused on the work-related problem.
- Expect explanations and excuses.
- If the employee mentions personal problems, refer him/her to COPE’s EAP.
- Stay on message - focus on the problem.
- Explain current and future consequences if expectations are not met.
- Repeat expectations.
- Set follow-up meeting to review progress.

The Employee Assistance Program is here to help employees sort through their personal problems. If you have any questions or would like to discuss a specific situation, please feel free to contact the EAP at 202-628-5100

COPE, Inc.
1120 G St. NW, Suite 550
Washington, DC 20005
eap@cope-inc.com
www.cope-inc.com
This is to serve as an official notification that ____________________________

[ ] is scheduled for an appointment with the EAP on ____________ at ______ am / pm

[ ] has attended his/her scheduled appointment with the EAP on ____________ from

__________ am / pm to ___________ am / pm.

__________________________________________________________
Employee Assistance Program Counselor __________________________ Date

COPE, Inc. 202-628-5100 1-800-247-3054 fax: 202-628-5111
AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION

(Client’s Name) ____________________________ (Counselor’s Name) ____________________________

1. Name of person or agency making disclosures and requesting information:

___________________________________________________________________________________

(Employee Assistance Program)

2. Name of persons or organizations to whom disclosure will be made and/or with whom information will be exchanged:

___________________________________________________________________________________

3. Purpose or need for the disclosure:

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

4. Extent and nature of information to be exchanged:

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

5. Permission is granted until ____________________________

(Date or event on which release will expire)

- I understand that confidential information concerning me cannot be disclosed without my written consent and that I may revoke this consent at any time, in writing, except to the extent that action has been taken previous to my revocation.

- I understand that the EAP cannot guarantee that the party to whom the information is being released will keep the information confidential, and if re-disclosure occurs, the information may not be protected by federal law.

- I understand that COPE will not condition the provision of services on my signing of this authorization.

(Signature of Client) ____________________________ (Date Signed) ____________________________

(Signature of Witness) ____________________________ (Date Signed) ____________________________
Employee Assistance Program
Supervisory Referral Form

General Instructions:

The purpose of this form is to provide information to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) regarding the reason for your supervisory referral.

It is essential that you complete all of the information requested to the best of your knowledge. Please limit your responses to objective fact as opposed to hearsay and/or assumptions. This information will serve as a means of assessing the employee’s problem, will help the EAP to determine the steps necessary in assisting the employee in alleviating his or her problems, and will be used to measure outcomes regarding the effectiveness of the EAP supervisory referral process in terms of helping to minimize employee problems.

An EAP Staff member will follow up with you by phone in six (6) months to complete a follow up survey which allows COPE to determine the effectiveness of the referral process, the outcomes related to EAP services, and whether or not any additional steps are necessary at this time in assisting the employee in alleviating his or her problems.

It is recommended that you review the contents of this form with the employee prior to referring him or her to the EAP.

*** Note: This form should ONLY be completed by the person making the referral. ***

(Please Print In Ink or Type)

Referral Date________________________________

Employee’s Name: _____________________________________________________________________________

Social Security Number: _____ - _____ - _____ (optional)

Home Address: ________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
City                                                       State
Zip Code

Home Phone: ________________ Work Phone: ________________ EOD: _______________________________

Position Title: __________________________ Grade: _________________________________________________

Department / Agency: __________________________________________________________________________

Employee’s Work Location: ______________________________________________________________________

Shift: ________________ To: ________________ Days Off: _______________________________

Referred By: __________________________________________________________________________________

Title: __________________________ Phone Number: __________________________

Office Address: ______________________________________________________________________________

Fax Number: __________________________________________________________________________________
REASON(S) FOR REFERRAL

Please complete all of the sections below, basing your responses on the employee’s performance in the past six months. If sufficient space is not available, please attach a supplemental sheet.

ATTENDANCE

_______ The employee does not have a problem with attendance.

_______ The employee has a problem with attendance as evidenced by the consistent presence of one or more of the following:

- Extended lunch periods
- Frequently away from work station
- Significant number of days absent
- Late occurrences
- Unusual excuses for absences
- Early departures

Please rate the severity of this problem on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = extremely severe, 2 = moderately severe, 3 = somewhat severe, 4 = troublesome, 5 = could become troublesome if behavior continues) based on behavior observed during the past six months.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

JOB PERFORMANCE

_______ The employee does not have a problem with job performance.

_______ The employee has a problem with job performance as evidenced by the consistent presence of one or more of the following:

- Lower quality of work
- Erratic work patterns
- Decreased productivity
- Failure to meet schedules
- Increased errors
- Impaired judgment/memory/concentration

Please rate the severity of this problem on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = extremely severe, 2 = moderately severe, 3 = somewhat severe, 4 = troublesome, 5 = could become troublesome if behavior continues) based on behavior observed during the past six months.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
BEHAVIOR / CONDUCT

_______ The employee does not have a problem with behavior / conduct.

_______ The employee has a problem with behavior / conduct as evidenced by the consistent presence of

one or more of the following:

Avoids Supervisor or Co-workers
Unusually sensitive or hostile to advice or constructive criticism
Loss of interest of enthusiasm
Less communicative
Frequent mood swings
Threats of violence and/or harm to others
Disregard for safety of Supervisor/Co-workers
Unusually critical of Supervisor/Co-workers
Inability to get along with coworkers, customers, managers

Please rate the severity of this problem on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = extremely severe, 2 = moderately severe, 3 = somewhat severe, 4 = troublesome, 5 = could become troublesome if behavior continues) based on behavior observed during the past six months.

1 2 3 4 5
REASON(S) FOR REFERRAL
(continued)

Please CIRCLE the appropriate answer:

YES  NO  Have the above observations been discussed with the employee?

YES  NO  Have these observations been recorded/documentated and filed?

YES  NO  Has a corrective and/or warning interview taken place?

If ‘YES’, when did the interview take place? ________________

What were the results of the interview? (e.g., Letter of Warning, suspension, etc.):

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

YES  NO  Has the manager discussed with the employee the need to receive confirmation of EAP participation and asked the employee to sign a release for that purpose?

Comments and/or Additional Information:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Referring Person  Date

__________________________________________________________

My manager has discussed the contents of this form with me. I understand that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselor will inform my manager whether or not I have contacted the EAP and met with a counselor. Only this information will be provided to my manager. This information will be given whether or not I have signed a Release of Information form.

Employee’s Signature  Date

__________________________________________________________

Employee Assistance Program
COPE, Incorporated
Phone: (202) 628-5100 or 1-800-247-3054
Fax: (202) 628-5111
Email: eap@cope-inc.com
Web: www.cope-inc.com