



Manager's Program Guide



Air Force EAP
1-866-580-9078 (TTY 711)
www.resilience.af.mil/Workforce-Resource



Contents

Welcome 2

YOUR PROGRAM 3

Understanding your program 3

Promoting your program..... 4

MANAGER SUPPORT 5

Manager Support Services 5

Critical Incident Response 6

Learning events 7

STAFF SUPPORT..... 8

Caring for your staff 8

Navigating the counseling process 9

Managing staff through a personal crisis..... 10

Helping a staff member in distress 12

Preventing violence (at work and at home) 13

Suicide awareness and prevention 14

Identifying substance misuse 16

Transitioning staff members back to work after a leave of absence..... 17

Addressing performance issues 19

Managing a constructive confrontation..... 20

Types of referrals..... 23

Manager referral performance worksheet..... 24

Welcome

Creating a safe, supportive and productive work environment with engaged and enthusiastic staff is a common goal for managers and supervisors. Your program is here to support you on this journey with resources, tools and services that are no cost to you and your household members, completely confidential and available 24/7/365.

When you or your staff experience work-related or personal issues, your program offers help for a variety of challenges including depression, grief, relationship issues, stress, substance misuse, work-life balance and more.

As a manager, your job is to support your staff so they can maintain optimal work performance. Your program can help you develop as a manager and help you assist your staff as they navigate through the ups and downs of life. This guide outlines the services available to you and those you can recommend to your staff.

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Until you think about it, you don't notice how effectively Kathy has guided you to define, verbalize, and resolve your challenge. I was fortunate to benefit from her coaching during a recent life transition. Her coaching was instrumental in bringing clarity to my situation and helped me find great peace where I could not find it before. With her help, I was able to move forward with happiness and joyful anticipation of the great things that are ahead for my family and me.

– Member testimonial

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Understanding your program

Your program offers something for everyone! Your organization is paying for this program to help you and your staff with a broad range of issues affecting mental health and emotional wellbeing, and it is also a valuable resource for celebratory life events such as welcoming a new baby, adopting a pet, purchasing a home, planning for retirement and more.

Key features

- Provided at no cost to you and your household members
- Completely confidential service managed by a third party
- Available 24/7/365

How you and your staff can use the program

For yourself

You can take advantage of the learning events and call your Manager Support Services team to consult with specialists confidentially. Your program may also provide critical incident response services for traumatic events in the workplace. See [page 5](#) for more information.

For your staff

When you become aware that a staff member is struggling with an issue and you are concerned about the individual's wellbeing, you can recommend the program as a valuable and helpful resource. See [page 23](#) for more information on referrals.

As a management tool

When you are concerned about a staff member's declining work performance, Manager Support Services help you identify behavior patterns and ways to recommend the staff member seek help through the program. See [page 23](#) for more information on referrals.

Your program is here to help you when you need it. You can call anytime and speak to experienced and trained professionals who can help you respond to a range of workplace issues.

When to use your program

Part of being an effective manager is motivating your staff so they are productive and satisfied with their work. Occasionally, sensitive issues arise and you may need some help in handling them. Consider consulting with your program when:

- You are concerned about a staff member's welfare.
- Someone's work is suffering because of personal concerns.
- A problem surfaces or a crisis strikes.
- You encounter a situation that you are not sure how to handle.
- A staff member consistently arrives late to work.
- A staff member is diagnosed with a terminal illness or passes away.
- A staff member is transitioning back to work after an extended time away.
- You begin to suspect a staff member is experiencing personal problems at home.
- You think a staff member is either drinking or using drugs on the job.
- You are managing staff members in life stages that you are not familiar with.
- You are working with an emotionally distressed staff member.

Promoting your program

It's important to create awareness of your program to help your staff understand the free and confidential resources, tools, and services available to them and their household members. Additionally, promoting the program as a resource for managing the challenges of life can help to normalize issues and reduce the associated stigma.

Establish awareness

To establish awareness, try the following tactics to ensure that staff members are informed about the program:

- Discuss it in a staff meeting and distribute informational program flyers or brochures.
- Share a link to the member website.
- Display awareness posters and digital signage in high-traffic areas.
- Communicate different aspects of the program to your staff regularly, such as overall program awareness, work-life services, and suicide awareness.
- Share the monthly newsletter or direct staff to the member website to find relevant articles and videos.

Communicate accessibility

To communicate accessibility, make it clear how easy it is to access the program:

- Staff can explore the member website to see all the no-cost features and benefits.
- Staff members can call the program number, and the Customer Experience Associate will provide resources specific to their needs.

Emphasize confidentiality

Make it clear that no one will know if a staff member has used program resources, as the program is completely confidential for self-referring individuals.

Promote normalcy

Communicate to staff that it is okay to seek assistance and that everyone experiences ups and downs in life.

- Help staff understand that the program is designed to help individuals live their best lives.
- Emphasize that the program is available to help them perform better at work and achieve a more satisfying quality of life.
- Let them know that no situation is too big or too small to seek assistance from the program.

Once staff members clearly understand the program benefits and how to use them, they are much more likely to seek help when they need it.

Manager Support Services

Manager Support Services provides confidential guidance to help you improve your leadership skills, enhance team dynamics and assist your staff members. You can call anytime and speak with a Manager Support Consultant who can help you in assessing challenging situations and determining the appropriate level of intervention in line with your departmental policies.

Manager Support Consultants offer guidance on various topics, including:

- Communicating a performance issue to a staff member
- Offering assistance in a constructive manner
- Discussing options for handling difficult situations

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Kathy provided me support through many pivotal growing experiences in the past year: getting a promotion, sharpening my managerial skills, and discerning my next steps. The support, guidance, and listening I received from Kathy are truly a gift and a privilege. Of all the professionals I have had the opportunity to work with inside and outside of this program, Kathy remains set apart from the crowd. I have learned a lot from Kathy and it has been an absolute pleasure to work with her.

– Member testimonial

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Critical Incident Response

When a tragic event disrupts your workplace, your staff may feel overwhelmed, anxious, unsettled and distracted. Tragedy can take many forms and each experience is unique. The Critical Incident Response (CIR) team is available to provide immediate and compassionate support to you and your staff at anytime, day or night.

Note: CIR service cost and availability varies depending on your program. Please follow your organization's internal approval process prior to requesting this service.

What the CIR team does

When a traumatic event occurs, CIR services can help minimize the long-term effects on staff and the organization. Our dedicated team of specialists are clinical professionals trained to handle sensitive situations.

The team is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

CIR counselors help staff process and cope with the emotional and physical impacts of a traumatic event by fostering their natural resilience, coping skills and strategies.

A wide range of services are available and are deployed according to your organization's unique needs. Services include Psychological First Aid (PFA), Management Consultations, group and individual support to affected staff members and telephonic crisis support.

Services are confidential and provide staff members with the resources and support they need to manage potential stress and return to their regular lives.

How CIR works

The first step is to consult with you on what happened and assess the situation. Once the situation is assessed and a plan of action is developed, we will send a counselor to your work site within an appropriate and agreed upon period. The counselor will conduct an onsite structured intervention to help manage the incident, when appropriate, and be available to management and individual staff members as needed.

Questions to expect

When your organization experiences a crisis or traumatic event, call your program. We understand that you may not have detailed information at the time of the first call, however, we do need specific information to assess the impact on your staff and to recommend the best response.

- Contact information (name, title, phone number)
- Description of incident and affected staff
- Address of site or sites affected
- Date(s) and time(s) for requested onsite services
- Preferences (for example a specific provider)
- Number of staff affected
- Special needs, i.e., language, accessibility, etc.
- Any individual staff member concerns
- Impact on work performance
- Media involvement
- Types of interventions requested (group/individual/management consultation)

Please note: Magellan Federal makes every effort to secure a counselor to come to your worksite at the requested date and time. Providing us with as much notice and details as possible helps to ensure fulfillment of your request.

What happens next

- Magellan Federal will secure a CIR counselor.
- You will receive tip sheets with information on how to cope with traumatic incidents to share with your staff.
- The counselor will contact you to confirm details.
- If your staff would like to speak to a clinician prior to the arrival of the CIR counselor, they can call the program phone number for assistance.

For more information, call 1-866-580-9078 (TTY 711) or visit www.resilience.af.mil/Workforce-Resource

Learning events

Your program offers a wide range of learning events covering various topics such as leadership, interpersonal skills, emotional wellbeing, home and family, healthy living and specialty training.

Learning event options include:

- *Live webinars:* These are led by subject matter experts and cover current and relevant topics. There are monthly webinars for staff and quarterly webinars for managers. All webinars are recorded and available for on-demand access on the member website.
- *Classroom and virtual training:* The Options in Learning Guide details in-person and real-time virtual courses. Additional fees may apply for this option.
- *Self-learning:* On the member website, you can find clinically validated articles, videos, self-assessments, and webinars on various topics such as anxiety, burnout, depression, financial wellbeing, mindfulness and more.

Please visit the member website to learn more about learning events.

Caring for your staff

Mental health matters. It's important to remember that mental health is significant. One in four adults will struggle with a mental health issue in a given year. As a manager, your understanding and response to staff struggling with mental health can greatly impact them both professionally and personally.

Differentiating between expected behaviors and signs of mental illness can be challenging. There is no definitive test to determine if someone has a mental illness or if their actions and thoughts are typical behaviors or the result of a physical illness.

Warning signs of mental health issues

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Persistent sadness or low mood
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or euphoria
- Long-lasting irritability or anger
- Avoidance of friends and social activities
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns, along with fatigue and low energy
- Difficulty perceiving reality, such as experiencing delusions or hallucinations
- Misuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Thinking or talking about suicide

Knowing when to offer help

If you suspect that someone is dealing with a mental health issue, you can assist by:

- Making the staff member aware of the program and the support services it offers.
- Offering support to the staff member and encouraging them to contact the program.
- Contacting the program in your capacity as a manager or supervisor to discuss your concerns and seek guidance from a Manager Support Consultant.

Navigating the counseling process

There are many misconceptions about what it means to talk to a counselor, and the stigma associated with it is often the reason people do not seek help in the first place. As a supervisor or manager, it is important to know that counseling can help people manage issues, develop coping skills and learn how to improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Common reasons people seek therapy:

- To work on relationship issues
- To cope with a big life transition
- To develop better parenting skills
- To manage mood swings
- To improve career prospects
- To process grief
- To become more assertive
- To mitigate harmful thoughts
- To process trauma
- To gain a deeper understanding of themselves

It is okay for people to seek guidance to work through their issues. You can let staff know that self-referral to the program is no cost, completely confidential and provided by a third party. When your staff members are ready to get started, they can call their program and a Customer Experience Associate will connect them with the right resource or professional for their needs.



It's been a difficult time for me. Katie is very positive, she's very helpful, and I just can't say enough about her. I'm so grateful to you guys for what you do. I greatly appreciate her service.

– Member testimonial



Managing staff through a personal crisis

Individuals will inevitably face personal crises, such as a death in the family, a divorce, or other challenging life events at some point in their lives.

When an employee approaches you with a personal crisis, it is crucial to provide appropriate support while considering their needs and the organization's objectives. Responding to these situations fairly and consistently is an essential aspect of effective management. It is important to adhere to your organization's policies and seek guidance from your leadership as needed.

Here are some tips to help you support a staff member going through a personal crisis with compassion and professionalism:

Listen and be compassionate

If a staff member comes to you with a personal crisis, it is important to give the staff member your undivided attention. If you are not able to do so immediately, assure the staff member that you understand the importance of the issue and schedule a time to meet as soon as possible. When you meet with your staff member, keep in mind the person's right to privacy. Listen respectfully and do not interject until the person is done filling you in on as much as they are comfortable sharing. The person may just want a sounding board for things happening in their life or to tell you why a specific life event has affected their focus at work. If you immediately suggest a solution, the person may become upset because that was not what they were seeking.

Be empathetic about the situation but be careful to stick to the facts and avoid blurring the lines between work life and the staff member's personal life.

If a staff member doesn't come to you with a problem but you notice that they are suddenly behaving in a different manner than usual, it may be necessary to reach out to the person directly. Read the section in this guide on how to recognize the warning signs of a mental health issue. Follow the same tips for listening and staying empathetic.

Let the person know what it is that brought the matter to your attention so that they understand your concern and are aware of how it is affecting their work. This may be news to the staff member and may elicit a defensive response. Clarify that your purpose is to help figure out solutions to promote ongoing successful performance.

Remember, when someone is going through a crisis, they may not want to come to their manager for support for a variety of reasons. That is why it is important to build a culture of compassion where staff can feel comfortable reaching out for help when they need it.

Make sure work isn't the problem

In some cases, the crisis may be the workplace or workload itself. The person may feel overwhelmed with deadlines or they may be having issues with a coworker or the work schedule. If work is the problem, addressing the situation as soon as it appears may help you to avoid losing a good worker and identify a problem that could be causing your organization's turnover ratio to be higher than necessary.

Offer reasonable assistance

Sometimes the person will benefit from having a few personal days to sort things out. In these cases, requesting time off or adjusting a schedule and/or workload may be a simple solution, subject to your organization's policies and procedures regarding these topics.

For situations that require more support, let the person know that you need to check on what's available to them, such as Employee Assistance Program benefits, medical insurance, paid leave, reduced hours, flexible schedules, counseling, health-related services, etc., before committing to an arrangement. Avoid going overboard to accommodate a staff member and stick to what you can reasonably offer without seriously affecting the organization.

Check in regularly

Make sure to check in regularly with the person, whether through a call, quick meeting or email. Show empathy and understanding, rather than pressuring them to return to work. This will help strengthen your relationship and give you a better understanding of how they are dealing with the situation. Regular check-ins will increase the chances of receiving honest feedback and ensuring that the person is receiving the necessary support.

Develop a plan

You may need to make temporary arrangements to reduce and/or modify the persons' workload. This may take some creativity to achieve and needs to take the workload and other team players into consideration.

Workload planning

Be realistic about what you can accomplish when developing a temporary plan to reassign work to other

staff members and/or delay work. Identify all the responsibilities and tasks that need to be covered. Plan for the longest anticipated coverage period and how to adjust as the situation changes. Work coverage could include reallocating resources internally, finding a replacement and/or hiring additional workers. You will need to help team members find ways to accommodate the increased workload and reward them for their commitment and willingness to take on new tasks.

Staff impact

If staff members ask about the person experiencing the personal crisis or why their workload is being increased, you will need to be discreet. Present relevant facts about the situation as it relates to the workplace and let team members know you are available to meet with them. This will show the team the situation is under control and reduce rumors.

Source: Inspire Me Now

Helping a staff member in distress

We bring our humanity to work every day, experiencing joy, laughter, sadness and more in our personal and work relationships. Dealing with emotions at work is unavoidable. If you notice sudden changes in a staff member's behavior such as increased absenteeism, an inability to focus at work or unusual emotional upheavals, chances are these sudden changes indicate emotional distress, and in some cases a serious mental health condition.

The following tips will help you recognize distress symptoms and understand how to reach out and help staff resolve their issues.

Read emotional cues and signals

Pay attention to the emotions and feelings expressed by your staff. Things to pay attention to include body language, facial expressions and tone of voice.

Listen and empathize

Listen closely and think before you react to the situation. When you approach a staff member, or they come to you, it is an opportunity to strengthen your relationship by learning more about what is bothering them and supporting them. Be careful not to react too quickly and fall into a collegial comfort zone by making light of the issue or telling them to deal with it.

Understand the triggers

Remember that the emotional distress is usually triggered by underlying issues. Ask about what is driving the distressed response, i.e., *"You don't usually react that way in meetings. Is there something that is bothering you right now?"* Be careful not to prejudge the situation. Instead, focus on listening to the person's concerns and making them feel heard and respected.

Transform the problem into a positive change

If a person becomes emotional, comment on the person's strengths while communicating hope and support.

Keep their dignity

When someone is going through a tough time, and you are talking to them about it, it is important to give them space to process their situation and keep their self-respect. Most people will already feel embarrassed that their manager is learning about their situation and no one should feel bad about becoming emotional or crying.

Note: If the staff member's emotions have become unmanageable, this could affect other staff (excessive anger, harmful/abusive behaviors, etc.), and a different approach may be needed. Options could include formal counseling, conflict resolution/mediation and/or disciplinary action. It is not okay for staff (or managers for that matter) to express their emotions in ways that hurt or frighten others and if this is the case you should consult with your human resource department and Manager Support Services team through your program.

Reframe your messages

Staff members can be deeply affected by how you respond to a situation. If you react too quickly and use poorly chosen words or a negative tone of voice, it can be a source of damaging emotions. Listen closely so that you are responding to the right things. Think before you speak and consider how what you say will be perceived. Frame your message in a positive way that is respectful and gives the staff member hope.

If, upon reflection, you think you could have responded differently, own it. Saying, *"I'm sorry, I didn't respond as well as I would have liked, can we try having that conversation again?"* is likely to earn you increased respect and lead to a better resolution.

Source: [6Q](#)

Preventing violence (at work and at home)

Workplace violence

When the work environment is unsafe, employees may feel vulnerable and uncomfortable. Prevention of violence is crucial in avoiding potentially harmful situations. Our experts can assist in creating a plan or providing immediate support resources when needed.

Contact your program and ask to speak with a Manager Support Consultant if you have noticed any signs of violence in your work environment. These experts can offer suggestions and help create a plan to address any threats of violence in the workplace.

Although there is no absolute predictor of who will become violent at work, there are certain behaviors that are associated with workplace violence:

- Use of direct or veiled threats toward self or others
- Use of email to make threats toward self or others
- Intimidating, bullying or aggressive behavior
- Harassment
- Ongoing conflicts with supervisors or coworkers
- Bringing a weapon to the workplace
- Extreme change in behavior
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage

Violence tends to escalate through a specific pattern. It is important not to tolerate any violence in the workplace and to prevent it from advancing to the next level.

Self-harm

Workplace violence can also take the form of self-inflicted harm. If a staff member mentions or suggests that they are thinking about self-harm, take it seriously. Immediate resources are available for someone feeling this way. Seeking help through Manager Support is critical to reducing the risk of self-inflicted violence.

Domestic violence

An abusive relationship at home can transfer to the workplace. Victims may be dealing with an untrustworthy partner who follows them to work and displays stalking behavior. Although it is not your role to counsel staff members about their personal relationships, it is your responsibility to provide a safe work environment.

Signs of domestic violence include:

- Preoccupation or lack of concentration
- Increasing or unexplained absences
- Receiving harassing phone calls
- Bruises or other injuries that are unexplained

An alert and supportive manager or supervisor can make a difference. By recognizing the signs, consulting with your Manager Support Consultant, and helping the staff member with getting the right help at the right time, you can help the staff member and reduce any risk to the workplace.

Suicide awareness and prevention

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide rates increased approximately 36 percent between 2000 – 2021. With the increasing rates of suicide, it is important to be aware of the warning signs and to know what to do when someone threatens suicide.

Warning signs of suicide in adults

Take any mention of suicide seriously. You can take steps to prevent a suicide attempt. Be willing to listen and help the person find help. Don't be afraid to ask, *"What is the matter?"* or bring up the subject of suicide.

It is hard to know if a person is thinking about suicide, however, you can look for warning signs and events that may make suicide more likely.

Events that may put people at greater risk for suicide include:

- Changes in life such as the death of a partner or good friend, retirement, divorce, or problems with money.
- The diagnosis of a serious physical illness, such as cancer or heart disease, or a new physical disability.
- Severe and long-lasting pain.
- Loss of independence or not being able to get around without help.
- Living alone or not having friends or social contacts.

Adults who are at risk may show these warning signs of suicide. They may:

- Plan to or say they want to hurt or kill themselves or someone else.
- Talk, write, read, or draw about death, including writing suicide notes and talking about items that can cause physical harm, such as pills, guns, or knives.
- Say they have no hope, they feel trapped, or there is no point in "going on."
- Buy guns or bullets, stockpile medicines, or take other action to prepare for a suicide attempt. They may have a new interest in guns or other weapons.
- Change their drinking habits or drug use.
- No longer want to see people and want to be alone a lot.
- No longer take care of themselves or follow medical advice.
- Give away their things and/or hurry to complete a will.

What to do when someone threatens suicide

Many people who attempt suicide don't really want to end their lives but see no other way to escape their pain.

What you can do

- Tell the person you're concerned about them.
- Ask the person if they have been thinking about self-harm. Do they have a plan? You aren't "planting" the idea of suicide by asking direct questions. The more detailed the plan, the greater the immediate risk. If the answer is yes, you need to get professional help, even if the person argues or resists. Think about what you would do if you suspected someone was having a heart attack in the workplace. Self-harm is just as serious of a concern.
- Don't leave the person alone. Talk with them about your concerns and show that you care and want to help.
- Listen to what they have to say. Don't act shocked, judge or swear not to tell anyone else.
- Remove dangerous items such as firearms or medications.
- Call your program. Do not send the staff member home without first speaking with a licensed clinician.
- Call, text or chat with the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline to be connected to trained counselors. The service is available 24/7/365.
- Call 911 if the person is in immediate danger.

What not to do

Avoid these types of statements:

- *"How could you think of killing yourself? Your life isn't that bad. Other people have it a lot worse than you."* This is a judgmental statement that shows no understanding or willingness to listen to the person's inner pain. Even if on the surface the person appears to have a good life, they are experiencing something unbearable that prompts thoughts of death as the only solution.
- *"Suicide is selfish and cowardly. How could you hurt us like that?"* The person already feels guilty. Piling on more guilt and shame will only make them feel more worthless and close the door to further conversation.
- *"You don't really want to die. You're just looking for attention."* Anyone who displays suicidal thoughts or behaviors should always be taken seriously.
- *"You have so much to live for."* People who are suicidal feel so hopeless that they can't see anything positive about their future. While this remark is well-intentioned, it fails to acknowledge the person's emotional turmoil.

If you suspect that someone is at risk for suicide, trust your instincts and take the threat of suicide seriously. Call 911. It is a matter of life or death.

Source: [Centers for Disease Control](#)

Identifying substance misuse

In addition to the risk substance misuse poses for the individual, it also has significant consequences for the workplace. When a person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, it can lead to accidents, inefficiency, reduced productivity, high stress and other issues.

If there is a concern about drug or alcohol use, it is important to take action. Your program can help you identify the behaviors or work performance issues that may require intervention.

Once you suspect a substance use problem, you can consider these steps:

1. Consult with your human resources department about your organization's substance misuse policy and testing procedures.
2. Focus on the staff member's performance and observable behavior. Do not make accusations or diagnoses about substance use.
3. Document the behavior, the performance issues and the observable signs of alcohol or drug use.

If you or a staff member is struggling with addiction and it is taking a toll on work and home life, help is available. Your program can help you start a conversation with your staff member who is struggling with substance misuse and will work with you to explore strategies for dealing with the problem.

Transitioning staff members back to work after a leave of absence

When a staff member leaves work for an extended period, whether two weeks or two months, the leave is typically due to a life event or transition.

Reintegrating into the workforce after an extended absence is a crucial process, and your Manager Support Consultant can assist in ensuring a successful transition back to work for the staff member.

Returning to work

Returning to work after an extended leave can be challenging for a staff member. Being proactive can make the staff member's return easier. Following are some practical tips to help with a transition back to work.

- If possible, as the staff member is planning their leave, discuss how they want or do not want to stay in touch with the office while they are out. For example, regular email correspondence so they can be kept updated on what is happening at the workplace. This connection reinforces the link back to the workplace and can be very helpful in mitigating the anxiety of a long absence from work creates.
- When notified of a staff member's plan to return to work, set up a meeting with the staff member to discuss a return-to-work transition plan. In this meeting, clarify any concerns the staff member may have and identify if there are barriers to returning to work that can be addressed in preparing for the return.
- Schedule meetings with all appropriate co-workers/ departments for a "catch-up" meeting.
- Request training assistance from human resources, if needed by the staff member.
- Talk with the staff member about any need for work accommodations or modified duty, according to your company policies. Make sure issues are addressed in advance of the staff member's return.
- Talk with the staff member about communication with co-workers. Discuss how much information the staff member wants to share with co-workers to help with the transition. Be respectful of the staff member's privacy needs.
- Encourage the development of a written return-to-work plan that includes commitments to the plan by all parties.
- It is normal for the staff member to experience anxiety or worry when returning to work. Reinforce the importance of self-care and setting realistic expectations for the staff member. Expect to allow some time for adjustment issues. Encourage the staff member to consider using the program for help.
- Consider all components of your organization's staff member support, such as work-life resources, specialty programs for specific conditions and other programs that may be available to help the staff member in navigating this life transition. If you are not sure of the full span of resources that may apply, consult your human resource representative, or call the program for more information or ideas.
- Keep communication open between you and the staff member.

Transition staff members back to work following a substance misuse leave

Starting treatment is the first step in overcoming substance misuse. The program offers various supportive tools and resources for staff members and supervisors. Staff members dealing with substance use issues who participate in the program also receive:

- **Structured follow-up**—To help a staff member maintain their recovery, your Manager Support Consultant will set up a structured follow-up plan consistent with the staff member's needs. This program provides the most support when the chance of relapse is highest.
- **Recovery monitoring for supervisor referrals**—Recovery monitoring services combine recovery support with treatment compliance monitoring.* In the case of management referrals, the Manager Support Consultant makes regular contacts (at least monthly) with both the staff member and the treatment provider to confirm continued participation in any agreed-upon treatment plan.
- **For management referrals related to substance misuse**—The program regularly provides compliance information reports to the designated employer representative to aid in any corrective action procedures relating to the staff member's substance abuse. The combination of recovery monitoring and employer support is a powerful way to help staff members remain on their path to recovery.

* Compliance monitoring is provided only when the staff member signs an Authorization to Use or Disclose Information form authorizing the program to share treatment compliance with the organization.



Thank you so much for these resources! And thank you so much as well for taking the time to speak with me last week. I wanted you to know that that made a big difference for me, truly. That was the lowest and the most helpless I've felt in a long time, and it helped immensely to be able to call and speak with you.

– Member testimonial



Addressing performance issues

Sometimes work or personal problems can affect a staff member's work performance. As a manager, one of your responsibilities is to ensure that your staff perform their jobs satisfactorily. When addressing performance issues, practice these tips.

Identify expectations

- Define specific expectations of the staff member based on their job description.
- Convey concise, detailed information.

Specify performance concerns

- Point out where performance has slipped compared to past work and behavior. Be honest and firm.
- Give specific, objective examples with dates, times and situations.
- Emphasize the seriousness of the situation.
- Focus on the job, not the individual.
- Avoid making judgments.
- Keep the discussion focused on work performance, regardless of the staff member's response.

Schedule timelines for improvement and a follow-up meeting

- You and the staff member should jointly agree on an action plan based on the staff member's input and your guidance.
- Establish a timeline for improvement, appropriate to the level of the problem.
- Determine and agree on desired results.
- Set a time, date and place for the next meeting.

Describe consequences*

The staff member must understand they have a serious performance problem and what to expect if they do not meet their work expectations. At this point, you should:

- Be specific without threatening.
- Be prepared to follow through if performance does not improve.

- Emphasize that the staff member is responsible for resolving the present situation and avoiding future consequences.

Recommend the program

- Reiterate your confidence with the staff member and reinforce your goal to help them meet performance expectations.
- Remind the staff member that you do not need to know of personal problems, but you can encourage using the program and explain how it can help.
- Provide information about the program, emphasizing that it is a confidential resource available free of charge to address any personal problems the staff member may be having.
- Refer the staff member to the program. Help in making the call if necessary.
- Explain that the program is confidential, and no personal or private information will be shared without the staff member's written consent.

Note: You may wish to call your Manager Support Consultant to discuss confidentiality issues and Authorization to Disclose procedures for management referrals.

**Be sure to consult with your human resources department before communicating consequences to ensure that any job action is consistent with internal policy and procedures.*

Managing a constructive confrontation

Constructive confrontation is a technique that enables you to address performance issues objectively. It provides the opportunity to discuss the performance problem while offering genuine help.

The initial meeting is intended to offer constructive, honest feedback about work performance in an objective, factual manner. It should not be a negative, emotional exchange. The sequence of the meeting is crucial to the effectiveness of this approach. At the conclusion of the discussion, there should be specific action items for both the staff member and supervisor to complete.

Preparation will be the key to a successful constructive confrontation and should include the following:

- Be respectful of privacy. This type of discussion should be conducted in a private setting and should never be held in the presence of or within listening range of others.
- Consult with your human resources department to ensure your meeting is consistent with your organization's specific policies and procedures.
- Gather and organize your documentation so it is available during the discussion.
- Be aware of your own expectations. Define acceptable and unacceptable performance.
- Focus on behavior. Do not label or diagnose a personal problem either in your mind or at the meeting.

Four steps for a constructive confrontation

A constructive confrontation includes four components. These steps, outlined on the following pages, illustrate how to conduct a successful constructive confrontation.



ACKNOWLEDGE

Reinforce the staff member's value



ADDRESS

Discuss work performance and expectations



SUPPORT

Recommend your program



FOLLOW UP

Meet regularly with the staff member

1. Reinforce the staff member's value

Begin the meeting by highlighting the staff member's value. Ways to show the staff member's value can include:

- You have noticed a change in work performance.
- Your concern today pertains to this change.
- The change is not typical of past work habits.

Acknowledge the staff member's past and present good performance. It is important to:

- Let the person know of their value to the organization.
- Give examples of past and present contributions (e.g., years of service, past performance, technical skills, earlier level of dependability).
- Tell the staff member that you appreciate these contributions.

2. Address work performance and expectations

The key to this part of the meeting is to remain calm and objective.

Identify expectations:

- Define specific expectations of the staff member based on their job description.
- Convey concise, detailed information.

Specify performance concerns:

- Point out where performance has slipped compared to past work and behavior. Be honest and firm.
- Give specific, objective examples with dates, times and situations.
- Emphasize the seriousness of the situation.
- Focus on the job, not the individual. Avoid making judgments.
- Keep the discussion focused on work performance, regardless of the individual's response.

Schedule timelines for improvement and a follow-up meeting:

- You and the staff member should jointly agree on an action plan based on their input and your guidance.
- Establish a timeline for improvement, appropriate to the level of the problem.
- Determine and agree on desired results.
- Set a time, date and place for the next meeting.

Describe consequences:*

The staff member needs to know that their performance problem is a serious situation and what they can expect if work expectations are not met. At this point, you should:

- Be specific without threatening.
- Be prepared to follow through if performance does not improve.
- Emphasize that the staff member is responsible for resolving the present situation and avoiding future consequences.

**Be sure to consult with your human resources department prior to communicating consequences to ensure that any job action is consistent with internal policy and procedures.*

3. Recommend your program

- Reiterate your confidence with the staff member and reinforce that your goal is to help them become productive again.
- Remind the staff member that you do not need to know of personal problems but you can encourage the use of your program and explain how it can help.
- Provide information about your program, emphasizing that it is a confidential resource available free of charge to address any personal problems the staff member may be having.
- Explain to the staff member that no personal or private information will be provided to anyone without the individual's written consent.

Note: You may wish to call your Manager Support Consultant to discuss confidentiality issues and Authorization to Disclose procedures.

4. Ongoing communication and engagement

Please remember the following guidelines for following up after a constructive confrontation meeting:

- Keep all aspects of the situation between you and the staff member private.
- Avoid being overly sensitive or empathetic, as it is counterproductive.
- Monitor the staff member's work performance and document improvement or decline (performance documentation example is below).
- Be available to provide guidance or discuss concerns the staff member may have.
- Support and reinforce positive behavior changes.
- Follow through with normal disciplinary procedures, if necessary.

A Manager Support Consultant is always available to answer your questions about work expectations following a constructive confrontation and to provide consultation on any additional concerns you may have. We also recommend that you stay in contact with your human resources department about appropriate job action.

Stay focused on performance

It's important to remember that even with thorough preparation, it is difficult to predict how a staff member will react to a constructive confrontation meeting. A staff member may appreciate your support and welcome the opportunity to resolve problems and improve performance. However, there may be times when a staff member becomes defensive and emotional. Manager Support Services can assist you in creating a plan for a constructive confrontation with a staff member regarding their work performance.

Performance documentation example

<i>Day</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Change in Performance</i>
Monday	4/04/yr.	9:30 A.M.	Absent. Said it was due to "recurring and very painful stomach problem."
Wednesday	4/06/yr.	9:30 A.M.	Tardy. 30 minutes.
Friday	4/08/yr.	9:30 A.M.	Absent. Said it was "recurring stomach problem."
Tuesday	4/12/yr.	9:45 A.M.	Tardy. 45 minutes.
Wednesday	4/13/yr.	9:15 A.M.	Absent. Had to go to court.
Monday	4/18/yr.	9:05 A.M.	Absent. Dentist appointment.
Thursday	4/21/yr.	9:30 A.M.	Tardy. 30 minutes.
Friday	4/22/yr.	9:40 A.M.	Tardy. 40 minutes.
Monday	4/25/yr.	11:00 A.M.	Missed deadline for important project to be completed at time of department meeting.
Tuesday	4/26/yr.	3:00 P.M.	Complaint from sales representative about John's rude phone manner.
Monday	5/02/yr.	11:30 A.M.	Absent. Unexplained.

Types of referrals

As a manager, it is important to monitor job behavior and performance to identify any changes that could potentially impact the wellbeing of your staff or the organization. If you notice anything concerning, you can have a confidential conversation with a Manager Support Consultant. These consultants are available 24/7 and can guide you on how to address team dynamics or individual concerns. You can also consider making a management referral for further support.

Self-referral/informal referral

This type of referral allows supervisors to address staff member performance issues that do not warrant formal disciplinary action.

The supervisor can recommend program participation to a staff member who requests help or when the supervisor sees a staff member who seems to be experiencing emotional difficulties in the workplace. Typically, these referrals are due to a concern about the staff member's wellbeing in reaction to personal, acute or traumatic circumstances in their life.

The staff member's participation in the program is voluntary. Through this referral, the Manager Support Consultant's role includes:

- Helping the staff member with finding the right program coordinator to schedule an evaluation and potential ongoing sessions to deal with any personal issues that may be impacting the workplace.
- Making the staff member aware that information about their program usage will not be shared with the company.

Formal management referral

This type of referral allows supervisors to address staff member attendance issues where a pattern of behavior has been demonstrated by a staff member and there is a noticeable decline in work performance. A formal management referral can also be made for reasons such as concerns for staff wellbeing based on behavior changes in the workplace that may not directly impact performance.

A supervisor can recommend the staff member to seek help through the program and request the staff member follow through with this recommendation. Through this referral, the consultant will help with:

- Obtaining a signed Authorization to Use or Disclose Protected Health Information form from the staff member. This form allows the Manager Support Consultant to follow up and provide one-time reporting regarding the staff member's attendance at an appointment.
- Referring the staff member for an assessment.

Specialized management referrals (DOT and DOE/NRC)

Manager Support Consultants have extensive experience with management referrals of staff members subject to the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Department of Energy (DOE)/Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) drug-free workplace and other workplace safety regulations. Manager Support Consultants participate in ongoing training to ensure that their knowledge and understanding of employer needs is current and regulated referral procedures are followed appropriately.

Manager referral performance worksheet

If a staff member's work performance or behavior has declined, and standard methods of addressing the issue have been ineffective, Manager Support Services may offer helpful solutions. You can call any time—and the questions below may help you decide when. Be sure to consult with your human resources department before communicating consequences to ensure that any job action is consistent with internal policy and procedures. Print this sheet as needed.

Staff member: _____ Date: _____

A. Have you seen repeated and continued patterns of performance deterioration in any of the following areas?
Check the box for affirmative.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Quantity/Quality of Work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Gradual reduction over a period of time<input type="radio"/> Inconsistent/sporadic<input type="radio"/> Carelessness, increased mistakes | 6. Dependability <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Does not meet schedules<input type="radio"/> Makes unreliable/untrue statements | 10. Interpersonal Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Deliberately avoids colleagues and supervisor<input type="radio"/> Complainer<input type="radio"/> Unusually sensitive to advice or criticism<input type="radio"/> Overly critical of others |
| 2. Job-related Work Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Forgetful<input type="radio"/> Reduced awareness of what is going on<input type="radio"/> Unable to keep current | 7. Attendance and Punctuality <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Frequent tardiness in the morning<input type="radio"/> Frequent unplanned absences<input type="radio"/> Frequent complaints of vague illness<input type="radio"/> Frequently leaves early or returns late from lunch<input type="radio"/> Frequent unexplained disappearances from job | 11. Safety Conscious <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Higher than average on the job accidents<input type="radio"/> Takes needless risks<input type="radio"/> Disregards safety of others |
| 3. Judgment <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Inconsistent<input type="radio"/> Frequent errors on routine matters | 8. Analytical Ability <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Details often neglected<input type="radio"/> Increased number of poor conclusions/decisions | 12. Other Behavior Problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Inappropriate personal appearance<input type="radio"/> Loss of interest/enthusiasm for job<input type="radio"/> Extreme mood swings<input type="radio"/> Inappropriate behavior |
| 4. Initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Unwillingness to change work responsibilities<input type="radio"/> Needs constant supervision | 9. Ability to Communicate <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Argumentative<input type="radio"/> Less communicative than in the past<input type="radio"/> Unclear/imprecise written communications | |
| 5. Resource Utilization <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Overly dependent on others<input type="radio"/> Unable to identify proper resources | | |

Regarding the affirmative responses (Items 1 – 12)

- B. Have you documented the performance or behavior deficiencies in behaviorally specific terms? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- C. Have you communicated your concerns regarding the individual's work performance or behavior to the individual? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- D. Has their performance or behavior continued to deteriorate? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- E. Have these items been included in a formal performance review or in formal disciplinary actions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If the total affirmative responses under section A are excessive in your judgment and the answers to sections B, C, D and E are affirmative, contact Manager Support.

For more information, call 1-866-580-9078 (TTY 711)
or visit www.resilience.af.mil/Workforce-Resource