1. Introduction

1.1 A Guide to Supervisory Referrals

Photo by Jeff Miller/UW-Madison
Hello. My name is Sherry Ray Boeger. I am the Director of the Employee Assistance Office (EAO) here at UW Madison. The Employee Assistance Office is a University resource to assist employees with personal and work-related concerns while promoting the productivity, health and safety of the work environment. We provide counseling to employees and supervisors, workshops, grief groups and much more. One unique aspect of the Employee Assistance Office is that we understand both the dynamics of the individual as well as the dynamics of the workplace.

This presentation will focus on how supervisors can utilize the EAO in responding to employees who are experiencing personal or work-related problems that impact the workplace. The presentation will explore how and when to make a referral and how the EAO can help you to address the employee concerns.

One of the questions people frequently ask is about the confidentiality of their visit to the EAO. Go to the next slide to find out more.
1.3 Our Commitment to Confidentiality

Is an EAO consultation confidential? The answer is “yes, within limits.” The exceptions to confidentiality are primarily related to safety. The consultant is obligated to address safety concerns in cases where a person is at risk of harm to self or others, an abused or neglected child or elder, or unexplained, unusual, or suspicious death. We will share more about confidentiality when we talk about supervisory referrals.

In a moment, you will be introduced to the fictional character of John. While the EAO has met with many people in similar circumstances to John’s, we want to emphasize that this scenario, and the scenarios that follow, are entirely fictional.
1.4 3 Ways Employees Access the EAO

There are three ways for employees to access the EAO: Self, Informal and Formal Referrals.

Let’s begin with the Self Referral, which is typically made by an employee who is struggling with personal or work related concerns. This initial contact is made by calling or emailing the EAO office to get an appointment.

Click the Self Referral option to continue.
2. Self Referral

2.1 How the EAO Can Help

John is married with two children. He has always been a collaborative employee who works well with others. His director and colleagues have appreciated his creative thinking and ability to be a team player.

Then John’s behavior at work changes. He no longer offers his opinion and appears distracted most of the time. Something is different. John’s director and team want and need him back.

This is the type of situation that the EAO is able to assist with.

Let’s hear from John about his self-referral experience.
2.2 Before Self Referral

John:

I have been going through a very challenging time in my life. My wife and I have been growing further apart in the past few years and a few months ago she asked me for a divorce. This has been very difficult for me. I am angry, sad and there are some days I don’t even feel like getting out of bed. I have told a few people at work, but this has made it worse. The group of people I have worked with for many years are just acting as if nothing is wrong. I am too embarrassed to talk to my friends about this as I feel like a failure.

I wasn’t sure where to turn and then I saw an EAO poster on the bulletin board at work. It looked like they could help with situations like mine.
2.3 Self Referral to the EAO

Problems like John’s are common and they can make it difficult for employees to concentrate on their work, or anything else for that matter. That is why it is important that employees are able to receive guidance and support from the EAO. Because the consultants are familiar with both campus and community resources, they can facilitate referrals when needed.
2.4 After Self Referral

John:

I was fortunate to have worked with a consultant at the EAO. I am still in the process of going through my divorce and it is not easy. I am not sure how I would have managed without the EAO. The consultant helped me to understand that my feelings are normal and to understand that I was grieving. We discussed ways I can move forward and feel like myself again. Now, I actually feel I can focus at work and make contributions to our projects. People have even commented that “it’s nice to see you smile again”.
This is exactly the type of success story the EAO takes pride in. Like all employees, John is valuable and his contributions make a difference.

Coping with divorce is one of the many concerns the EAO may be able to help with. Other types of issues employees face are family problems, depression, anxiety, grief, substance abuse, and financial stress. Many people also contact the EAO for work related issues like conflict, difficulties with change, job performance problems, and unclear expectations.
3. Informal Supervisory Referral

3.1 Informal Referral

Supervisor: Jane, I have noticed you don’t seem like yourself lately. Usually you are one of the first people to greet me and others when we come to work. Recently though you haven’t been speaking to your co-workers. And, in our staff meetings you have been very quiet. I am concerned about this change. Are you okay?

Jane: I’ve been having a lot of personal problems.

Supervisor: Jane, does this have anything to do with the DUI you told me about last month? If so, have you gotten any help for that?

Jane: I thought about going to a counselor but I wanted to see if I could deal with it on my own. You understand don’t you?
**Supervisor:** Yes, I do understand; however, I suggest that you start with the EAO and work with them to see what makes the most sense for you. The consultant can help you figure out what resources might be helpful. The EAO is a confidential, no cost resource and you can go there on work time. Here is the phone number and a copy of their brochure.

### 3.2 Informal Supervisor Referral

This example demonstrates how important it is for you, as a supervisor, to intervene early when you notice changes in your employees' attendance, work habits or relationships with co-workers or others. Offering a referral to the EAO has the potential to prevent future job performance problems.
4. Formal Supervisory Referral

4.1 Formal Referral

In this scenario, Mike has been called into his supervisor’s office to address a concern. Let’s listen in:

**Supervisor:** Mike, I just overheard you yelling at Jim and slamming the door. I am really concerned. When this type of behavior happened about a month ago, I put you on notice that it was a work rule violation and it must not happen again. I thought you were clear on what changes you needed to make. Since these changes haven’t occurred, I’m going to have to take additional steps. I’ll be scheduling a pre-disciplinary meeting with you shortly.

**Mike:** But you don’t understand. Jim really knows how to push my buttons.

**Supervisor:** Nevertheless Mike, I need you to engage in respectful behavior in the work
place. Since you have not been able to do this on your own, I want you to contact the Employee Assistance Office. They are able to coach employees regarding conflict resolution, communication skills and respectful interaction with co-workers.

**Mike:** If I go to the EAO, does this mean you won’t have to have a pre-disciplinary meeting?

**Supervisor:** No Mike, going to the EAO is not a substitute for formal corrective action. However, they are a good resource and can coach you regarding different approaches to take when your buttons are being pushed. It is my hope, that with their help, you will be able turn this situation around.

This is one example of when you would make a Formal Supervisory Referral. Mike’s behavior and communication were directly related to his job performance and needed to be addressed.

In order for the EAO to be most effective in working with your employee, it would be helpful for you to call ahead to provide the consultant with background information and to share your concerns and expectations. This enables the consultant to be most effective in not only helping the employee but also you, as a supervisor, in the approach you take with the employee.
As a supervisor, you have the ability to influence how your employee views this referral. It is important that the employee understands that you want them to be successful, and utilizing the EAO as a resource could help. Many supervisors find it difficult to address performance concerns when they know the person is struggling in their personal life. To help with this, the following is an example of what you might say to an employee when making a Formal Supervisory Referral.

“Sometimes work problems like these are the result of things going on outside the workplace. It may not be true in your case, and it's really none of my business. Because it is true sometimes; our University has the Employee Assistance Office. It's free and it's confidential. It has helped a lot of people.”
4.3 Informal vs. Formal

A question that is often raised is, “What is the difference between an Informal and Formal Supervisory Referral”?

The Informal Referral is made early on, before work performance has been significantly affected, and could be considered a preventative measure. When performance becomes a serious concern, a Formal Supervisory Referral would be your next step.

The Formal Referral is made when the employee’s problems have resulted in a negative change in performance, such as reduced quality or quantity of work, inability.

In order for the EAO to be most effective in working with your employee, the consultant needs to receive a call from you the supervisor ahead of time to provide background and share your concerns and expectations.

As previously stated, it is important to consult with the EAO prior to making the Formal Referral.
5. Review & Quiz

5.1 Summary

We realize as supervisors you have other responsibilities in addition to managing people. We’re also aware that managing people can be one of the most stressful parts of your job. Remember help is available through Human Resources, as well as EAO consultation. If you remember nothing else from this presentation, please remember you are not alone when dealing with a troubled employee. Call the EAO for a confidential conversation or to debrief when you have had a difficult encounter with an employee. Whether you refer the employee or not, your Employee Assistance Office is here to support you.
Let’s take a moment to review the 3 types of referrals you’ve just heard about:

The Self Referral is most common and includes employees, eligible family members or significant others. In this case, the person contacts the EAO to schedule an appointment for themselves to discuss the personal or work-related concerns they have.

An Informal Referral is made when a supervisor becomes aware of an issue that is affecting the employee. You can remind the employee of the EAO services and offer them the EAO phone number and brochure. Use of the Informal Referral may prevent future job performance concerns.

The Formal Referral is based on work-related concerns: performance, quality or quantity of work, attendance, or ability to get along at work. Remember this is not a substitute for discipline. It is a resource to help the employee address whatever might be contributing to their job performance issues.
5.3 **Who is eligible to use the Employee Assistance Office services?**

*(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)*

![Check Your Understanding](image)

**Who is eligible to use the Employee Assistance Office services?**

- a) Faculty, academic and classified staff
- b) Student hourly or LTEs
- c) Employee spouses/significant others
- d) All of the above

**Feedback when correct:**

That's right! Any employee is eligible as well as their spouse/significant other.

**Feedback when incorrect:**

The answer is d) Any employee is eligible as well as their spouse/significant other.

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5.4 **Self Referrals are made by...**

*(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)*
Feedback when correct:

That's right! Typically the employee contacts EAO for self referral.

Feedback when incorrect:

The answer is a) Typically the employee contacts EAO for self referral.

5.5 Which one of the following would not be appropriate for an Informal Referral?

(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)
Check Your Understanding

Which one of the following would not be appropriate for an Informal Referral?

- a) Supervisor finds employee distraught on the job
- b) Employee tells supervisor of personal issue
- c) Employee is being disciplined for poor work performance
- d) Supervisor is spending lots of time listening to employee's personal problems

Feedback when correct:
That's right! When it has reached the point of work performance it is time for a Formal Referral.

Feedback when incorrect:
The answer is c) When it has reached the point of work performance it is time for a Formal Referral.

5.6 Which of the following would not be confidential?

(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)
5.7 Which of the following would not be appropriate for a Formal Referral?

(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)
Check Your Understanding

Which of the following would not be appropriate for a Formal Referral?

- a) Their supervisor doesn’t like the employee
- b) The employee has difficulty getting along with co-workers
- c) The employee has attendance problems
- d) The supervisor has coached the employee regarding performance and no changes have occurred

Feedback when correct:

That's right! A Formal Referral is made when there are performance problems.

Feedback when incorrect:

The answer is a) A Formal Referral is made when there are performance problems.

5.8 The EAO can be accessed by...

(Multiple Choice, 10 points, 1 attempt permitted)
Check Your Understanding

The EAO can be accessed by...

- a) Calling the EAO office
- b) Checking with your human resource representative
- c) Talking with your supervisor
- d) You can contact the EAO yourself, through an HR rep., or your supervisor

**Feedback when correct:**
That's right! You can call EAO yourself, through an HR rep., or your supervisor

**Feedback when incorrect:**
The answer is d) The EAO can be accessed by calling directly, through an HR rep., or talking to your supervisor
Frequently Asked Questions

**What is the Employee Assistance Office?**
The Employee Assistance Office is a resource provided by the University of Wisconsin to assist employees and their immediate family members or significant others who are finding it difficult to successfully cope with personal or work related issues and concerns.

**Who is eligible to use the Employee Assistance Office?**
Employee Assistance Office services are available to all faculty, staff, LTE/project employees and their immediate family members or significant others.

**Why do people use the Employee Assistance Office?**
Most people who come to the Employee Assistance Office have tried unsuccessfully to problem solve a situation in their personal or work life and are looking for additional options or resources for dealing with it.
What about Confidentiality?
Contact with the staff of the Employee Assistance Office is confidential within limits as governed by Federal and State regulations. This information is reviewed with the employee at the time of their initial appointment.

What happens at the Employee Assistance Office?
At the time of the initial visit, individuals are given the Employee Assistance Office Statement of Confidentiality to review and a brief questionnaire to fill out. They then meet with a consultant who reviews their situation, works to clarify their issues/concerns and to identify options and possible resources for addressing them. The initial consultation usually lasts approximately an hour. Subsequent follow-up visits, if necessary, are usually an hour or less.

How are Employee Assistance Office services accessed?
Employee Assistance Office services can be accessed by calling 263-2987 during regular office hours (Monday-Friday, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.).

Can Employee Assistance Office services be utilized on work time?
Work time may be used to contact the Employee Assistance Office and for appointments with its consultants. Employees need to arrange time out of their work area with their supervisor to arrange coverage and work demands.

What is the cost of using the Employee Assistance Office?
Employee Assistance Office services are available at no cost.

Where is the Employee Assistance Office located?
The Employee Assistance Office is located in Room 226 Lowell Center, 610 Langdon Street, Madison, WI 53703. View Map (requires Flash).

As a supervisor what should I do when an employee doesn’t seek help for their problems?
You can offer your employee the campus resources (Employee Assistance Office, Human Resources, Equity and Diversity Office). Whether they utilize the resources is up to the employee. Regardless, as their supervisor it is your job to hold the employee accountable for doing their work. This does include the ability to get along at work. So it is important you are clear about your expectations.

What should I do as a supervisor, if I make a Formal Supervisory Referral and the employee refuses to go?
You continue to hold the employee accountable for their work. You cannot make an employee take advantage of the referral. You have done your part in offering a resource and now it is up to employee to find a way to address the problem whether they do it on their own or with the help of the EAO. It is important to be clear that the
employee is still responsible for making the necessary changes to address any work performance issue with or without help.

**As a supervisor do I have to discipline for performance if I made a referral to EAO?**
As a supervisor you are responsible for addressing performance concerns with your employee and this needs to occur regardless of making a referral. The purpose of the referral is to provide a resource that could help the employee to address the problem so that it does not continue to impact the work environment.

**How will I know if my employee followed through on the supervisory referral I made?**
It is important if you are making a formal supervisory referral that you contact the EAO before referring your employee. This will allow you to provide details of the behavior/performance problems, as well as your concerns. This way EAO can ask for a release of information from the employee in order to follow up with you on attendance and compliance.

**What does it mean when someone says, “the supervisor was enabling”?**
Enabling is a tendency to protect the employee from the consequences of his/her behavior. However, it often takes consequences or the realization that there will be consequences to motivate change. Ways people enable: failure to confront or talking around an issue. Another example is denying or minimizing the problem. If you cannot afford to have all of your employees behaving in a particular way, then you cannot afford to have one employee behave that way. Remember, what you permit you promote.
Thank you for taking time to review this presentation. For more information contact our office at 608-263-2987.