The EAP notified me that an employee I referred is not following through with its recommendations. The employee signed a release, but there are no disciplinary issues. Is there any reason to meet with the employee, even though I can’t discuss the personal problem?

Yes. Sit down with your employee. Explain that you are in this meeting not to discuss any personal business related to the EAP referral, but to address the performance or conduct matter that led to the referral in the first place. Your expectation is the resolution of that problem or concern regardless of follow-through at the EAP. Let your employee know what the consequences are for a continuation of the problem, and encourage him or her to reconsider participation in the EAP along with its recommendations. Follow up and meet with your employee in the weeks ahead to reinforce any successful work performance or address any return to the performance issue. Whether you refer to the EAP again (if problems return) would be up to you, but talk with the EAP if that happens.

We hired an employee who was recently paroled from prison after being incarcerated for a few years. Can I refer the employee to the EAP to be interviewed and assessed for any risk issues?

The EAP would not meet with an employee for this purpose because it is beyond the scope of EAP practice. The employee could self-refer to the EAP for any reason, of course, and you could refer the employee (like any other employee) for performance issues, but meeting with the EAP to help management better gauge the employment decision would be impermissible. Such a practice would damage the program’s ability to attract self-referrals, because a psychological reporting role would be seen by the workforce as intimidating. Your new employee has a parole officer, and the court has a discharge plan. The court takes responsibility for a parolee’s assessment, release, and suitability for work. This often includes communication with the employer. EAPs promote their confidentiality and their reputation as a safe and helpful resource, and when this perception is eroded, risk to the organization will increase because some employees may shy away.

I am a new manager and in my first job as a supervisor. What problems might I encounter early that I can prepare for now?

Becoming a manager can be exciting, but be sure you understand your role and responsibilities. Have this discussion and nail down the details early. This will prevent many problems you would otherwise face from overlooking important aspects of your job. Be prepared for difficult challenges that lead you to question your ability to do the job. This is normal. If your employees are performing well, do not see this as a signal to ignore them until they need you. Be proactive and engage with them regularly. The supervi-
If I feel overwhelmed, can the EAP help me?

Many employees are taking care of elderly parents while managing their households and parenting their own children. I think some of these workers are at risk for burnout, or at least for being unproductive at some point. How can managers play a role in helping these workers?

Compassion fatigue describes the type of burnout often experienced by caregivers. Additionally, the “Sandwich Generation” describes those adults faced with responsibilities for their children while also ministering to the needs of elderly parent(s). Like nurses who may experience burnout that contributes to less-effective patient care, absenteeism, and employee turnover, these employees may pose similar risks to employers. Realize that caregivers may not notice the level of stress they are truly under until symptoms like health problems appear. For burnout, these could include dozens of maladies and complaints—headaches, lowered resiliency, interpersonal conflicts, cynicism, irritability, low energy, more frequent colds, or blaming the employer for not appreciating his or her contributions. It can be a highly mixed bag of issues. When you witness productivity drop-offs among employees, refer early to the EAP. Scheduling flexibility may offer valuable help for employee caregivers, but a lot of accommodating can be difficult for employers.

I am feeling burned out. I am exhausted, apathetic, and frustrated. Should I go to my boss first or visit the EAP for answers on how to get out of this state of mind?

Whether you approach your boss or the EAP is your decision, but here is how the EAP can help: 1) Assess the degree to which burnout is affecting your physical health (a medical referral may follow). 2) Identify the ways in which burnout has affected your work-life balance, with the goal of planning a return-to-wellness strategy, particularly with regard to depression. 3) Offer suggestions for intervention strategies outside of work that can help you return to a more fully functioning state of engagement with your organization. 4) Help you examine on-the-job interventions, some of which may require discussion with your boss in order to implement them. 5) Follow up with you to facilitate, monitor, and help you implement your return-to-wellness plan.

Please call our EAP professionals for advice on confronting and referring troubled employees to the EAP. We will assist you in developing action plans and coach you toward successful confrontations. This is part of your EAP service with McLaughlin Young.

McLaughlin Young 704-529-1428 or 800-633-3353

*FrontLine Supervisor* is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to be specific guidance for any particular supervisor or human resource management concern. URLs are case-sensitive. For specific guidance on handling individual employee problems, consult with your EAP professional. © 2017 DFA Publishing & Consulting, LLC