



THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FEB
19

February Online Seminar

Mental Health First Aid

Recognize the signs of someone who might be facing emotional concerns, and learn best practices for offering support.

Available on-demand
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Deer Oaks 2019 Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series

Employee Engagement

A series of practical educational programs designed to help supervisors and managers to build more engaged and productive work teams. This series is available to all supervisors, managers, and other interested employees and does not count toward your organization's training hour bank.

Webinar # 1: Creating a Culture of Improved Employee Engagement

This dynamic presentation will provide several practical strategies that supervisors can utilize in their day-to-day management approach to improve employee engagement and motivation. The session will discuss methods for identifying the needs and interests of staff and techniques for getting them to buy into and work towards the accomplishment of organizational goals.

Friday, March 1st 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7291651448822880771>

Monday, March 4th 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2540442902388928259>

Building a Collaborative Team Environment

Teams are expected to produce results, but performance is hindered when team members don't work together well. A collaborative team environment is essential for the team's success. To create a collaborative environment, team members must do the following:

- Have a common purpose and goals
- Trust each other
- Clarify roles
- Communicate openly and effectively
- Appreciate diversity
- Balance the team's focus

Have a common purpose and goals.

A team is defined as 'a group of people working together toward a common goal'. Without a goal, there is no team. Ideas for creating a common goal include these:

- Create and/or review the team's charter.
- Discuss why the team exists.
- Allow each team member to express commitment.
- Create mottoes, symbols, awards, or posters that portray the team as one unit.
- Use the common purpose to prioritize team actions.

Trust each other.

Team members must trust each other if they're to work together successfully. Ideas for creating trust among team members include these:

- Be honest.
- Work to eliminate conflicts of interests.
- Avoid talking behind each other's backs.
- Trust teammates (you must trust them before they'll trust you).
- Give team members the benefit of the doubt.

Clarify roles.

Knowing everyone's role and being familiar with the responsibility of those roles creates efficiency and flexibility. Ideas for clarifying roles on the team include the following:

- Review team members' roles frequently.
- Relate team member expectations to the team's overall purpose.
- Clarify responsibilities when action planning.
- Learn what others do on the team.
- Figure out ways to help each other.

Communicate openly and effectively.

Miscommunication can create hard feelings and undermine the success of the team. Ideas for improving communication include the following:

- Err on the side of over communicating.
- Seek to understand all angles.
- Take responsibility for being heard and understood.
- Work to clear up misunderstandings quickly and accurately.
- Reinforce and recognize team member efforts.

Appreciate diversity.

Team members come from all walks of life, with different backgrounds and perspectives. Ideas for taking advantage of team diversity include the following:

- Remember that reasonable people can and do differ from each other.
- Try to learn as much as you can from others.
- Evaluate a new idea based on its merits.
- Avoid remarks that draw negative attention to a person's unique characteristics.
- Don't ignore the differences among team members.

Balance the team's focus.

Finally, team members need to recognize that they should measure and monitor the products and services the team provides as well as the team's internal group dynamics and relationships. (Sometimes team members get so involved in the process of becoming a team, they forget the reason they were made a team in the first place, or vice versa.) Ideas for creating that balance include these:

- Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of team meetings.
- Hold team celebrations for achieving results.
- Praise individual effort.
- Design individual performance goals that emphasize both results and teamwork.
- Assign certain team members to monitor task needs and others to monitor relationship needs.

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). (Reviewed 2018 [Ed.]). Building a collaborative team environment (B. Schuette, Ed.). Retrieved October 18, 2018, from <https://www.opm.gov/>

Ten Things to Promote Cultural Competence at Work

1. Make a commitment to expand knowledge about culture, cultural competence, and the various dimensions of culture in your organization.
2. Make a commitment to develop an understanding of the various cultural groups within communities served by your organization.
3. Include culture and cultural-competence principles in the strategic planning, policy development, program design, and service-delivery process. Increase the organizational and individual understanding of how the various dimensions of culture impact the clients or families that your company serves and the staff that works with them.
4. Be committed to promoting cultural competence. Develop this commitment through staff development and training, hiring, retention, career advancement, performance evaluations, and employee policies that support culturally competent and linguistically appropriate practice.
5. Create a safe, secure, and supportive environment where staff can explore and develop an understanding for all cultures. Create formal partnerships with community organizations, and encourage staff to actively engage communities and families in the development of policy, program design, and service-delivery models.
6. Be active in local communities. Engage communities by recruiting local citizens for the board of directors, in voting positions, and on advisory teams and task forces, if applicable. Encourage and support staff to become involved in community boards and cultural activities.
7. Be an example to tribes, communities, and families that work with your organization by making hiring decisions that are reflective of the diversity of those populations. More importantly, make sure that staff develop an understanding and respect for the richness, strength, and additional capacity culture and diversity bring to the workplace.
8. Advocate for the development of cultural-competence principles in other groups to which your organization belongs. Include criteria in requests for proposals and other contracts that place emphasis on the ability of the applicant, contractor, or consultant to demonstrate the capacity and ability to achieve positive results that are culturally competent and linguistically appropriate, and applicable to the needs of clients being served.
9. Become more proactive about recognizing and resolving conflicts that can occur when differing cultures interact. Encourage staff to speak out when they recognize intolerance, whether or not they are the targets.
10. If your organization provides educational and/or recreational opportunities for the community and families served, make sure that they include experiences that are reflective of all cultural groups. For instance, many tribes and communities have museums or cultural centers that host a variety of events throughout the year and on holidays. Also, during the summer many communities have various festivals that celebrate the culture, traditions, artwork, and dance of racial and ethnic groups. Encourage children and youth to share their knowledge about the cultural groups to which they belong.

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway. (n.d.). Ten things you should do to promote cultural competence (B. Schuette, Ed.). Retrieved October 19, 2018, from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.

Q. When giving feedback to employees, I notice they are often defensive. My intention is to let them know what they are doing incorrectly along with what they are doing correctly so they can avoid future mistakes. How can I improve my approach and make feedback more pleasant?

A. Giving feedback to employees is not about delivering the good with the bad and hoping for the best. Your attitude and approach are critical. Do you show annoyance over the shortcomings of your employee's work, or do you deliver feedback with judgment-free specificity? Do the latter because valuable employees are hard enough on themselves. More importantly, give feedback with the intention of motivating employees. If an employee is not energized following a feedback interview, you have taken a step backward in that relationship. Whenever possible, use feedback meetings to teach new skills. Develop good working relationships with your employees and discuss how you will give feedback to them. Let them know that the purpose of feedback is to help them excel, not to find fault or shake their confidence. Use these guidelines the next time you give feedback. You will enjoy giving feedback more often and you'll do it more effectively.

Q. My employee suffers from chronic pain. He is a good performer. He has more difficulty on some days than others, and this causes him to move more slowly, but it is acceptable. How can I be more supportive?

A. The strongest recommendation regarding supporting employees with disabilities, including chronic pain, is for managers to remain approachable and welcoming so employees with special needs feel willing to request accommodations. This means periodically touching base with these workers and asking how things are going. It also includes modeling inclusiveness to coworkers. Failure to do so may contribute to unnecessary employee turnover. Offering disability awareness to the work organization or work unit is also a plus. The EAP can discuss with you what options for this sort of education might be available. Research shows that stress, anxiety, and workplace conflict can exacerbate chronic pain. This is an added reason to maintain good communication in the workplace, recommend EAP assistance for those who need it, and help employees maintain job satisfaction.

Q. We have an older employee whom some people call "Pops," as in "Hey Pops!" I am a bit nervous that the term is age discriminatory. It rubs me the wrong way at least and a couple of others as well. Still, the employee doesn't seem to mind. What's the recommendation?

A. This term "pops" is being viewed by at least a couple of employees as discriminatory. Is it? It really does not matter. Insist that employees stop using this term because people find it offensive. That's the justification. Perhaps this tag may have been fitting for a chuck wagon cook in an old Western movie, but it's problematic in the modern era. It does not matter that your employee is not offended. The term denotes an age stereotype. Even if your employee is fond of the term, others may label it as offensive. There are many terms commonly used in the workplace that few employees would give a second thought to. They may feel benign. Unfortunately, many of these terms have shown up in discrimination court cases. Terms like "having a senior moment," "looking for new blood," "our new and seasoned supervisors," and "old school" may also be problematic with regard to ageism in the workplace.

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