



THE SUPERVISOR/HR NEWSLETTER

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

March
2020

March Online Seminar

Planning for Professional Growth

Discuss the four stages of professional careers and get tools to develop a self-assessment plan that can lead to your career growth.

Available on-demand starting
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Deer Oaks 2020 Supervisor Excellence Webinar Series *Employee Engagement*

Advanced Communication Skills that Improve Employee Motivation
February 3rd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/794103984746779139>

Successful Approaches to Difficult Employee Conversations
May 4th, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/444956266369821443>

Maintaining Effective Communication Channels
August 3rd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5196350630268998915>

Advanced Coaching Skills for Leaders
November 2nd, 1:00 – 2:00 PM CT

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8703449675246617347>

Expectations and Agreements for Trainings and Meetings

Establishing clear expectations and agreements supports teams and leaders. Using a democratic process of generating a set of expectations creates an open, safe, and democratic learning environment during trainings and meetings.

Open meetings or training groups by setting expectations and agreements.

Create two lists:

- The first is a set of “agreements” composed of ground rules that everyone agrees to follow.
- The second list has briefly stated “expectations” that participants have.

Ask for group consensus. Can everyone in the room agree with every item on the list? If not, open the items in question up to discussion. Lead the conversation to a conclusion where the original agreement is clarified and consensus is reached, or it has been altered in such a way that everyone is content with it. Encourage participants to use “expectations and agreements” when they facilitate their own trainings and meetings.

Expectations

Developing group expectations allows group members to share the reasons they have come together. It is very informative to both the group and the facilitator. Gathering expectations gives the group a sense of ownership; it also gives the facilitator a better idea of what the group would like to experience during their time together.

How to Generate Expectations

- Explain what expectations are to the group, and provide them with a couple of examples.
- Ask the group members to take a few minutes and silently think about what they would like to get out of the experience.
- Prompt the group to share their expectations.
- Lead the brainstorm by modeling strong facilitation skills and recording expectations on paper.
- Read through the expectations, and check for understanding from the entire group.

Agreements

Members of a group need to decide how they would like to work together and what their norms will be. It is not the job of the facilitator to set the ground rules; instead, the participants should generate agreements and be held accountable for their decisions.

How to Generate Agreements

- Set up a brainstorming session at the beginning of the meeting.
- Ask the group to tell you ways they agree to work together. You may want to give them a couple of examples like, “We will start and end on time.”
- Lead the brainstorm by modeling strong facilitation skills and recording their expectations on paper.
- Review each agreement, and make sure all group members understand what it means.
- Ask if the group will be willing to amend the agreements as the need arises.
- Ask the group to commit to the list of agreements.
- Use the agreements throughout your time together to help the group accomplish its objectives and to stay on task. Feel free to review the agreements if necessary.

List of Expectations

Developing group expectations allows a group to share with each other and with the training staff the reasons why they chose to come together. Not only does it enhance the overall involvement for participants, but it also helps those leading sessions know and understand the needs of the participants.

My expectations for this training:

The group's expectations for this training:

List of Agreements

Participants must also create a set of agreements in order to work together and achieve the expectations of the group. The group develops its own set of working standards by brainstorming.

Agreements that I would like to propose:

The group's agreements:

This was adapted from the Northwest Leader Corps training curriculum written and compiled by Nicole Trimble. It is an EnCorps resource.

Source: Trimble, N. (2007, June; Revised 2019 [Ed.]). Training expectations and agreements [Excerpt] (B. Schuette, Ed.). Retrieved November 20, 2019, from the Corporation for National and Community Service website: <https://www.nationalservice.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. Why is it important for supervisors to understand “psychological safety” in the workplace? Is this just a passing fad? Isn’t it a new burden for supervisors and a way of taking too much care of employees when it comes to their happiness and well-being?

A. A psychologically safe workplace is another way to describe a work climate that encourages employees to be vulnerable and authentic, present their talents and abilities, and do so without fear of disapproval from managers or peers. There is a business case for psychological safety in the workplace as a tool that produces a positive influence on the bottom line. From a supervisory perspective, one key practice in promoting a psychologically safe workplace is to continually notice what appears to inhibit employees from sharing their ideas, notions, and concepts for improvement and change regarding products, services, and systems. This could be almost any tangible or intangible obstacle, from physical barriers in an office to employee meetings and coworker behaviors that discourage creative expression. It can also be your own lack of modeling risk-taking behaviors or failure to make psychological safety a tradition in your work unit that is continually reinforced by what you say and do.

Q. My employee has been coming to work late. I finally sat down to confront him. He opened up about the problems he is facing at home. He wants leave without pay (LWOP) for a week to deal with these problems. I don’t mind authorizing the leave, but should I ask him to visit the EAP too?

A. The seriousness of the attendance problems makes a formal referral to the EAP appropriate. Consider this as the first step. Discuss the attendance pattern with the EAP or share documentation to allow a more thorough assessment. The assessment could discover that the problems he has shared with you are not primary, but symptoms of larger issues that should be resolved before attendance issues will stop. Taking time off might be a needed accommodation recommended by the EAP, but maybe not. (Note that the EAP cannot tell you to approve or disapprove LWOP.) A release will allow the EAP to share essential basic information, without details, necessary for you to manage your employee’s productivity and attendance issues. On a side note, this scenario with your employee is a good example of how easy it can be to accept what you are hearing at face value from a troubled employee without knowing it will resolve the problem. Consider waiting to hear what the EAP recommends.

Q. My employee has mood swings that range from pleasant to very grumpy and argumentative. Everyone complains about it, but I have not gotten to the point of taking some job action. After all, we all have some personality quirks. How do I decide that it is time to make a referral?

A. Although no one’s perfect, be cautious about slowly adapting to dysfunctional communication and thereby promoting a poor work climate that interferes with productivity, adversely affects morale, causes turnover, and enables this behavior to grow worse. You aren’t ready for a formal referral to the EAP until you sit down with this person to give feedback, ask for changes, describe those changes clearly, and get a commitment from the employee. You should meet with the EAP and formulate an approach to this issue. Are you afraid of confronting this employee? Discuss that possibility with the employee assistance program because it could serve as a roadblock to what appears to be necessary change that would benefit everyone.

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