

Q. If a tragedy occurs in the workplace and employees are emotionally affected, what signs and symptoms

Q. I have known my employee for many years and am quite familiar with her personal problems. Does this create an exception in terms of not being given more specific information about the nature of her issues discussed at the EAP?

A. Typically, EAPs share very little information with a signed consent to release confidential information. This protects employees from the possibility of improper and reckless disclosures of confidential information, and in turn helps underscore and ensure the confidential nature of the EAP. Information that the EAP can share with managers, with an employee's signed release, includes acknowledgment of participation, cooperation with EAP recommendations, and accommodations for a manager to consider in supporting the employee's functional capacity and limitations. Historically, managers don't need any additional information to successfully manage their employees' performance. Your employee is free to share information with you directly about treatment or medical recommendations, but it would be improper for the EAP to communicate with you about these things because there is no clinical or performance-management justification. This may be difficult to accept after having played a significant role in supporting your employee up to this point, but you can still do that by being a manager who stays focused on performance.

Q. Can I phone the EAP to find out if an employee I suggested attend the program showed? More specifically, if the employee was in fact never seen, can the EAP say so?

A. Most EAPs will state that they can neither confirm nor deny participation in the program, and this answer is the best one to help protect employee clients and the program's perception of confidentiality among the workforce. Whether or not the employee is an EAP attendee does not interfere with, prevent, or amend any administrative actions you need to take or consider in response to the worker's performance, because the EAP is not a "safe harbor." This is consistent with EAP policies. Conceivably, employees could tell you they are participating in the EAP when they are not, but you should still make decisions based on what is observable, measurable, and consistent with employees' performance.