

Managing Mental Health: Action Plan for Managers

Managing mental health in the workplace is like managing anything else in the workplace:
It's about *performance*.

Best practice: Don't manage the illness; manage performance.

When to Intervene

High-Risk Warning Signs: **Reach out to HR or the EAP**

Other Warning Signs:

- Watch for patterns or escalation
- Document incidents
- Put isolated incidents in context
 - History
 - Performance
 - Situation

Remember, if you have *any* questions about an employee or workplace situation, consult with HR or contact your EAP directly for guidance

Action Plan for Managers

- Prepare
 - Know your company’s policies and procedures
 - Identify the appropriate contact: HR, EAP, or other resource
 - Keep contact information readily accessible
- **Don’t ignore** problematic or erratic behavior
 - Learn the warning signals (see below)
 - Intervene early
- **Don’t diagnose** or make assumptions
- **Document** behavior
 - Review internal policies
 - Be specific about what has been **observed**
 - Work performance
 - Workplace behavior concerns
 - Identify patterns
- **Consult** with your EAP for guidance
- **Coordinate** with HR, if indicated
- Hold a **constructive conversation** with the employee
 - Reach out to the person **based on work performance**
 - **Be specific** about what you have observed
 - **Review** policies with employee
 - State specific **expectations for change** including time frame
 - Schedule a **follow-up** meeting to discuss progress
 - Be firm, professional, and **compassionate**
 - Make the employee aware that **help is available** through the EAP
 - If the employee has already had some form of discipline, consider **involving HR** in progressive disciplinary action
- If performance does not improve, consider a **formal referral** to EAP

High-Risk Warning Signs:

- Suicidal statements
- Comments like “it would be better if I wasn’t here” or “I want out”
- Statements about being hopeless or worthless
- Loss of interest in things that used to be valued
- Dramatic mood swings
- Constant thoughts or discussion about death
- Extreme risk-taking or having a “death wish,” such as driving recklessly
- Threats
- Giving away possessions, putting affairs in order, saying farewell
- Sudden, unexplained change in mood from extreme sadness to calm, happy appearance
- Any major changes in patterns of behavior

If you observe any of the above behaviors, reach out to HR or the EAP as soon as possible.

The following warning signs can be indicators of a developing issue. If you observe any of these signs, assess the situation for High-Risk warning signs. Continue to monitor the situation for an increase in severity.

If the behavior is disruptive to the workplace, address the performance issue with the employee and offer an informal referral to the EAP.

Other Warning Signs

- Disrespectful to authority
- Strange or grandiose ideas
- Unpredictable changes in energy level / mood / cognition / behavior
- Changes in grooming / hygiene
- Social isolation
- Increased irritability
- Impulsive behavior
- Swearing / emotional outbursts
- Difficulty remembering / thinking / problem-solving
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Incongruent emotional or behavioral signals
- Pacing, restless, or repetitive movements

Work-related Signs and Symptoms

- Frequent absenteeism
- Long lunch breaks
- Regularly leaving early / Excessive lateness
- Conflict with co-workers
- Inconsistent work patterns
- Habitual mistakes
- Poor work product
- Decreased productivity
- Trouble accepting responsibility
- Blaming others for mistakes
- Avoiding supervisors or co-workers
- Lack of workplace boundaries

Work-related signs and symptoms should be addressed as a performance issue regardless of whether they are related to a mental health issue.