

**Q. My employee told me, in a private conversation, that she visited the EAP regarding some problems at home with her spouse. Am I obligated to keep this information about her visit to the EAP confidential?**

A. Yes. Periodically, all managers learn personal information about their employees through private conversations, employment records, hearsay, and personal notes provided to them. Sometimes employees accidentally disclose personal information under emotional stress. Your possession of this information carries with it significant responsibility, and the appropriate care of it is a matter that shouldn't be taken lightly. Here are some rules to follow: Consider all personal information about employees as private and never disclose it unless compelled to do so. In all cases, talk to your HR manager or legal advisor and don't act alone without such advice. Also, it may be tempting to share personal information about an employee in confidence with another manager/colleague and ask him or her to not re-share it. Don't do this.



## **UR Medicine EAP**

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**Q. If supervisors visit the EAP to get advice or consultation on unique employee management situations, but do not share their personal problems with the EAP, are they still guaranteed the same sort of confidentiality given to employee clients?**

A. Any employee, whether or not they are a supervisor, or whether or not the nature of the discussion is about a personal problem, is covered by the program's confidentiality policy. Using the program to get help is what defines you as a client, not the type problem you bring. Ensuring that your discussions with the EAP are confidential reduces risk to the organization because it helps ensure that you are likely to visit the program without hesitation, seek its help in dealing with troubled employees, and thereby reduce risk that employees will be mismanaged. Mismanagement of employees can lead to wrongful discipline, workplace violence, conflicts, absenteeism, legal claims, and much more. When managing troubled employees or simply seeking to elevate their potential, consider what role the EAP can play. EAPs acquire experience on motivating workers, documentation, confrontation, praising and inspiring employees, making observations, and conflict resolution, and can guide you in "what to say" and "how to say it" no matter what the communication need might be.

**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.