

# How to Make a Management Referral

At the first sign of a decline in an employee's performance, early intervention can help to get the employee back on track. There may be a time when the manager needs to follow a formal process in order to document that the workplace has offered a resource for assistance. This process is called a *management referral*. By following the management referral process, the workplace can be a vehicle for helping to improve the performance of its employees.

**Step 1. Call the EAP:** Call your toll-free EAP number and ask to speak to an Employee Assistance Consultant. Have on hand the employee's:

- Name
- Address
- Social security number
- Date of birth

The EA Consultant will use this information to open a case for your employee.

**Step 2. Consultation:** You will review with the EA Consultant the concerns you have about the employee's performance, and together develop a plan to address those concerns. Part of this plan might include a management referral.

**Step 3. Making the referral:** The EA consultant will explain the management referral process, including:

- Release of Information form
- Employee access to EAP
- Compliance information, and the follow-up process

**Step 4. Talking to the employee:** As part of the performance discussion with the employee, you will need to review the management referral process. Include an explanation of the Release of Information form and how the employee can access the EAP. Summarize your performance expectations, and discuss the employee's plans for improvement. Remember to have the employee sign the Release of Information form, and then fax or mail it to the EA Consultant.

**Step 5. EAP for the employee:** Direct the employee to call the toll-free EAP number. A Personal Advocate will connect him or her to EAP services. The EA Consultant will contact the designated EAP provider and review the reasons for the management referral. The EAP provider will assess the employee's situation, problem-solve, and make recommendations. The provider may connect the employee to additional resources to help resolve the performance issues.



**Step 6. Follow-up:** The EA Consultant will provide you updates on the employee's compliance with the management referral, including:

- Appointment made and kept
- EAP recommendations
- Initial follow through with EAP recommendations

**Step 7. After the management referral:** Continue to review your performance expectations with the employee, and offer feedback on both successes and areas needing improvement. Intervene immediately for any further performance problems. Remember that an Employee Assistance Consultant remains available to you for further consultation.

**About the release of information:** The *Release of Information* is at the core of a Management Referral. Through this release your employee authorizes the EA Consultant to give you updates about the Management Referral process. An EA Consultant will forward you a copy of this important document.

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# Talking Points for Managers: Making a Management Referral

## 1. Present the topic as a performance problem

- Point out the previous discussions requesting improved performance (this should not be the first discussion about the issue) to your employee.
- Present the management referral as an effort to retain, not dismiss, the employee. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is designed to help employees resolve performance issues.
- Name the performance issues in objective, measurable language (excessive absences, argumentative with co-workers, difficulty meeting deadlines, violation of company drug/alcohol policy).
- Note any improvement/efforts you have noted since implementing earlier performance plan.
- Outline the specific expectations for follow-through in the management referral process (“We expect you to attend all scheduled EAP appointments, to comply with the process, and to begin following through on any recommendations made by the provider prior to our being able to consider lifting your suspension.”)
- Use performance-based language
  - Avoid saying the employee “needs help” or “counseling” or any other terms that imply mental health problems (“I think you are depressed.”) due to potential liability issues.
  - State that they will meet with an Employee Assistance Provider (versus “counselor” or “therapist”).
- Express confidence in his/her ability to improve.

## 2. Discuss confidentiality

- Explain CIGNA Behavioral Health’s release of information form is to protect their confidentiality in accordance with federal and state confidentiality regulations.
- Emphasize that the only information you will receive is outlined in the points on the form.

## 3. Explain the referral process

- Inform the employee of the number of sessions available through their EAP benefit and that this benefit is provided to the employee free of charge.
- Give the employee specific time frames to call their EAP number for referrals (usually within 24 to 48 hours) and to set up an appointment with a provider (usually within 7-10 days, depending on provider availability).
- Coach the employee that they need to identify that they are calling as a part of a “Management Referral” when they call their EAP number for provider names.
- Coach your employee that they need to call their EAP number back to receive an authorization to the provider and so an Employee Assistance Consultant can contact the EAP provider regarding the reason for the management referral.



- Inform your employee (if applicable) that if the EAP provider recommends the employee access additional assistance in resolving the performance problem, they may incur some cost through co-payments or fees.
- Prepare your response should the employee decline to sign the release of information form. Some employers' state that they still expect the employee to meet the outlined performance expectations. Other employers consult with their Human Resources and/or legal department prior to the meeting and have been directed to inform the employee that this is a continuation of employment referral/last chance agreement. The consequences of an employee's decision to decline participation in the management referral process should be determined prior to the meeting with the employee.

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# How to Approach Employee Performance Problems

Dealing with performance problems is one of the most common – and challenging- tasks you face as a manager. At some point, you'll probably need to talk to an employee about performance problems. Before you meet with your employee it is important to prepare for the discussion.

- Identify the work performance issue at hand. Is there a decline in productivity? Are mistakes being made? Are there attendance problems? Does the employee have a difficult time interacting with others in an appropriate manner?
- Determine whether or not the problem stems from a lack of training or a misunderstanding about their job expectations. Consider options for improving performance (e.g. training, mentoring, change in work responsibilities, etc.)
- Don't try to diagnose or make assumptions. Be cautious about making personal judgments about the employee's situation. Keep your focus on the job performance or work behavior.
- Consult with your Human Resources and/or review your Company policy prior to speaking with the employee. Determine what the consequences will be if your employee fails to resolve the performance issue. Be sure you have documented the specific performance problems.
- Choose a time and place where you can speak with your employee uninterrupted and away from coworkers. Though this may an uncomfortable conversation do not put it off until the problem escalates further. Behavioral problems seldom "go away" on their own.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when speaking with your employee:

- **Validate the relationship.** Acknowledge the person's accomplishments, length of service, and position within the company can start the discussion in a positive manner.
- **Clearly state the problem.** Be objective and factual when you are talking with your employee. Don't express the problem with emotion (especially anger.) Be calm and even tempered when addressing the performance issues. For example, instead of saying, "I'm sick and tired of you missing work and you keep messing up on your assignments!!!" you could say, "Since April you have missed 13 days of work and we've received 10 complaints about errors in..."  
Don't make reference to suspected personal, emotional, alcohol or drug related problems in the meeting. If your employee brings these topics up, it's fine to respond but your discussion should center on the observable workplace behavior.
- **Explain the consequences of the problem for others.** Explain how their behavior affects the organization, the unit, or other people. For example, "This has lead to XYZ Company canceling their account, or "Your absence means someone else has to pick up your workload in addition to their own," or "Your inappropriate comments are upsetting Sally and making it difficult for her to concentrate on her work."



In addition, offer to help your employee with the changes, offer a schedule of periodic meeting with them to review their progress and to problem-solve any hurdles. Remind them of the availability of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for further help. Your help should be focused on the workplace; the EAP can help with personal issues. If you have questions or concerns about talking with your employee, you can call the EAP for consultation with an Employee Assistance Consultant.

**After the employee performance discussion:**

- Contact your Human Resources to discuss the outcome of the meeting.
- Document your action plan, the employee’s verbal response, and the next steps.
- Continue to document any substandard work performance. Consider making a management referral to the EAP at any step in this process.
- Document any improved work performance.
- Give your employee feedback.

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# Common Diversionary Tactics and How to Handle Them

TACTIC	RESPONSE
<b>1. Sympathy</b> —attempts to create sympathy, pity, remorse, guilt, and/or shame by focusing on how much hardship you are causing the individual.	Express concern, but do not probe. Refer individual to EAP. Remain focused on job performance issues.
<b>2. Denial</b> —outright refusal of the action or behavior in question. May be done passively or overtly with hostility and/or indignation.	Use your documentation. Stand by the validity of the findings of your investigation. Do not debate, argue, or concede.
<b>3. Minimizing</b> —lessening either the extent of, involvement in, and/or the seriousness of a situation.	Use your documentation (see above). Use your policies and procedures to reinforce expected behavior and the seriousness of violations. Site consequences of the behavior in objective terms, e.g., dollar loss.
<b>4. Personal attacks</b> —designed to put you on the defensive, personal attacks may impugn your position, employer, actions, intelligence, compassion, or friendship.	Remain calm. Do not retaliate nor defend yourself. Do not respond with anger. Acknowledge the individual's feelings without validating them (e.g. "I'm sorry you feel that way, but we need to discuss your performance").
<b>5. Threats</b> —like personal attacks, threats are designed to put you on the defensive. These may be veiled or explicit, and vary from minor to life threatening.	Take all threats seriously. Immediately report the threat to the proper authorities within your company. Take appropriate additional disciplinary action.
<b>6. Invoking others</b> —attempts to defuse responsibility for or severity of behavior by claiming it is common among others.	Stay focused on the individual at hand. Acknowledge the person's perception without validating it (e.g. "Perhaps we have other problems, but you and I need to focus on your situation . . .").
<b>7. Bargaining</b> —promises that the employee offers in lieu of appropriate disciplinary action.	Do not accept promises. Hold the employee accountable for expected outcomes. Remain focused on the performance problem and your relevant policies.

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## Telephone Seminar Evaluation

Please complete this form and fax it to 1.952.996.2702, or email it to eshcomments@cigna.com

Your company: \_\_\_\_\_

Seminar date: \_\_\_\_\_ Company city, state: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_ Title of seminar: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please state your agreement/disagreement with the following statement using this scale.**

4 Strongly Agree	3 Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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1. SEMINAR CONTENT:

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| a. The information I received was helpful. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| b. The seminar met the stated objectives.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

2. SPEAKER EVALUATION:

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. The speaker presented the information clearly. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| b. The speaker responded well to participants.    | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| c. The speaker was knowledgeable on the subject.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

3. Overall I was satisfied with the seminar presentation. 4 3 2 1

4. What part(s) of the seminar did you like best, and why?

5. What part(s) of the seminar did you like least, and why?