

# high-risk behavior

## Guidance for Intervention with High Risk Employee Behavior

Occasionally, as a company manager or HR representative, you may be confronted with an employee who is exhibiting physical or verbal behavior that is bizarre, incoherent, disorganized, and/or threatening harm to self or others. Increasingly in today's workplace, emails/text/social media communications contain or reflect these issues. It is good practice to take all threats seriously.

If you are unsure about the seriousness of threats to self or others, call the toll-free number for your EAP Service and ask to speak with an Account Manager. Your Account Manager is an experienced workplace consultant and can provide guidance. Workplace consultation is available 24/7.

Consider meeting with the employee to express your concern and inquire if he or she feels "safe" and/or able to control their behavior. It is sometimes prudent to have a colleague or security representative present in the meeting. Please note that our experience is that such inquiries do not trigger destructive behavior. Employees sometimes even feel relieved that someone asked. Even if the employee reassures you, you may not feel convinced and should proceed to "**Safety First**", below.

### **Safety First**

If you are not assured about immediate risk, please be advised that the safety of the employee and others in your workplace or community is the top priority. If an employee is verbally (including email, texting, Facebook, etc.) or physically threatening self or others at work or elsewhere, we generally recommend that your first step is to call your security service or the local police for a safety-check response. This can include situations where the employee is not present at your workplace. Most security and law enforcement personnel are familiar with the term, "Safety Check." Security or law enforcement personnel will meet with employee and decide whether to transport the employee for emergency services at a hospital Emergency Room.

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## Medical Evaluation

If the behavior is not threatening to self or others, but renders the employee unable to work or is disruptive to normal workplace functions, immediate medical and/or psychiatric assessment and care, usually through a hospital Emergency Room, should be considered. People may show unusual behavior as a result of a medical condition, medication interactions or dosage problems and that it is important to clear these possible causes first. (For example, employees with dementia, neurological disorders, brain tumors, insufficient oxygen to the brain, etc. can show signs that appear to be caused by a psychiatric disorder.) There are two options.

- **First:** If the employee is willing, the emergency contact for the employee can be called to help the employee get immediate medical care. Document that the employee has given you consent to speak with a specific person
- **Second** If the employee refuses the emergency contact option, local authorities/services may be called to assist with getting medical care for the employee.

## Fitness-for-Duty

After the employee has been assessed in an Emergency Room or treated elsewhere, you may consider requiring the employee to provide a physician's (preferably a psychiatrist) note clearing the person for return to work. This step should be discussed with HR and or legal resources. The company's occupational health provider may be a good resource for locating a psychiatrist or qualified psychologist for this purpose. In addition, your EAP Account Manager is able to provide you with contact information for a national fitness-for-duty provider, who will assess the employee and make recommendations, including fitness-for-duty. This service involves a significant expense that is normally paid by the employer. Your EAP does not provide fitness-for-duty services and is not affiliated with any fitness-for-duty provider.

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## **Mandatory Referral & Return to Work**

EAP Mandatory Referral can be used in conjunction with the employee's return to work, but it must be based on a documented work performance issue(s) that could lead to termination, not because they have a psychiatric disorder. You will receive regular updates on attendance and compliance with recommendations while EAP sessions are being provided. Contact your EAP Account Manager to discuss this kind of referral.

## **Employee Access to EAP**

The employee may use the EAP voluntarily at any point, by calling the EAP toll-free number.