

THE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR

Helping You Manage Your Company's Most Valuable Resource -- Employees

State Employee Assistance Program 1-800-308-4934 (Toll Free)

■ **I have several employees in my office struggling with eldercare issues that sometimes get in the way of work. Everyone knows about the EAP, but I don't think any have called. Maybe they don't know everything that the EAP can do for them. Can you elaborate?**

The scope of help the EAP can offer may include arranging a workshop to discuss and discover answers to tough eldercare issues. The EAP could also conduct an assessment of home and work problems to find ways of providing eldercare without these responsibilities interfering with work. Sometimes employees need some coaching in how to share the difficulties they are facing at home, and also requesting reasonable adjustments or allowances in their schedules so they can perform satisfactorily and meet the needs of home and work. This lack of assertiveness creates many large problems for employees, and sometimes it is the key roadblock to resolving tough problems employees face. Also, believing that one's problem or concern is fundamentally different from others who struggle with the same issue is a common reason people avoid asking for help. They can't imagine someone offering a solution that has not yet been considered.

■ **Is all the talk we hear about workplace stress overblown, or is there something to it? After all, the workplace has always been stressful. Things should be better with all the technology options, right? What does the research say? Is there anything new to report?**

According to a recent study by Watson Wyatt Worldwide, an international consulting firm, workplace stress is the most frequently cited reason U.S. employees consider leaving their jobs. Employers acknowledge that stress is affecting business performance, but few reportedly are doing much about it. Nearly half of U.S. employers (48 percent) say stress caused by working long hours is affecting business performance. However, only 5 percent are addressing this concern. Similarly, more than one-quarter (29 percent) of employers believe stress caused by widespread use of technology such as cell phones and personal digital assistants is greatly affecting business performance, but only 6 percent are taking action to confront the issue. By not intervening with stress, employers invite an increase in unscheduled time off, absence rates, and health care costs — all of which hurt a company's bottom line. (Feb. 14, 2008; Press Release, www.watsonwyatt.com)

■ **I referred my employee to the EAP, but at the time I wasn't concerned whether the appointment was kept. I saw it as the employee's**

If you call the EAP, and no release has been signed, the EAP will be unable to confirm your employee's participation. The chances are high that no release exists. The EAP may bring the matter to the employee's attention, but don't take a wait-and-see approach to whether a release is signed. Focus on what you are observing: an unsatisfactory absenteeism