A Manager's Guide to the EACC

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Who We Are

What's an EAP?

An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a worked-based program for employees that offers free and confidential services including assessments, short term counseling, referrals and follow-up to employees experiencing personal or work-related concerns. EAPs emphasize the importance of early intervention and are a valuable employee benefit for both small and large organizations. They help employees stay focused on duties and responsibilities at work, keep job performance and productivity at peak levels, while improving the mental health and wellbeing of those who take advantage of EAP service offerings.

The UAB Employee Assistance and Counseling Center (EACC) is the voluntary confidential employee assistance and counseling program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).

Background

The EACC began providing counseling services to all University of Alabama at Birmingham employees and immediate household members on July 1, 1982 as the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program. Since that time, the EACC has expanded and now offers a variety of EAP services including life coaching, psychoeducation, and stress management programming to help clients clarify issues, explore options and find solutions for successful work/life integration. The purpose of the EACC is to facilitate retention of valued employees, who are experiencing personal issues that may interfere with job performance by providing services designed to promote healthy functioning and emotional well-being. The EACC currently offers free and confidential EAP services to UAB, UAB Medicine, Viva Health, Homewood City School System and i3 Academy Charter School.

The EACCs staff of licensed and certified counselors specialize in addressing the following client issues:

- Relationship or family problems
- Work or home related stress
- Depression, mood swings or anxiety
- Grief, loss and loneliness
- Alcohol and drug abuse aftercare
- Career exploration

- Work-life integration/balance
- LGBTQ+
- Chronic illness support
- Self-esteem issues
- Financial stress
- Aging and caregiver issues

EACC Counselors/Staff

What makes the EACC unique? We are not part of a multi-program community mental health agency or private practice. We provide EAP services ONLY and we do so extremely well. Our team of counselors have years of experience within the employee assistance or mental health profession and all are Master's and/or Doctoral level practitioners. Our counselors hold multiple certifications including but not limited to Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor (LPC-S), Licensed Marriage and Family therapist (LMFT), Certified Employee Assistance Professional (CEAP), National Certified Counselor (NCC), Board Certified Tele-mental Health Provider (BC-TMH), Certified Therapist in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Board Certified Coach (BCC), Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW), Registered & Board Certified Art Therapist (ATR-BC), and Registered Play Therapist (RPT).

EACC team members are well-versed in providing confidential EAP and counseling services to assist employees with personal problems resulting in increased job performance, retention, work productivity, efficiency, and employee morale. We offer psychoeducation to individuals and departments on topics related to mental health and emotional wellbeing such as building resilience, effective communication in the workplace, stress management, positive psychology, work-life integration and healing from trauma. Counseling support is also available after hours in the event of a crisis, worksite emergency or critical incident.

For more information regarding EACC Staff, please visit go.uab.edu/EACCstaff.

Scope of Benefit and Eligibility
The EACC provides services for all eligible persons, without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or veteran status. Employees and members of their immediate household are eligible for our services. Adolescents and children (starting at five years of age) are eligible for individual counseling sessions outside of family therapy sessions.

Confidentiality
The EACC understands confidentiality is essential to the counseling or life coaching process. Our counselors and coaches are ethically and legally bound to maintain client confidentiality, except as otherwise required by law (i.e. suspected or known child, older adult, or disabled person abuse or neglect or threat of danger to self or others). A written and electronic record (date, time, nature of meeting) of contacts with the EACC will be maintained in a secure manner per the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Only EACC staff members have access to clinical records. As a supervisor or manager, the relationship between you and your team is one of the greatest indicators of employee satisfaction, work productivity, and retention. Managers make great referral sources because employees sometimes share personal information when looking for advice or direction with life challenges. As a manager, you want to be able to point them to resources within the workplace. Review the below section of the manager's guide to familiarize yourself with the counseling and EAP services provided by the EACC.

EACC Services

EACC CORE SERVICES

Traditional Counseling: Employees and members of their immediate household, are eligible for 12 sessions of free and confidential individual, couples, or family counseling. After an assessment/ telephone triage session with one of the EACC intake coordinators, clients are assigned to a counselor based on initial presenting concerns and scheduled immediately for a first-time follow-up appointment unless circumstances indicate a higher level of treatment or specially area would better meet the client's therapeutic needs.
Life Coaching: The EACC offers employees and members of their immediate household 12 sessions of free and confidential life coaching services. Life coaching utilizes a strengths-based approach and focuses on skill building, planning and organization. Typical goals can be in areas such as work performance, career exploration, time management, or any facet of life the individual is seeking greater success.

Telemental-Health/Distance Counseling: The EACC offers Telemental-Health/Distance Counseling via face-to-face video conferencing to employees and members of their immediate household who are located outside of the Birmingham metro area and persons with disabilities. Video conferencing counseling and life coaching sessions are held via the web application Zoom, which is HIPAA compliant and encrypted to the federal standard.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM): The EACC recognizes emergencies and critical incidents sometimes occur in the workplace. Such incidents in the workplace sometimes results in emotional, physical, cognitive and/or behavioral reactions, which can result in impaired employee work performance and adversely affect fellow workers in addition to members of their immediate households. CISM offerings includes crisis management briefings, defusing and debriefing sessions in addition to individual crisis support, case management, and follow-up.

EACC STRESS MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Art Therapy: Art therapy combines counseling psychology and creative expression and is considered a mind-body intervention. Art therapy sessions may be helpful for clients who are interested in exploring their issue from a new angle, clients who feel "stuck" in traditional talk therapy, couples with communication issues, and clients experiencing anxiety, depression and anger issues. The focus in an art therapy session is on the process of creating, not the final product. Clients do not have to be skilled in the arts to participate and accomplish therapy goals.

Code Blaze: Code Blaze provides community and online resources to assist employees with successful work/life integration. Many of the resources can be saved and accessed at any time or place on a desktop computer or smart phone. uab.edu/codeblaze

Code Blaze Quiet Room: The Code Blaze Quiet Room is located within the office suite of the EACC. The EACC Code Blaze Quiet Room is filled with adult coloring books, kinetic sand, a sound machine, and iPads with access to meditation apps. Clients are encouraged to come early to their appointments to relax before their counseling appointment.

Group Therapy: The women's support group, "A Woman's Place," meets every Wednesday from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. This support group offers participants an encouraging environment to discuss topics specific to women and to promote personal growth and self-improvement. The "Hopeful Healing" support group meets the last Tuesday of the month from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. This group provides a confidential and supportive environment to discuss strategies for coping with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, Sickle Cell, Celiac Disease, etc.

Meditation: Meditation is a stress reduction practice or training where an individual focuses on a particular object, visualization, sound, breath or activity with the purpose of increasing one's awareness to the present moment. Meditation reduces stress, decreases anxiety and depression, improves physical health, increases employee engagement, and enhances job performance. Meditation is available to departments upon request.
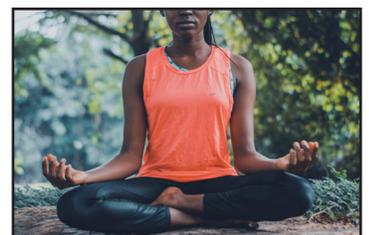
SMILE (Stress Management Initiative for Lifestyle Enhancement): SMILE is a resilience-training program that teaches employees integrated mindfulness skills for quickly bouncing back from stress. Skills including meditation, deep breathing, strategies for healthy habits, goal setting, and identification and management of stress triggers are offered online via LinkedIn Learning for all UAB employees. uab.edu/codeblaze

Yoga/Pilates: Yoga and Pilates classes offered Monday through Thursday (5:25 to 6:25 p.m.)

encourages participants to engage their bodies and minds while exercising (mind-body connection). During instruction mindfulness meditation techniques are taught which have been found to improve mental focus, alleviate stress and improve your mood. All yoga and Pilates instructors are certified.

ADDITIONAL EAP SERVICES

Financial Wellness: The EACC offers a variety of personalized services to help employees take control of their finances. A financial wellness counselor works with employees and immediate household members and assists with budget development and short or long-term financial goals. The EACC also provides monthly financial seminars/webinars through partnerships with the UAB Regions Institute for Financial Education (RIFE) and Smart Path Financial wellness coaching.

Emergency Assessments: Appointments are available the same day for employees and family members with emergent needs due to concerns related to physical safety and emotional health and wellbeing.

Play Therapy: Play therapy is available to children as young as 5 years of age. Play therapy is especially useful for children with affective disorders such as depression and anxiety, behavioral disorders, and children with acute or chronic stress disorders. Play therapy gives children the ability to fully express and explore self (feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors) through play, which is the child's natural mode of communication for optimal grown, development and emotional wellbeing.

Psychoeducational Seminars: The EACC offers monthly seminars on a variety of mental health and wellbeing related topics. On-site educational presentations for departments and groups are also available in addition to customized presentations. To make a presentation request and review a list of current class offerings, please visit our programs and events page and click on "Request an EACC Presentation."

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR): EMDR is an evidenced based intervention for the treatment of trauma or other distressing life events. EMDR is a non-traditional option of therapy, which utilizes eye movements, sound, or touch to activate the brains natural ability to heal. The EACC has several certified EMDR therapist's on staff.

myStrength: myStrength is an interactive web and mobile-based application with e-learning tools designed to help employees and family members build resiliency and maintain overall mental health, emotional health and wellbeing. myStrength features hundreds of resources on topics like stress management, depression, anxiety, chronic pain, parenting, substance use concerns, and more. Access to myStrength is free and employees do not have to be an existing EACC client to take advantage of this valuable confidential resource. go.uab.edu/mystrength
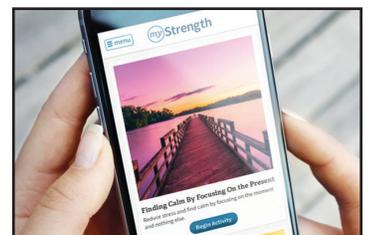
Supervisor Consultations: Supervisor consultation is available for managers and department leads prior to progressive discipline. EACC counselors can assist with communication strategies to ensure agency and federal guidelines are not violated when handling employee work performance issues. Consultation is also available for referrals to the EACC out of personal concern.

Community Referrals: EACC counselors are familiar with community mental health providers and make referrals when the scope of a client's mental health needs exceeds the expertise of EACC staff (i.e. active substance abuse disorder, eating disorders). The EACC does not pay for the cost of therapy or community resources/treatment services to which client's may be referred.

24-hour Emergency Access: Employees and immediate household members can access counseling support after normal business hours and on the weekend for emergency telephonic counseling as needed. To access the EACC on-call counselor contact UAB Paging at (205) 934-3411.

The EACC as a Management Tool

The EACC can be a helpful management tool when managers understand how to utilize this easily accessible resource. EACC counselors can provide guidance and information to:
- Encourage and support employees during difficult times
- Help you address small concerns before they get out of hand or become larger
- Prevent personal problems from affecting departmental outcomes
- Assist you with retaining valued employees
- Maintain employee satisfaction

When to Refer to the EACC:
- When you are worried about an employee's welfare or wellbeing
- When an employee's work performance begins to decline
- When a work issue presents and you are unsure of how to handle it

TYPES OF REFERRALS

Remember, there are three types of EAP referrals.

Self-Referral
The employee voluntarily attends counseling due to work-related, work-life balance, or other personal concerns (e.g. passing of a family member, health concern, stress management) usually before the problem starts to affect job performance. No other person is aware of his or her affiliation with the EACC unless they choose to share this information.

Informal Supervisor Referral
The manager encourages an employee to contact the EACC after the individual reveals they have a personal concern and job performance is not usually an issue. An informal supervisor referral can serve as a preventative measure to ensure your employee stays connected to assigned job responsibilities. A informal supervisor referral should be made as soon as the employee reveals a personal concern or when you notice a change in behavior. See section on "Signs of a Troubled Employee." Managers should offer the contact information for the EACC, when possible.

Formal Supervisor Referral
The manager recommends employee seeks counseling based on job performance concerns ONLY. See section on "Making a Supervisor Referral" for more details.

HOW TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

To schedule an intake screening appointment, employees should visit uab.edu/eacc, click on the appropriate paperwork weblink option, complete the intake forms online (HIPAA secure), and submit when finished. Once we have received an employee's completed paperwork, a member from the administrative support staff will call within 24 to 48 hours to schedule a 30-minute phone intake/triage appointment with an EACC Intake Coordinator. The individual must provide a phone number where he

or she can be reached during normal business hours. All parties who are age 14 and older and will be involved in counseling must be available for the scheduled phone intake/triage appointment. Managers can schedule an appointment for employees in the case of a formal supervisor referral or in the event of a counseling emergency.

How to Schedule a Counseling Emergency Appointment

A counseling emergency is defined as any severe emotional disturbance which overwhelms an individual's capacity to cope in the present. Symptoms and warning signs include (but are not limited to):

- Risk of harm to self, others, or property (see suicide prevention and response)
- Out of touch with reality (i.e. hallucinations or delusions); seeing or hearing things that no one else can see or hear, or exhibiting bizarre behavior
- Extreme nervousness, confusion, or excessive panic attacks
- Any uncontrollable behavior or emotional reactions that is concerning to others

To schedule a counseling emergency same day appointment please contact the EACC main office at (205) 934-2281 and ask to speak to a counselor.

Signs of a Troubled Employee

Employee job performance problems can be a challenge for many managers. The below list serves as a guide to identifying a troubled employee. All employees may exhibit some of the behaviors listed below. It is a pattern of job performance problems over a period of time that the manager should note and document.

Physical Signs
- Weariness, exhaustion
- Untidy appearance
- Slurred speech
- Sleepiness

Absenteeism
- Multiple instances of unauthorized leave
- Excessive sick leave
- Frequent Monday and/or Friday absences
- Repeated absences, particularly if they follow a pattern
- Excessive tardiness, especially on Monday mornings or returning from lunch
- Leaving work early
- Peculiar and increasingly improbable excuses for absences
- Higher absenteeism rate than other employees for colds, flu, gastritis, etc.
- Frequent unscheduled short-term absences (with or without medical explanation)

"On-the-Job" Absenteeism
- Continued absences from post more than the job requires
- Frequent trips to the water fountain or restroom
- Long coffee breaks
- Physical illness on the job

High Accident Rate
- Accidents on the job
- Accidents off the job
- Disregards safety of others

Difficulty in Concentration
- Work requires greater effort
- Jobs take more time

Confusion
- Difficulty in recalling instructions, details, etc.
- Increasing difficulty in handling complex assignments
- Difficulty in recalling own mistakes

Reporting to Work
- Coming to/returning to work in an obviously abnormal or impaired condition

Generally Lowered Job Efficiency
- Missed deadlines
- Mistakes due to inattention or poor judgment
- Wasting more material
- Making bad decisions
- High/Low productivity
- Improbable excuses for poor job performance

Poor Employee Relationships on the Job
- Overreaction to real or imagined criticism
- Wide swings in morale/mood
- Borrowing money from co-workers
- Unreasonable resentments
- Complaints from co-workers
- Refusal to accept authority
- Avoidance of co-workers and supervisor

Mood
- Appears depressed or anxious a lot of the time
- Is irritable
- Is suspicious
- Is emotionally unsteady, i.e. has outbursts of crying
- Withdrawn

Unusual Behavior
- Temper tantrums
- Physical violence
- Emotional outbursts

Remember that the supervisor is not to make a diagnosis based on the employee's behavior. Simply state to the employee the specific observed deficiencies. Let the employee know about the need to improve the deficiencies and make the referral to the EACC when appropriate.

How To Document Job Performance Problems

The supervisor needs to document specific attendance, conduct, and performance problems before formally referring the employee to the EACC. Documentation helps prevent the supervisor from making subjective judgments and facilitates successful referral. Documentation includes the date, time, and place of the incident. All absenteeism, tardiness, late work, reduced production, mistakes, accidents, changes in personal appearance and hygiene, poor employee relations, long lunches, early departures, and attitude problems are to be recorded. Stick to the facts — observable behavior — do not label, judge, or diagnose when documenting. Using the "Signs of a Troubled Employee" section will assist in identifying specific behaviors that need documentation.

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate documentation:

Appropriate
The employee was late today (date, time). She appeared out of proper uniform. When confronted, the employee became belligerent, saying, (statements or acts). She interrupted while being corrected and appeared unwilling to accept feedback, saying, (statements made). She then left the room slamming doors. The noise was loud enough to be heard by others who came to investigate. Two employees reported feeling fearful of this worker's behavior stating, (statements).

Inappropriate
The employee was extremely late and obviously appeared hung over. She acted inappropriate when she was confronted and said that other employees come in later than her. The employee stormed out of the room and observers were stunned by the behavior. Two employees report that domestic problems cause her tardiness.

You should consult with your HR Consultant *or the HR Employee Relations department for assistance with documenting performance issues.* **Remember — "if it isn't written down and documented, it didn't happen."**

MAKING A SUPERVISOR REFERRAL

The supervisor is encouraged to contact the EACC prior to the actual confrontation with the employee. It is also recommended that the supervisor confer with their HR Consultant to ensure that every step of the referral process is in agreement with UAB policies and procedures.

The supervisor has the responsibility of referring an employee to the EACC whenever there are job performance problems that cannot be attributed to (1) a lack of competence, or (2) a lack of understanding of job expectations. The supervisor first evaluates whether the employee has the knowledge, experience, and ability to perform the job. Instead of EAP counseling, the employee may simply need more training, a transfer to another job, or motivation inducements. Supervisors can contact the Learning and Development department for guidance on training and development opportunities.

If the employee has the competence to do the job, the supervisor verifies that the employee understands the expectations for satisfactory job performance. The employee may not be aware

that his/her performance is not meeting expected standards. In this case, the supervisor conveys the expected level of performance.

When the supervisor has ruled out that job deficiencies are attributable to a lack of competence, or a failure to understand job expectations, it is appropriate to refer the employee to the EACC. It is most effective to refer the employee in the early stages of declining job performance.

Supervisors can use the EACC Supervisor Referral Form as part of the referral process.

Step 1: Preparation
1. Know UAB policies and procedures for performance review meetings with employees, and for implementing disciplinary actions. Don't forget to confer with your HR Consultant if there are any questions about policies and procedures.
2. Select a time and place for the discussion that facilitates privacy and no interruptions.
3. Have all attendance, conduct, and work performance problems documented and ready to review with the employee.
4. Outline changes the employee needs to make to correct performance deficiencies. Be clear about your expectations for the employee.
5. Rehearse what you want to communicate to the employee so you can remain more in control of the discussion.
6. Be prepared to cope with employee resistance, denial, excuses, defensiveness, and possible hostility.

Step 2: Meeting
1. Be supportive — let the employee know that you want to help. Show respect and do not become angry or argumentative.
2. Review work problems with the employee. Do not accept excuses for poor work or be put off by sympathy-provoking tactics. Be careful not to give opinions about possible personal problems. Stick to specific job performance behaviors, citing concrete facts.
3. Inform the employee of what specifically needs to be done to correct job problems.
4. Explain to your employee why you are making the referral to the EACC. Base the explanation on conduct or performance issues. Emphasize that the goal is to restore the employee's productivity. Referral to the EACC is a corrective action, not a disciplinary action. Present it in a way that the employee understands that while the referral is recommended, it is also voluntary.
5. Tell the employee that the EACC will provide problem assessment, short term counseling, and referral to appropriate, affordable community resources if needed.
6. Specify further actions that will be taken if there is no performance improvement. Do not threaten.
7. Inform the employee that their EACC counselor will request that a release of information form be signed, permitting the EACC to provide the supervisor with the following information. Explain that this release of information is voluntary and further disciplinary actions will not result if the employee chooses not to sign a release.
   • Attendance at EACC and counseling appointments
   • Recommendations resulting from the assessment

Step 3: Employee Acceptance or Rejection of EACC Referral
1. If the employee agrees to be assessed by a counselor at the EACC, the supervisor can arrange the initial appointment. Also, employees sometimes delay making the appointment, or may not specify that their supervisor referred them. When the supervisor calls the EACC, it is very helpful to provide pertinent information regarding the employee referral.

2. Clarify with the employee whether the initial appointment is to be taken on the employer's time, sick leave, or vacation time.
3. Acceptance of the referral is voluntary. If the employee refuses the referral, continue to monitor employee job performance and take appropriate disciplinary measures. At each stage of the disciplinary process, encourage the employee to contact the EACC.
4. Document the discussion with the employee regarding job performance and referral to the EACC. A memo may be given to the employee stating his/her unacceptable job performance and specifying job standards for improvement. The memo should reiterate that it is recommended that the employee contact the EACC, and that attendance is voluntary, free, and confidential.

Step 4: Follow-up
1. Continue to monitor job performance and conduct and provide the employee with appropriate feedback. Please notify the EACC about changes in the employee's job performance, or when new events occur in your department that are relevant to the employee or the referral you made to the EACC. Expect the employee to bring his/her work up to a satisfactory level. Even if the employee is using the EACC, he or she is not excused from meeting job performance or conduct expectations. Remember, the purpose of the EACC referral is to help employees return to expected levels of job performance and/or conduct. Be sure to document all follow-up actions, and all follow-up meetings with the employee. It creates a record that will be important if further action needs to be taken.
2. Information is shared with the supervisor/manager from the EACC only if the employee has signed a consent to release information. Even with a release, only relevant information is disclosed. The nature of the personal problem is not revealed.

SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR DISCUSSING PERFORMANCE ISSUES & MAKING REFERRAL

Thank you for meeting with me today. Let me explain the purpose of our meeting. I want to give you some important feedback on your work. I've been looking at my records for the past _____ months. Let me start by covering the positive areas in your work performance.

(List positive areas in employee's work performance.)

We are very appreciative of the hard work you have done in these areas, and value these assets you bring to the department.

There are, however, a couple of areas in your work that have not been as strong, and are not up to the standards that we need to see from you. I'd like to go over these areas with you, and then see if we can work out a plan to bring these areas back up to the expected level.

(List specific problem areas supported by documentation.)

These are the areas in which we'd like to see improvement. Before we move to developing a plan for improvement, I want to find out if you had any questions or comments.

(Give employee a chance to give feedback or raise questions before moving to the next step.)

The first part of developing a plan is to clarify what expectations need to be met.

(Clarify job performance or conduct expectations.)
(Clarify the time frame in which changes need to occur.)

(Work with employee to develop a plan to meet these expectations within a specified time frame.)

I need for you to be aware that we are serious about the need for these changes to occur. If this plan is not successful in bringing your work up to the level that we need to see, there may be consequences in accordance with the UAB's policies and procedures for progressive discipline.

(Outline potential consequences if the employee does not change, in accordance with progressive discipline policy. Managers should consult with their [HR Consultant](#) on progressive discipline policy.)

At this point, I want to offer you some additional help and support in meeting the department's expectations. I am referring you to the Employee Assistance Program. If there are any personal matters that are affecting work performance, they will offer you counseling help and support.

(Can use Sometimes Speech here, as well — see below.)

I can't require you to go. The EACC is a voluntary program. It's not a part of the disciplinary process. Instead, it is an offer of help, made by our department in good faith. The EACC is also confidential, even when the referral is made in this way. The EACC can provide me with information only if you give written permission. Only relevant information is provided, not personal information. For instance, with a signed release, the EACC will let me know if you are attending your appointments, and if you are working on a plan to get your job back up to the expected level.

Whether you go to the EACC or not, we are going to get back together in _____ weeks to see what progress has been made in your work performance.

Are there any questions?

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Sometimes Speech
Sometimes job problems like these are the result of things going on outside the workplace. It may not be true in your case, and it's really none of my business. However, because it is true sometimes, UAB has the Employee Assistance and Counseling Center. The service is free and confidential. It has helped a lot of people.

Employee Suicide Prevention and Response

Being able to recognize and respond to potential indicators of employee suicide in the workplace can decrease this kind of incident from occurring on-site or even outside the work environment. As part of overall suicide prevention strategy please consider the following:

Individual Risk Factors for Suicide
- Previous suicide attempt(s)
- Alcohol or drug misuse or abuse
- History of mood or anxiety disorders (depression, PTSD, panic disorder)
- Access to lethal means to harm self
- Family member who died by suicide
- Isolation from others
- Chronic disease or disability
- No access to behavioral health care or resources

Signs of Immediate Risk of Suicide
- Employee starts to look for means to kill self or seeks access to lethal means such as guns, pills, knives or other objects to make an attempt.
- Employee talks about suicide — any talk about suicide, death, dying or self-harm such as "I wish I was not here," or "I'd be better off dead."
- Employee talks about no hope for the future, feeling helpless, trapped, or believe things will not change or improve.

Other Signs of Suicide
- Withdrawal from others — friends, family, increasing social isolation from previous activities
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs (show up at work intoxicated)
- Employee talks about getting affairs in order — giving away prized possessions, making arrangements for family members
- Self-loathing — feelings of worthlessness, shame, self-hatred or feeling like a burden
- Uncontrolled anger, rage or seeking revenge
- Constantly dwelling on problems in which there seems to be no resolution for
- Expressing a lack of support or belief in the system

Strategies for Suicide Prevention
- Create a work environment that encourages communication, a sense of belonging, connectedness, and respect.
- Offer suicide prevention training for department managers, supervisors and staff members. The EACC offers the Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention education.
- Promote mental health and wellbeing and encourage employees to seek assistance through the EACC.
- Identify and assist employee who may be at risk for suicide.
- Be prepared to respond immediately.

How to Respond to Potential Suicide Behaviors
1. A manager who is concerned about an employee who is suicidal can help by asking the employee how they are doing and listen to them without judging.
2. Next share differences or changes in observed behavior. Remember to say you are concerned about his or her mental and emotional wellbeing.
3. When expressing concern about the employee's mental and emotional wellbeing, reassure them you are available to support them.
4. Validate the employee's feelings by nodding your head or say that must be difficult for you.
5. It is okay to ask the question, "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" Asking someone if they are suicidal will not cause the person to harm his or herself. Since most suicidal people are ambivalent about dying, this can provide a sense of relief and potentially a starting point for a solution.
6. Contact the EACC at (205) 934-2281 and ask to speak to a counselor for an emergency suicide assessment and/or assistance with next steps.

How to Respond to Signs of Immediate Risk for Suicide
1. If self-harm seems imminent, the employee should go immediately to the nearest ER. You should also offer assistance by asking to contact a support person to transport the individual to the facility. Ask the question, "May I have your permission to call a friend or family member for you who can support and transport you to the nearest ER?"
2. While waiting for a support person, you or another employee should stay with the individual in a private and secure area.
3. Call the ER to inform them of the employee situation.
4. Contact the EACC at (205) 934-2281 to speak with a counselor if you have additional questions or concerns regarding the situation. Remember to give all pertinent and background information regarding the circumstances when talking to the counselor. You may also contact UAB Connect at (205) 934-3411 if you need to speak with a counselor after normal business hours.
5. When the employee returns to work encourage the individual to reach out to the EACC for follow-up and support.

See also: workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/managing-workplace-issues/suicide-response

Employees and Domestic Violence

Intimate partner violence in the workplace may occur. Victims may be dealing with a partner who follows him or her to work and displays stalking behavior. Although it is not a supervisor's place to counsel employees about their personal relationships, providing a safe work environment is an employer's responsibility.

An alert and supportive supervisor can make a difference. It is important to understand that an employee may not be ready to admit that she or he has been victimized by a partner or family member and may choose not to discuss the topic. Managers and Supervisors should respect this decision but should give information about available resources. By recognizing the signs, consulting with your

HR Consultant and the EACC, and assisting the employee with getting the right help at the right time, you can help the employee and reduce any risk to the workplace.

Workplace-Related Incidents

Workplace-related incidents of domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking include acts, attempted acts, or threatened acts by or against employees, the families of employees, and/or their property, that imperil the safety or wellbeing of any person associated with an employee of UAB, regardless of whether the act occurred in or outside the organization's physical workplace. An employee is considered to be in the workplace while in, or utilizing the resources of the employer, including but not limited to facilities, work sites, equipment, or vehicles, or while on work-related travel.

Signs and Symptoms of a Victim of Violence
Look for a pattern rather than one sign/symptom.

- Repeated discussion of marital/relationship problems
- Flowers/gifts sent to employee at the workplace for no apparent reason
- Bruises, chronic headaches, abdominal pains, muscle aches
- Recurrent vaginal and bladder infections as reported by employee
- Vague, non-specific medical complaints
- Sleeping or eating disorders
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Signs of fear, anxiety, depression

- Fatigue
- Intense startle reactions
- Difficulty in making decisions alone
- Suicidal or homicidal thoughts
- Tension around receiving repeated personal phone calls
- Nightmares/flashbacks
- Tardiness, or very early arrival at work
- Unplanned or increased use of paid time off
- Decrease in job performance
- Unkempt or disheveled appearance
- Inability to concentrate

IF AN EMPLOYEE SELF-DISCLOSES

Guidelines for the Manager/Supervisor
- Communicate your concerns for the employee's safety. Communicate that you are concerned for the safety of her/his children if there are any.
- Tell the employee that you believe her/him and that what is happening is wrong. No one deserves to be hurt. (The abuser may say, "You made me do it, it's your fault.")
- Tell the employee that the EACC and UAB Police can help with safety planning, based on the wishes and needs of the employee.
- Be clear that your role is to try to help and not to judge. The employee needs to know that someone cares, will listen and can help her/him find the right resources.
- Refer to the EACC as a resource with expertise in counseling employees who are living with domestic violence and knowledge about services. If the employee chooses not to use the EACC, reiterate safety and refer to other community resources.
- Discuss concerns about the employee's situation confidentially with the EACC for consultation and support as needed, with the UAB Police Department or BTAM if there is a concern about workplace safety, or with Human Resources regarding earned time or paid time off, leaves and performance issues. Do not discuss the employee's situation with anyone else without permission.
- A victim may choose to stay in or return to an abusive relationship out of fears for safety, economic survival, religious convictions or out of shame. As managers and supervisors, it is not your place to counsel the employee or express frustration, but rather to refer to helpful resources.

What Not to Say
- Why don't you just leave?
- What did you do to provoke your partner?
- Why did you wait so long to tell someone?
- Don't use labels such as "battered" or "abused."
- Don't tell the employee what she/he must do.
- DO NOT confront the individual about your suspicions of abuse.

What to Do
- If possible, rework the employee's work assignment or schedule to decrease stress.
- Follow up to see how the employee is doing. Ask general questions such as "How are you doing?" "How are things going?
- Respect the employee's privacy, even if you think she/he is still in an abusive relationship.
- Maintain your relationship as manager/supervisor, not as counselor.
- DO share your concern about their changes in behavior, and their safety and wellbeing.

EACC Domestic Violence Policy

The EACC seeks to maintain an office environment that is free from violence or threats of violence against clients or potential clients. Therefore, partner violence between couples should be shared with your counselor in order to assist with safety planning. Partner violence is defined as any on-going physical violence, sexual violence, intimidation, and/or stalking behavior between persons within an intimate relationship. The EACC will not engage in couples or marital therapy with clients when such behavior is evident due to the volatile dynamics of the relationship, which may exacerbate the abuse. Individual therapy is the appropriate modality of treatment for both parties however; the EACC reserves the right to refuse treatment of one client to protect the wellbeing of another client.

EACC Critical Incident Stress Management Plan

Purpose

UAB recognizes emergencies and critical incidents sometimes occur in the workplace and employees may experience significant distress as a result. Such incidents in the workplace sometimes results in emotional, physical, cognitive and/or behavioral reactions, which can result in impaired employee work performance and adversely affect fellow workers in addition to members of their immediate households.

The purpose of this plan is to ensure UAB is prepared and effectively responds to such emergency and critical incidents by providing appropriate crisis intervention and support to those in need. Crisis intervention and effective emergency and critical incident management can minimize the negative impact on the greater UAB community. This plan solidifies UAB's commitment to ensure appropriate support is in place through the EACC.

Critical Incident Terminology

Emergency: A serious unplanned event that compromises the health, safety, and welfare of others, property or infrastructure and requires immediate action. Usually such events disrupt normal business activities and results in the need for resources to mitigate the effects.

Critical Incident: A critical incident is an abnormal or traumatic event "which has the potential to overwhelm one's usual coping mechanisms resulting in psychological distress and an impairment of normal adaptive functioning."

Critical Incident Stress: A person or groups emotional, physical, cognitive, and behavioral response experienced after a critical incident. Critical incident stress is a normal reaction to an abnormal event often resulting in psychological distress.

Traumatic Event: An incident in which a person witnesses or is exposed to actual, threatened or perceived serious injury, death, or sexual violation. Exposure to such events may result in physical, emotional, spiritual, or psychological injury resulting in the need for therapeutic and/or medical intervention.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A psychiatric disorder characterized by flashbacks, recurrent memories, nightmares, and severe anxiety resulting from exposure to a critical incident.

Critical Incident Debriefing: Intervention implemented as a preventative measure following a critical or traumatic event designed to mitigate the emotional, physical, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms associated with the experience.

Examples of Critical Incidents
(not limited to)

- Suicide or sudden death
- Homicide
- Robbery
- Fire/explosion
- Hostage situation
- Physical/sexual assaults
- Violent act/threats of violence
- Worksite accidents
- Industrial and natural disasters

CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORTING

Employees and managers who experience, witness, or who are involved a critical incident at UAB should immediately contact the EACC during normal business hours at (205) 934-2281. If an incident occurs after normal business hours or on the weekend, contact the UAB EACC emergency counselor on-call through UAB Paging at (205) 934-3411.

Information to Report

- What occurred during the event?
- Where did the incident take place?
- Who was involved in the incident?
- Estimate of number of people affected
- What is causing the greatest distress to those involved?
- What is the impact to individuals and the organization?
- What support services are needed (see list below)?
- Who is the contact person to coordinate response with?

TYPES OF RESPONSE

Crisis Management Briefing: Group crisis intervention usually held as soon as possible following a critical incident to provide information, guidance and/or instructions with the goal of stabilizing those affected by the incident. This type of group can assist with rumor control, promotes community cohesiveness, and enhances the morale of the community. The purpose of a CMB is to restore the organization to normal functioning.

    Who: Any size heterogeneous groups up to 300 people (those directly and indirectly affected by the event)

    Length of Intervention: 20 to 30 minutes

    When: As soon as possible following a critical incident

    Providers/Roles: This type of response will include a two-person team (UAB department representative and EACC Counselor). The UAB department representative will provide facts/

information regarding the event. The EACC Counselor's role is to discuss and normalize common reactions to critical incidents and discuss stress management, self-care, and give information and resources for follow-up treatment.

Critical Incident Defusing: A shorter interactive crisis intervention group/group debriefing held to mitigate the aftereffects of a critical incident. Only persons directly impacted by the event can attend. The goal of this group is to normalize the stress response, build resilience, and re-establish group cohesion. This group will also assist with restoring the group to unit performance prior to the incident.
    Who: Homogenous group of 2 to 20 people (those directly involved in the event)
    Length of Intervention: 20 to 45 minutes
    When: Usually within 8 to 12 hours after the event
    Providers/Roles: EACC CISM team will provide this private and confidential group in a safe space. EACC CISM team will normalize the stress response, teach stress survival skills, emphasize the importance of self-care, and offer referral and resources for follow-up treatment.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing: A longer and interactive crisis support group, held to mitigate the aftereffects of a critical incident. Only persons directly impacted by the event can attend. The goal of this group is to reduce acute stress, provide support through the shared experience, and re-establish group cohesion. This group will also assist with restoring the group to unit performance prior to the incident.
    Who: Homogenous group of 2 to 20 people (those directly involved in the event)
    Length of Intervention: 1 to 3 hours
    When: Usually 1 to 3 days after the event (not held within the first 24 hours); 1-10 days after the event or 3-4 weeks after a disaster
    Providers/Roles: EACC CISM team will provide this private and confidential group in a safe space. EACC CISM team will normalize the stress response, teach stress survival skills, emphasize the importance of self-care, and offer referral and resources for follow-up treatment.

Individual Crisis Support: On-site crisis management support for departments held after an event to assist persons affected with coping strategies to reduce the aftereffects of a critical incident.
    Who: Any heterogeneous group or department
    Length of intervention: 1 to 4 hours
    When: As soon as possible following a critical incident
    Providers/Roles: EACC Counselor(s) will provide confidential individual crisis support in a dedicated private space within the department impacted by the event. The EACC Counselor's role is to discuss and normalize common reactions to critical incidents and discuss coping strategies, stress management and a plan for self-care. Psycho-educational information will be available in addition to resources for follow-up and treatment.

Critical Incident Response Action Plan

EACC Director and/or EACC Clinical Coordinator will assemble the EACC CISM team and disseminate known information regarding the event to the team. EACC CISM team members will report to specified location and conduct the appropriate crisis intervention response. When possible, team members will remain on-location following the response for up to two hours to provide individual support and referrals as needed.

Case Management/Follow-up Plan

Following a critical incident EACC Director and/or EACC Clinical Coordinator will follow-up for additional support and community referrals. Persons involved in a critical incident will be given first priority for face-to-face intake appointments within 24 to 48 hours after reaching out for support. Persons impacted directly may be referred for further psychological/psychiatric evaluation depending on the severity of acute stress/trauma symptomology.

Leaves of Absences & Transitioning Employees Back to Work

An employee leave of absence for an extended time period is often triggered by a life event or transition. There are different types of leave within the realm of UAB HR. Some are employer sponsored and others are mandated by federal legislation. For more information about the different types of leave available to employees, visit the UAB Leaves of Absence page.

Returning to Work

Returning to work following an extended or prolonged leave of absence can be challenging to navigate for employees. Below are some practical tips for assisting employees with a successful transition back into the work environment.

- If possible, discuss with the employee strategies to keep in touch with you or colleagues while planning the leave of absence. For example, email correspondence is a way she or he can stay up to date with what is happening in the workplace. Connections are helpful in reinforcing the link to the work environment and can also mitigate anxiety one may experience from being off work for a long time. If the employee does not want to keep in touch, do not take this personally. Sometimes employees need a chance to regroup following an illness and would prefer not be disturbed.
- When notified of the return to work date, schedule a meeting or conference call to discuss a return-to-work transition plan. The purpose of the meeting is to clarify concerns and identify barriers to returning that need to be addressed prior to the first day back in the office. If needed, schedule appropriate meetings with colleagues or other departments to "catch-up" on what occurred when the individual was on leave.
- Discuss with the employee any needed work accommodation or modified duties. Be sure to address these issues in advance of the employee's return.
- Discuss with the employee what information he shares with colleagues upon his or her return is up to their discretion. Be respectful of the employee's needs for privacy.
- Consider inviting the employee to a department meeting before his or her return. This may help the employee start to regain connections with colleagues prior to returning to the work environment.
- Consider developing a written return-to-work plan to ensure all parties have the same understanding of what returning to the office means for the employee.
- It's normal for employees to feel anxious or worried about returning to the office. As the supervisor, you should reinforce the importance of taking things one step at a time, encourage self-care, and assist your employee with setting realistic expectations. Remember to refer to the EACC for additional support needs.

Appendix

SUPERVISORY REFERRAL GUIDE

Situation	What To Do	Where To Refer
Critical Incident *(Ex: workplace accident, shooting, robbery, sudden death, etc.)*	Call the EACC to speak with the Director and/or Clinical Coordinator and provide information regarding the event. Services will be offered immediately according to CISM guidelines.	• EACC: (205) 934-2281 • EACC After Hours: (205) 934-3411 • uab.edu/eacc
Employee Threat of Suicide *(Ex: employee says they want to die or inflict self-harm)*	Employee should go immediately to the nearest ED. Contact a family member for assistance and/or to escort the person for psychiatric evaluation at the ED.	• Text "UAB" to 741-741 • National Suicide Prevention Life Line: (800) 273-8255 • Birmingham Crisis Center: (205) 323-7777 • uab.edu/uabcares
Threat of Violence *(Ex: person threatens to hurt UAB employee or UAB department, supervisor, etc while on the premises of UAB)*	Document what occurred and contact UAB PD to file a police report and/or escort party off of UAB property if person's are at imminent risk of being harmed by other person. A BTAM Report should also be completed.	• UAB Police Department: (205) 934-3535 • BTAM Report (non-emergency situations only)
Employee job performance or personal concerns that are interfering with employees capacity to perform job responsibilities/duties.	Contact aligned departmental UAB HR Consultant. HR Consultant will decide if the EACC needs to be contacted.	• Employee Relations: (205) 934-4458 • HRrelations@uab.edu
Neutral resource for workplace issues, academic concerns, issues related to administrative processes, interpretation of policies and procedures, etc.	Contact Ombuds office to discuss options available to resolve concerns	• UAB Ombudsperson: (205) 934-7230 • ombuds@uab.edu

UAB EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE & COUNSELING CENTER REFERRAL FORM

See EACC Supervisor Referral Form for electronic version of the form below.

Employee

Name of Employee _____

Department _____

Referral Date _____

Job Title _____

Supervisor

Referred by _____

Title _____

Telephone _____

HR Representative _____

Reasons for Referral (Please indicate below)

A. Absenteeism

☐ Excessive absenteeism

    Number in past 12 months _____

    Pattern (if any) _____

    _____

☐ Frequently leaves workplace during regular work hours

    _____

☐ Early departures

    Frequency _____

☐ Extended lunch periods

    Frequency _____

☐ Excessive lateness

    Frequency _____

☐ Other (please specify) _____

    _____

B. Performance

☐ Lower quality of work

☐ A change in work patterns

☐ Decreased productivity

☐ Failure to meet schedules

☐ Increased errors

☐ Other (please specify) _____

    _____

C. General Behavior, Attitudes, Social Adjustment at Work

☐ Avoids supervisor or co-workers

☐ Less communicative

☐ Responds negatively to work related feedback

☐ Critical of supervisor, co-workers or employer

☐ Loss of interest or enthusiasm in job

☐ Frequent mood changes

☐ Disregard for safety on the job feedback

☐ Other (please specify) _____

    _____

Have the above observations been discussed with the employee?

_____ Yes _____ No   If yes, when? _____

Have the observations been recorded and filed?

_____ Yes _____ No   If yes, when? _____

Has corrective action taken place?

_____ Yes _____ No   If yes, when? _____

_____   _____

Supervisor Signature   Date

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR A CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING SESSION

Introduction
Brief situation review
First impressions of the event
Aspect causing most personal distress
Signals of distress
Stress management information and recovery guidelines
Summary

Reference:
Mitchell, J.T. (2017). Group Crisis Intervention. University of Maryland Baltimore County.