Questions about Referral

Why should I refer to OEA? Shouldn’t I handle employees on my own?

Talking to an employee about personal problems is a lot like repairing the copier. If the problem is minor (a paper jam or an employee’s sadness or worry about a single event), you may respond to the situation effectively. However, when the problem is major or continuing, it is best to seek professional assistance. You may actually make things worse by trying to repair the problem yourself! Also, by delving into an employee’s private life, you may find yourself running afoul of the law. That’s why FIU provides professional resources to assist in these matters.

When you tell your employee about the OEA (through an educational discussion) or make a referral to the OEA, you give the employee the benefit of a confidential, professional assessment and brief problem-resolution counseling or a referral to an outside mental health provider. In addition, informing the employee about the OEA or making a referral provides the employee with the possibility of returning to full productivity by addressing the issues that may be interfering with the employee’s work.

What could happen if I attempt to counsel the employee myself?

You may:

- Not be trained to diagnose the problem, causing a delay in appropriate treatment.
- Not be aware of referral possibilities or the benefits available to the individual.
- Spend time with this employee while ignoring your responsibility to other employees.
- Hear things that compromise or complicate your supervisory role.
- Enable the employee to continue to develop added problems on the job.

I don’t think the University should be involved in personal matters. Won’t the employee think I am labeling him/her as crazy?

True, the personal life of employees is their own business. But, when problems start to intrude by creating inappropriate conditions or poor performance at work, it is the job of the supervisor to deal with this situation. It may also be a disservice to the employee to allow the situation to get worse (and it usually does) and have it ultimately result in an unpleasant job action. Most people who come to OEA are dealing with day-to-day frustrations (for example, stress, marital/family concerns, etc.).

FIU Office of Employee Assistance

- Phone (305) 348-2469  Fax (305) 348-3903  http://www.oea.fiu.edu