

Supervisory Training

How to Support Colleagues

A framework for lead and senior employees to support colleagues struggling with mental health or personal obstacles, balancing empathy, confidentiality, and practical solutions

1. Foster a Safe and Supportive Environment

Open Door Policy

Make it clear that employees can approach you without fear of judgment or retaliation.

Normalize Mental Health Conversations

Share resources, host workshops, and speak openly about the importance of mental well-being.

Lead by Example

Show vulnerability when appropriate by sharing how you handle stress or seek support.

2. Recognize the Signs

Look for changes in behavior, such as:

- Increased absenteeism or tardiness.
- Decreased productivity or performance.
- Uncharacteristic emotional outbursts or withdrawal.
- Substance abuse problems and addictive concerns.
- Approach the situation with care, avoiding assumptions or accusations.

3. Approach with Empathy and Active Listening

- **Schedule a Private Conversation** – Create a comfortable, confidential space to discuss concerns.
- **Use Open-Ended Questions**
 - “I’ve noticed [specific observation]. Is everything okay?”
 - “How can I support you during this time?”
- **Listen Without Interrupting** – Allow the employee to share their experience at their own pace.
- **Validate Their Feelings** – Acknowledge their emotions without minimizing their struggles.
 - Such as: “That sounds really tough. I’m here to help however I can.”

4. Provide Resources and Options

Internal Resources

- Refer them to PIOD for information on Employee Assistance Program (ESSS), counseling services, or accommodations.
- Discuss flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, reduced hours, or adjusted responsibilities.

External Resources

- Share contact details for mental health hotlines, therapy services, or online peer support groups
- Recommend credible apps or tools for mindfulness, stress management, or mental health tracking.

5. Develop a Collaborative Plan

- Work with the employee to create a plan that addresses their needs while maintaining workplace expectations.
 - Set Clear Goals: Identify what adjustments can be made to their workload, deadlines, or responsibilities.
 - Identify Supportive Measures: Assign a mentor, reduce meetings, or offer peer support if needed.
 - Create Checkpoints: Regularly touch base to monitor progress and adapt the plan if necessary.

6. Respect Confidentiality

- Keep all conversations and information private unless the employee consents to share with others (e.g., PIOD or team members).
- Avoid gossip or speculation about the employee's situation.

7. Encourage Professional Help

- If appropriate, gently suggest seeking professional support:
 - “Sometimes speaking with a counselor or therapist can help. I can connect you with our EAP if you’re interested.”
 - Avoid acting as a therapist; focus on facilitating access to trained professionals.

8. Model Patience and Understanding

- Understand that improvement may take time.
Avoid rushing solutions or expecting immediate results.
- Offer encouragement and celebrate small milestones in their progress.
- Using your best judgement as to avoid being seen as someone less than caring or supportive.

9. Promote Long-Term Wellness

- Advocate for workplace wellness initiatives, such as:
 - Mental health days.
 - Meditation or mindfulness workshops.
 - Health and wellness programs.
 - Regularly check in with your team to identify signs of burnout or stress before they escalate.

10. Know When to Escalate

- **If the situation involves a safety concern**
(e.g., self-harm or harm to others/actively using substances),
escalate immediately by contacting HR or the appropriate
crisis support services.
- **Stay compassionate but act decisively** to ensure
everyone's safety.

Key Takeaways

- **Be proactive** – Offer support early rather than waiting for a crisis.
- **Stay empathetic** – Approach each employee as an individual with unique needs.
- **Balance compassion with boundaries** – Support them while maintaining workplace standards and expectations.
- **Promote a culture of care** – When employees feel supported, they're more likely to thrive and contribute positively.

Conclusion

This framework ensures that senior employees play an active role in creating a workplace that prioritizes mental health and well-being.

Employee Support Services (EAP)

Emotional Wellness Program

Supports MDC employees and their eligible family members with the goal of enhancing emotional wellness, impacting employee's emotional resilience and assisting in times of need.

The internal services provided by the EAP are confidential and free, experienced staff Licensed Master's level clinicians (LCSW, LMHC, LMFT)

Short-term support services as well as community referrals, as needed

Common Concerns EAP Assists With

- Stress Management
- Relational/Familial Problems
- Grief & Loss/Bereavement
- Depression and/or Anxiety
- Substance Use
- Anger Management
- Referrals to Community Resources

Confidentiality

- EAP is designed to be a confidential resource and support for employees.
- Employees that come to the EAP on a voluntary basis will have information released only to individuals authorized by the employee.
- Only the staff within the EAP who serving the employee will have access to the confidential information needed to assist them.
- All confidential information is kept in accordance with state and federal regulations.

How Does The EAP Process Work

- The employee can refer themselves to the program for consultation.
- Managers, and Directors can also make mandatory referrals to the program in circumstances such as substance use.
- An initial consultation is typically scheduled that day or the next business day. After the initial consultation, the employee and their EAP counselor will identify the best avenue to support the employee in their goals and/or provide referrals to resources.
- Job security or promotional opportunities will not be affected or jeopardized by requesting assistance or involvement in EAP.

Where to Contact Support Services

- **Location**

OTV South Offices

601 NW 1st Court

Ste. 15-050

Miami, FL 33136

Phone: 305-375-3293

- **Offering In-Person & Virtual Intakes**

- **Emergency Walk-Ins**

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Presented by
People and Internal Operations Department's
Benefits and Employee Support Services Division



To request materials in an accessible format, sign language interpreters, and/or any accommodation to participate in any County-sponsored program or meeting, please contact Takia Burnett at 305-375-4585 or takia.burnett@miamidade.gov five days in advance to initiate your request. TTY users may also call 711 (Florida Relay Service).