



# Formal Referral Manual

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## A Guide for Managers and Supervisors

**VITAL WorkLife** is committed to supporting you and your organization in addressing the concerns that arise in the workplace. We provide specific solutions for managers, supervisors and human resources professionals to help you retain the talent you've invested in and avoid unnecessary turnover. On the following pages you'll find a detailed overview of our formal referral process and helpful information to assist you in utilizing your VITAL WorkLife Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Well-Being Solution.

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## Confidentiality Notice

Unless authorized disclosure in writing is obtained, no information or records of accessed services will be given to third parties, including employers, except if a VITAL WorkLife staff believe an individual may harm themselves or others, there is evidence of possible abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult may be or has occurred, or a judge orders VITAL WorkLife to comply with a court order or subpoena to provide information in connection with a legal proceeding.

# “Formal Referral” Rationale

At VITAL WorkLife, we’ve made a conscious effort to establish an effective and impactful process for how employees are formally referred by their managers, supervisors, or human resource professionals. Where other employee assistance programs may use the term mandatory referral, we intentionally avoid it. Engaging in counseling to address workplace concerns should not be seen by the employee as a punitive action, but as a supportive measure so they can safely and effectively continue in the workplace. Our formal referral process is designed to create lasting positive change in employees through establishing a meaningful counseling relationship with a licensed behavioral health consultant and providing organizations with the information and tools they need to support them.

Each step of the formal referral process is monitored and managed by the VITAL WorkLife Formal Referral Case Managers, led by the Senior Director of Clinical Services. The Case Managers serve as the liaison between the organization, the employee and the EAP consultant.

## Performance Based Referrals

Performance based referrals support employees in addressing current behaviors or patterns of behavior that impact their performance, interpersonal interactions, and productivity. The Consultant will assess concerns and develop an action plan for the employee to implement. Also, they provide recommendations for the employee’s supervisor and department to effectively support the employee in their work environment.

## Chemical Assessment Referrals

To support an organization’s drug and alcohol policy we provide access to consultants who are trained to assess and address substance use issues when they arise in the workplace. Chemical assessment referrals can occur after any of the following events:

- Reasonable suspicion of substance use as indicated by behaviors, appearance or odor.
- Drug or alcohol tests are performed per company policy where there is a positive result indicating use.
- Admission of substance use that violates company policy.

The Consultant will assess for substance use concerns and establish recommendations for the employee. In addition, consultants will provide a date when the employee should be able to retest and return to work based on the employee’s original testing levels and their self-reported frequency of substance use.

# Formal Referral Steps

## Step 1: Workplace Intervention

Most workplace issues can be identified and effectively addressed without the need for external intervention such as a formal referral. It is important to be aware of and recognize the early stages of performance issues. Performance issues can be a sign of a larger concern such as bullying, substance use, psychological changes or relationship or family issues. As a supervisor or manager, it is important to document any behavioral concerns observed or reported. By documenting concerning behaviors, leaders can identify patterns and issues before they lead to a more significant impact in the workplace.

Beyond documentation, it is important for leaders to consult often with others who can provide guidance and support in assessing employee situations. VITAL WorkLife clinical staff are available 24/7/365 by calling 800.383.1908 for supervisory consultations to address concerns and provide tools that can assist in managing workplace behaviors. Additionally, every organization’s Human Resources Department has specific knowledge of policies and resources that can be leveraged to support a department or workgroup.

Below are some examples of behaviors that could warrant a formal referral:

### **Absenteeism and Time-Off Abuse:**

- Unauthorized leave
- Excessive sick leave
- Excessive tardiness
- Monday absences, Friday absences, or both
- Frequent abuse of breaks and lunch periods
- Peculiar and increasing improbable excuses for absences
- Coming or returning to work in an obviously abnormal condition

### **Performance:**

- Mistakes due to carelessness or poor judgment
- Missed deadlines
- Decreased quality and quantity of work
- Complaints about performance
- Difficulty in recalling instructions and details
- Difficulty in handling complex assignments
- Excuses for poor performance
- High accident rate
- Alternate periods of high and low productivity

### **Personal Behavior:**

- Changes in mood
- Loss of temper or anger outbursts
- Overreaction to real or imagined criticism
- Reasonable suspicion of substance use
- Increased isolation from fellow employees
- Unexplained memory lapses
- Decline in personal grooming habits
- Denial of a job performance problem
- Playing the “Blame Game”

When possible, leaders should meet with their employees regularly to review behaviors, performance and provide feedback. Every organization and department will be different for how often structured communication is needed between employees and their direct supervisors but normalizing regular check-ins with employees can create a culture of communication and openness that will lead to improved productivity and a reduction in feelings of distress. Structured check-ins allow leaders to highlight areas where employees are excelling in their role and areas for improvement; in addition to providing the opportunity for leaders to express the needs of the organization or department and for employees to express their needs as well.

## **Step 2: Formal Referral of Employee**

Managers and supervisors considering a formal referral to VITAL WorkLife should always communicate and coordinate with their organization’s Human Resources Department to ensure they follow the appropriate organizational policy. A formal referral to VITAL WorkLife can occur when further support is needed outside of an organization’s internal resources. It can be helpful for an organization to establish best practice guidelines for formal referrals. Some examples would be to refer an employee if they have violated a specific company policy (bullying, substance use, absenteeism, etc.) or as part of a progressive disciplinary action (i.e. verbal warning, written warning, formal referral, performance improvement plan). Whenever a leader is unsure if it is the right time to formally refer an employee, they can always call and speak with a VITAL WorkLife clinical staff for a supervisory consultation.

It is best to establish the organization’s expectations of the employee’s engagement in the formal referral process through an in-person meeting with the employee and appropriate organizational contacts. Organizational contacts include any individual within the organization who would be invested in the employee’s engagement in the formal referral process (Human Resource Specialists, Supervisor, Manager, Team Lead, Department Chair, etc.)

The formal referral process begins when the Formal Referral and Consent to Release Information is provided with the following information:

- Contact information for the employee and organizational contacts

- Background information, completed behavioral checklist and the reason for the referral including:
  - **For Performance Based Referrals:** Documentation of previous disciplinary actions, complaints, and observed behavior
  - **For Chemical Assessments:** Positive test result (including levels), previous positive test results, and observed behavior
- Expectations for the employee's engagement in the formal referral process
  - Every organization has varying requirements for information and follow-through based on organizational policy and/or the reason for the referral. Whenever possible, it is important to provide the requirements along with the formal referral information so the employee, Formal Referral Case Manager and EAP Consultant are aware of any specific requirements the organization may have.
- A date by which the employee is expected to contact VITAL WorkLife
- Signatures of consent from the employee and employer representative(s)

Once the employee understands the parameters of the formal referral and has provided their consent to engaging in the process, the employee should be provided with a copy of the completed form and the form should be sent to VITAL WorkLife where it will be reviewed by the Case Manager.

### Step 3: Employee Contact and Assessment

It is then the responsibility of the employee to take that first step towards engaging in the formal referral process by contacting VITAL WorkLife by telephone prior to the date specified on the Formal Referral Release Form. Employees can call 952.230.5110 to reach the Case Manager and begin their phase of the process.

Organizational contacts will receive regular updates from the Case Manager throughout the formal referral. Most communication during the formal referral process will be completed by email. Organizational contacts can always call 952.230.5110, option 2, to reach the Case Manager directly, or email [clinicalteam@vitalworklife.com](mailto:clinicalteam@vitalworklife.com) with questions or concerns. Specific updates occur in the following instances:

- Receipt of the completed formal referral form
  - Including contact information for the Formal Referral Case Manager
- Employee has/has not contacted VITAL WorkLife
- Employee has connected with the EAP Consultant in their area
- Employee has scheduled their first appointment with the Formal Referral Consultant
- Employee has attended their appointment (first or follow-up)
  - The Formal Case manager will include details associated with the employee's progress toward the formal referral goals and future appointment dates and times.

During the employee's scheduled sessions, the EAP Consultant will complete a holistic assessment of the employee's overall well-being, in addition to addressing the specific concerns that have arisen in the workplace. Consultants are provided with all workplace documentation and will use that information to inform their assessment.

### Step 4: Formal Recommendations

Recommendations for further counseling or support will be provided by the Consultant based on their assessment of the employee's presenting concerns and the type of referral (chemical assessment or performance based). To ensure the recommendations meet the needs of the referral, the Case Manager will review them and provide any necessary changes or feedback to the EAP Consultant. Before their final session is finished, the EAP Consultant should review their detailed recommendations with the employee and answer any questions they may have before closing the case. Below are some possible recommendations based on the type of referral:

**Performance Based Referral Recommendations:**

- Anger management classes
- Continued individual counseling
- Skill building activities (online, in-person, book-based)
- Financial consultation

**Chemical Assessment Referral Recommendations:**

- Self-help group attendance (AA/NA or other community groups)
- Continued individual counseling
- Intensive outpatient substance use treatment
- Alcohol and drug education course

**Performance Based Referral additional recommendations:** When appropriate, the Consultant will provide specific recommendations for an organization and/or workgroup to address specific ways that to support the employee's continue engagement in the workplace and address larger concerns that may be impacting the workplace.

**Chemical Assessment Referral additional recommendations:** To support a safe work environment, the Consultant will provide a date by which the employee should be able to provide a clean drug retest for based on factors including the type of testing (urine analysis or oral fluid), the drug the employee tested positive for, and the Consultant's clinical assessment. In addition, when applicable the Consultant will provide an appropriate random testing schedule based on the drug the employee tested positive for and their assessment of the employee's pattern of drug use.

## Step 5: Case Closure

Receipt of the formal referral recommendations marks the end of the formal referral process. Organizational contacts should review the recommendations to ensure that they address the intended reason for the initial referral. Should any questions or concerns arise, the Case Manager is available to address them. To guarantee the employee is engaged in positive change, it is important to schedule a time to review the recommendations with them and the specific expectations from the organization moving forward.

## Supervisory Support

Managers and supervisors are on the front line of various employee concerns and issues. As workplace leaders they have a large impact on both organizational and individual Well Being by addressing performance problems proactively, building skills in team members, identifying and referring employees with personal concerns and acting quickly in the event of a workplace crisis. Difficult workplace issues do not have to be handled by leaders in isolation; VITAL WorkLife is available to help maintain a productive, positive and safe work environment.

### Supervisory Consultation 800.383.1908, option 5

Supervisory consultations give leaders the chance to consult with a VITAL WorkLife Senior Consultant, over the phone, day or night, for expert advice to address concerns that are impacting themselves, their organization or their employees. Senior Consultants are experienced at addressing specific workplace concerns that can be difficult to navigate as a supervisor or manager. Whether a leader is new to their position or are seasoned in their role, there are many workplace situations where having the support of a behavioral health professional with specific experience addressing the stressors and issues that can arise in the workplace can be helpful. Through their understanding of the organization and their ability to provide an objective ear to discuss or validate concerns, our Senior Consultants can assist in a variety of situations including:

- When and how to address employee behaviors or performance
- Assistance in developing an employee action plan
- Coordination of resources and support after a stressful incident or significant change
- Assistance in planning or scripting a difficult employee meeting or conversation

Whatever the issue may be, organizational leaders can always contact VITAL WorkLife and be directed to the appropriate resource that will support them, their organization and their employees.

### **Training (Fee based)**

Finding the best solution to address areas for employee growth can be a time-consuming and frustrating process. We offer both “off-the-shelf” Well-Being trainings and custom training options to meet the needs of your workgroup or organization. Training can be delivered in person or online for varying group sizes. Most of our training sessions are delivered in one to two hours on a fee-for-service basis. Any of our training courses can be customized to meet an organization’s unique needs. Further information on training options are available by selecting employer resources on the VITAL WorkLife Employer Resource Site.

### **Consultation (Fee based)**

As a national behavioral health consulting practice, our Senior Consultants are available to work with any sized workgroup to address a wide range of issues and concerns at every level of an organization. Through conversations with the organizational contact, we develop a complete understanding of the concerns disrupting the workplace and provide an implementation strategy to move workgroups towards effective resolution. Custom consulting is available to address organizational issues. Some possible objectives include:

- Leadership development and coaching
- Strategic Visioning/Planning
- Team building and management
- Conflict resolution and communication
- Policy development around substance use, bullying or harassment

Our Senior Consultants engage in a multi-phase approach to determine issues, define the project objectives, make recommendations, impact change and evaluate progress to reach organizational goals.

## **EAP Resources**

As a supervisor, manager or HR professional, your knowledge, skills and leadership impact not only your Well-Being, but also the Well-Being of your employees. Beyond understanding the formal referral process, it is helpful to understand each of the resources available to you, your employees and employee’s family members through VITAL WorkLife. The resources available through your organization’s VITAL WorkLife Resource can help you proactively address performance problems, enact necessary skill building and react quickly to the stressors that can impact the workplace.

At VITAL WorkLife, we take a holistic approach to address the concerns that arise in every aspect of daily living. In doing so, individuals can enact change and focus their energy on what can improve their work and life satisfaction. We focus on six interrelated dimensions of Well-Being: Professional, physical, relational, financial/legal, meaning & purpose and emotional.

Below are descriptions for some additional resources through VITAL WorkLife that can be utilized to support you, your employees and their families.

### **Counseling**

At the core of the solutions that VITAL WorkLife provides is our desire to support the mental and behavioral health of employees and family members. Counseling can assist in addressing each of the dimensions of Well Being by developing a connection between individuals and a licensed mental health counselor that facilitates growth and improves understanding of the stressors that impact our daily life. As a trusted leader it can be easy to fall into the role of counselor in the workplace. By supporting your employees in accessing their VITAL WorkLife counseling resource, you can establish and support effective boundaries between you and your employees to avoid interactions that could impact you and your employee’s ability to be productive and effective in the workplace. VITAL WorkLife offers two types of counseling:



## **In-the-moment telephonic support**

Sometimes life happens fast and we at VITAL WorkLife are here to support those in need in the moments when they need it most. In-the-moment telephonic support gives employees and family members unlimited access to over-the-phone counseling with a licensed mental health counselor at any time, day or night. Our telephonic counselors are available to discuss any concern that may be impacting an individual's ability to achieve their optimal level of Well-Being. Employees can contact in-the-moment counseling before, during or after the workday by simply calling VITAL WorkLife toll free at 800.383.1908.

## **Face-to-face counseling**

We understand the unmatched benefits that come from in-person counseling. We've developed a nationwide network of master's and doctorate level consultants with varying specialties so individuals can find the consultant that will best assist them in addressing the concerns impacting their Well-Being. Our consultants are trained to provide brief solution-focused counseling to address the specific concerns that are impacting the lives of your employees and their family members. Face-to-face counseling is provided on a "per incident" basis with individuals having access to the number of sessions allotted through their company-specific solution. There is no annual or lifelong limit on the number of times an individual can utilize face-to-face counseling.

If an individual has attended their total number of sessions for a given issue and decides to continue with counseling, they can do so by accessing their insurance or establishing a self-pay agreement with their counselor. In most cases, issues are resolved within the course of the face-to-face sessions. When additional assistance is needed, VITAL WorkLife counselors can provide referrals to qualified local resources and other appropriate mental health providers. For more information on your company specific counseling resource, call 800.383.1908 or speak with your organization's benefits department.

## **Member Site**

The VITAL WorkLife Member Site is the one-stop shop for all things related to improving Well-Being. The member site provides numerous self-guided resources including an overview of the solution and resources available, articles on an always expanding number of topics associated with Well-Being, online seminars and 15–20-minute eLearning courses on topics such as caring for aging relatives, cultural diversity, healthy eating and much more. The Member Site also offers specific online resources through its "Centers" portal which allows you to access online shopping discounts, legal/financial resources, moving resources and many others. By familiarizing yourself with the resources available, you can assist your employees with obtaining the resources that they need to address their concerns before they become more significant. To access the Member Site go to [VITALWorkLife.com](https://VITALWorkLife.com) and select "member login" to enter your company specific username and password.

## **Legal**

When legal issues or questions arise, it can be difficult to know which way to turn or what the next step should be. The VITAL WorkLife legal resource is designed to take the guess work out of addressing legal issues and allows employees to focus on the things that matter most. The legal resource includes free telephonic advice over the phone, generally within one business day. In-person referrals are also available for individuals who may need to retain an attorney for their legal issue. In-person referrals include a free half-hour consultation with a local lawyer and in most instances, a 25% discount off hourly fees if additional assistance is needed. Legal consultants and attorneys can provide legal support for various legal issues, excluding issues associated with employment law. In-person attorneys are available across the country with varying specialties. Additional resources include a 10% discount on document review or preparation. In addition to telephonic and in-person support, members have access to articles and forms on various legal topics and a free legal document creator download through the VITAL WorkLife Member Site.

## **Financial**

Financial concerns greatly impact our ability to focus whether at home or at work. Many financial concerns are outside of the support an employer can provide. Employees and family members can call to speak with a financial consultant by phone during normal business days/hours from 8 am - 9 pm EST. If calling outside of these hours, financial consultants will connect for a follow-up call the next business day. If further support is needed, individuals can schedule an appointment with a qualified financial counselor. There is no limit on the length of time and the number of times an



individual can access financial consultation services. Additional resources are also available through the VITAL WorkLife Member Site including financial calculators, financial forms and articles, information on how to access a free 14-day trial for the premium Pocketsmith Personal Financial Manager online tool, and various online resource links.

### **Nurse and Educator Peer Coaching**

If you supervise or manage nurses or educators, Nurse Peer Coaching and Educator Peer Coaching is a valuable resource for your reports to support their personal and professional Well-Being. At VITAL WorkLife we understand the specific challenges associated with working in the fields of healthcare and education which is why we developed a solution specific to support those who devote themselves to these impactful and often stressful professions.

Our peer coaches engage and support their clients in a shared exploration of personal and work-related stressors and experiences. Their professional work experience allows them to offer a perspective of someone “who’s been there” for many of the concerns that are common among teachers and nurses.