Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Whistleblowers in the Workplace: Increasing Safety

A whistleblower is an employee who complains of company and/or coworker misconduct pertaining to health and safety violations, shareholder fraud, or financial mismanagement. Even though whistle blowing promotes safety in the workplace, there is often a negative stigma attached to it. Employees fear retaliation or scrutiny from their supervisors or fellow employees, causing heightened stress on the job. Fear and stigma also leads to serious incidents going unreported, increasing the likelihood of onsite accidents.

Employers can take necessary measures to ensure whistleblowers are not ostracized or retaliated against in the workplace. Strengthening from the top with management on board may encourage employers and employees to "embrace" whistleblowing.

Employer Solutions:

- Promote individual responsibility and employer accountability.
- Don't blame the messenger – remove fear of reprisals. Treat the complaint as an opportunity to make any changes necessary to improve the workplace.
- Adopt a complaint policy and or compliance program – make it a legal requirement that all existing and new employees are given a copy of the company's Whistleblowing Policy. Make sure that your employees understand how to use it.
- Train managers on how to best handle reports of violations.
- Establish training programs regarding laws that may be violated, whistleblower provisions, and the internal reporting process, including the employees obligation to report suspected wrong doing.
- Ensure that the compliance program has strong mechanisms and guidelines in place to prevent, detect, and report misconduct.
- Encourage employees to use internal reporting and ensure that employees feel confident the report will be investigated and acted upon.
- Ensure that compliance programs include non-retaliation policies and that employees and managers understand that retaliation is prohibited.
- Investigate complaints – investigate it thoroughly and take action to correct misconduct. If you don't investigate complaints, your employees will be discouraged from making them in the first place.
- Develop a whistle blower program with your EAP provider. This will allow employees an opportunity to report concerns to a neutral party. Contact your account representative for more information on developing a whistle blower helpline.

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