How To Deal With Suicide Threats

If you become aware that an employee has made a suicidal statement or threat, it is important to take this threat seriously. Whether the threat is stated explicitly or in passing, at work or away from work, it is important to deal with this difficult and sensitive issue directly.

Here are some steps to help guide you through this employee issue:

If you are speaking with the employee when the threat is made:

♦ First of all, feel free to get HR involved right away.
♦ Find a private place to talk. This could be in HR or in a manager’s office or in a conference room.
♦ Tell the employee that you take this very seriously, and that you are not personally trained to help them. Therefore, say that “We have E4 Health—there are trained counselors who can help you and help us understand how we can help you. I’d like you to talk to someone at E4 Health. It is confidential.” Take them to the available office and call 1-800-227-2195, E4 Health (24/7).
♦ When E4 Health answers, tell them your name and the company you work for. Tell the receptionist that you are with an employee who needs immediate assistance. A counselor will come to the phone right away.
♦ Tell the employee that you would like permission to speak to the E4 Health Counselor after he is done speaking so that you can understand what follow up or assistance is needed for the employee. Then, put the employee on the phone to speak with the counselor. If the employee would prefer that you leave the room at this point, please do so.
♦ When you get back on the phone with the E4 Health counselor, ask what the next steps are. The counselor will then tell you whatever the appropriate next steps would be, and whether or not the employee should go home. Please note — the E4 Health counselor has to protect confidentiality. You will not get personal information about the employee. However, if the employee has given permission, E4 Health will give you some next steps to take. Or, if there is immediate risk of harm, the counselor can break confidentiality to protect people’s safety.
♦ OR — if the employee has already hung up, ask the employee what the E4 Health counselor told them to do. If the employee does not wish to discuss this, don’t push it too hard — respect his privacy. (You can also call E4 Health back and ask for whatever information and direction the counselor can give you.)
♦ Depending on what the counselor or the employee say, ask the employee if she is going to go home. If the decision is for the employee to go home, ask if she would like you to call someone — especially
if the employee lives alone. Before the employee leaves the premises, ask her (1) to call you when she reaches home; and (2) to give you the name and telephone number of a friend or family member you can call to check on her. Also, suggest that she call the friend or family member for support.

If you hear second-hand of the threat:

♦ Feel free to get HR involved.
♦ Ask the employee to speak with you in a private office.
♦ Ask the employee if they indeed made the threat.
♦ If the employee says “no,” then tell him that someone thought he did, and if there were any problems that the employee was dealing with, he should call E4 Health (give the employee a brochure).
♦ If they say “yes,” then follow the procedure above.
♦ You can always call E4 Health and request a consultation about the situation.

If the employee is threatening suicide right away, or if you feel that the employee presents an imminent danger to others:

♦ First call the police, and they will send an officer or an EMS unit.
♦ Try to keep the employee calm in a private office or conference room.
♦ Keep the incident as low-key as possible.

In all cases:

♦ Involve HR, even if it is simply notification that the incident has happened.
♦ Do NOT make any judgments concerning whether or not the threat is “real.” All threats are to be taken very seriously.
♦ Call E4 Health (800-227-2195). The counselors are trained to help with ‘people problems’, including mental health problems. They can help with the immediate situation, and also consult about how to handle the rest of the employees, and how to handle the employee coming back to work.

For additional assistance contact your E⁴ Health program: LifeScope, LifeChoice or LifeLync.

www.e4healthinc.com
Copyright © E⁴ Health, Inc.