

Reducing Workplace Toxicity

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Use the following strategies to help protect your practice against a toxic employee:

1. Hire Right

Be clear about the qualities all candidates must have to fit into your practice culture. Developing a hiring process that better identifies candidates who complement the team will reduce the frustrations associated with hiring the wrong person. Hiring simply to “fill a hole” will ultimately be more time-consuming and expensive than finding the person who fits in well with your team.

2. Be Aware of Toxic Flags

Even when the best candidates are hired, life happens and people change. Sometimes the change in an employee’s performance may be subtle or it may be obvious. Is the negative behavior of one person affecting the attitude or even the performance of others? It’s important for practice leaders to pay attention so appropriate action can be taken. Toxic flags may include change in behavior and performance, arriving to work late, increased absenteeism, and employees no longer wanting to work with the “toxic” employee.

3. Deal in Real Time

It’s extremely helpful to notice the signs of toxicity in the workplace, but it’s even more critical to address the problem in a timely manner. The toxic employee has the right to know he or she is not performing to practice standards and practice management has the right to inform them of how the negative performance/behavior is impacting the practice.

4. Don’t Just Hear, Listen

When an employee exhibits negative behavior in the workplace, try to understand what is motivating that behavior. Don’t make assumptions; give the employee the opportunity to tell his or her side of the story and resist making judgments ahead of time.

5. Establish Agreements and Communicate Expectations

When it is necessary to check in with employees concerning their performance, it is helpful to provide a map of the necessary steps going forward. Communicating agreements, iterating and seeking agreement regarding what is required from both management and the employee, will help direct the next steps.

6. Reassess Progress

Resist the temptation to consider the problem solved after providing a road map; once the expectations have been identified and communicated, follow-up is the next important step. This includes holding both sides accountable for following through on the agreements, not just the employee.