

EAO Supervisor Newsletter- September Issue

In this issue of the Employee Assistance Office's Supervisor Newsletter, we are proud to introduce two new additions to our office. Joshua Schiffman, Director and Consultant, and Cassie Varrige, Office manager, speak about their past experience and new opportunities at the EAO.

Dr. Joshua Schiffman, EAO Director and Consultant

What experiences have led you to your new role as Director of the EAO?

My entire professional life has been centered around counseling and higher education. I was chair of the Counseling Department at Madison College for a number of years and really enjoyed working with my colleagues both in- and outside the department to ensure that our services were really what our stakeholders needed them to be and were as good as they could be. Taking on the EAO Director role is a chance for me to take those skills in innovation and process improvement and extend them to a new and larger population.

What excites you most about working at the University of Wisconsin? The EAO in particular?

A big part of why I've spent my career in higher education is because university campuses offer endless opportunities for growth and learning. UW-Madison, in particular, is such a vibrant, diverse community, and I'm so excited to learn from and share my ideas with its many members. I'm especially excited about the EAO because I am part of a small team that is thoughtful, creative, hardworking, and fun, and I feel confident that together we can take a service that was already highly valued and respected, and make it even better!

What's one thing supervisors should know about the EAO?

Supervisors are in a unique position in that they can get a sort of "two-for-one" from the services at the EAO. In other words, they should know that they can refer employees who are struggling – whether in their work life, their personal life, or some combination – to us and we can help those employees find solutions that allow them to be happier and healthier, at work and at home. And, of course, supervisors can utilize that assistance for themselves, too. But supervisors should *also* know that they can take advantage of our "management consultation" services, which can help them communicate more effectively with their employees and, in particular, about difficult workplace issues that may arise. This, in turn, helps them be better supervisors and, in doing so, also resolves many of those workplace concerns. Plus, it tends to make people happier and more productive. So really, it's win-win-WIN!

Cassie Varrige, EAO Office Manager

What experiences have led you to your new role as EAO Office Manager?

I've had an enduring interest in health policy since my days as an undergraduate, where I assisted with research on public attitudes towards health care and worked with members of the Minnesota Legislature and Minnesota Department of Health to advocate for assisted living licensure reform. I also implemented health care IT systems as a clinical project manager at Epic here in Madison! These experiences in academia, nonprofits, and the private sector gave me a broad perspective on health and how it can be achieved. I'm very excited to take on new challenges at the EAO and to work with UW's diverse and multi-talented community.

What excites you most about working at the University of Wisconsin? The EAO in particular?

I look forward to bringing my analytical skills to this role and can't wait to work with our committed and creative team to support the University community. I'm also really excited about the meaningful impact the EAO has on our community. Our work reverberates positively throughout the University of Wisconsin, the city of Madison, and beyond. Everyone at the EAO brings a unique perspective to their work, and we are continuously working to build the employee assistance program.

What's one thing supervisors should know about the EAO?

In my tenure here, I've realized that many employees have learned of our services through word-of-mouth. Supervisors and managers have a big impact on their team, and they should know that their recommendation really matters! Supervisors have a unique opportunity to connect UW faculty, staff, and graduate students with the EAO, who in turn can help connect them with the right resources they need to resolve the challenges that they are facing.

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