

How should HR respond to concerns about a co-worker's health?

Question: "A member of our staff recently came to HR and said she was worried that a co-worker is in such poor health that he might have a heart attack on the job. The supposedly ill employee hasn't mentioned any health issues at all to HR or management. What's the proper HR response when someone reports that she is concerned about a co-worker's health, and specifically that it's affecting the co-worker's job performance?" —

PT in HR

Comments

I think if there is a real concern it would just be nice to ask in casual conversation, how is someone doing.....

Posted by: | September 02, 2008 at 12:32 PM

I think if there is a real concern it's fine to ask in casual conversation, how someone is doing.....

Posted by: Cindy | September 02, 2008 at 12:33 PM

The first thing to do is contact the manager to let him/her know that a concern has been registered with H.R.

The Manager should be in a position to follow up with the employee.

Posted by: Barb Mobey | September 02, 2008 at 12:41 PM

Someone else's health is a private matter and should remain private. The only aspect that should concern the company is the effect someone's health has on their performance - such as attendance. If there are no work-related problems, the company should stay out of it. Obviously, if the coworker was close enough to the person they say they are worried about, then they would ask them themselves instead of involving management.

Posted by: S in Atlanta | September 08, 2008 at 12:39 PM

Unless someone is missing work due to illness (and HR should have been notified by the manager) or their illness is affecting their performance, it's not the employer's business. It's a private matter. You as the employer, can't ask. A concerned co-worker could ask them directly, but that's all.

