

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Goals:

- Create a plan (in consultation with Staff Relations), track progress, and make adjustments when needed
- Maximize communication with employees
- Proactively resolve issues before they escalate
 - Expectation setting
 - Coaching
 - Informal counseling
- Hold yourself and others accountable

Proactive Communication Steps:

- Expectation Setting – Annually establish the performance standard through the Performance Review and Development (PRD) Process.
- Coaching – Facilitate employee development and action planning through ongoing communication.
 - Ongoing communication should include both positive feedback and constructive feedback. It is important to acknowledge successes and employee efforts toward improvement as well as challenging areas where improvement is needed.
- Verbal Counseling – Conduct the whole counseling session in a "low-key" manner. Be friendly, yet firm. This discussion should be done in private. Tell the employee the purpose of the discussion. Identify the problem. Try not to be mechanical or read from a piece of paper. Have documentation available to serve as a basis for the discussion. If additional verbal counseling is needed, consider following up verbal communication in an e-mail, recapping your discussion.
- Employee Empowerment
 - Seek input from the employee about the cause of the problem.
 - Where possible, jointly identify a solution to the problem; otherwise, identify your desired solution.
 - Clarify the employee's understanding of your expectations concerning the situation.
 - Try to get a commitment from the employee to resolve the problem.
 - Schedule several follow-up meetings with the employee. Provide feedback and let the employee know how he/she is progressing on solving the problem.
- Let the employee know that possible disciplinary action may follow if the problem is not corrected.

Non-Disciplinary Options (contact Staff Relations):

- Letter of Expectations
- Written Counseling
- Action Plan
- Performance Improvement Plan

Disciplinary Actions (contact Staff Relations):

Definition – discipline is a corrective measure to address performance, behaviors, and other actions such as time and attendance. Discipline is usually progressive; however, actions may be skipped in accordance with the egregiousness of the action. Types of discipline:

- **Written Reprimand** must be issued within 10 days of supervisory knowledge of the action. It is used when informal steps did not resolve the issue and/or when the employee's action warrants discipline. This step is also used for employees who commit infractions of significant safety and conduct rules.
- **Suspension** must be issued within 3 days of supervisory knowledge of the action and are typically 1-5 days depending on the severity of the infraction and/or the repetitive nature of the infraction (i.e. frequent lateness or unscheduled absences)
- **Termination** must be issued within 15 days of supervisory knowledge of the action, and employees have due process rights. This means that they must have the opportunity to provide their side of the story in the matter

Essential Elements of Both Non-Discipline and Discipline Options:

- These 3 essential elements need to be present at each level of communication, especially at each step of progressive discipline. Each should be clearly discussed prior to taking disciplinary action. Disciplinary actions may be completely overturned or reduced to a lesser level when any of these essential elements are missing.
 - Explicitly inform the employee of the unacceptable behavior or performance. Give specific work-related examples. Do not assume that the employee knows what the problem is, especially if the prior communication was not documented (formally or informally).
 - Explain acceptable behavior or performance standards and give the employee reasonable time to comply. The time frame may be longer if a skill needs to be learned, or a shorter time frame if it is a behavior to be changed.
 - Clearly communicate the consequences of failing to comply. This is not a threat, rather it gives the employee reasonable expectations of the consequences if change does not occur to the stated levels.

Important Points:

- Use verbal counseling sessions to bring a problem to the attention of the employee before it escalates to the point of formal progressive action.
- The purpose of this discussion is to alleviate any misunderstandings and clarify the actions the employee should take for necessary and successful correction. Most problems are solved at this proactive stage.
- If some progress is seen, verbal counseling can be repeated to allow the employee more time to continue correcting the problem.
- It is not necessary to document verbal counseling sessions because it is an informal, proactive step in progressive corrective action. However, a brief statement confirming the subject matter discussed and the agreed-upon course of action to correct the problem can be noted in a short memo or email to the employee.

Progressive Discipline Checklist:

- Did you contact your Staff Relations representative for assistance when egregious conduct/performance was observed, or a pattern was identified? Did you discuss relevant University policies and procedures? Was University policy violated?
- What is the observed/reported conduct?
- Was an investigation conducted?
- Is there a unit practice related to the observed/reported conduct?
- What is the employee's history with UMCP (i.e., years of service, past discipline)?
- Are there potential medical issues to consider?
- Were expectations set and reviewed with the employee?
- Was due process employed (a discussion with the employee regarding what happened)?
- Was the conduct egregious?
- Are there mitigating factors?

Links to Policies and the MOUs

UMCP and USM policies: <https://president.umd.edu/administration/policies>

Nonexempt and Exempt MOU: <https://uhr.umd.edu/staff-relations/memoranda-of-understanding/>