



Performance Management

Effective DC Training

NRCS Performance Policy

■ Section Overview:

Upon completion of this section, you will be familiar with NRCS policy on managing performance, doing appraisals, providing constructive feedback, determining whether an issue is conduct or performance, and handling poor performers.

NRCS Performance Policy cont.

- Employees must have written standards a minimum of 90 days
- Students and temporary employees are not required to have written standards unless they will work more than 90 days in the performance year
- Standards are to be developed for employees on details and promotions for more than 120 days; upon completion of the assignment, the temporary supervisor prepares an interim appraisal, discusses it with the employee, and forwards it to the employee's rating official for appropriate consideration

NRCS Performance Policy cont.

- For employees on those assignments 120 days or less, the performance must be documented, discussed with the employee, and forwarded to the employee's rating official for appropriate consideration
- A minimum of one progress review is required; more are strongly encouraged

NRCS Performance Policy cont

Interim Appraisals

- Change in Supervisors: each supervisor for whom the employee worked for at least 90 days must prepare an interim appraisal, discuss it with the employee, and forward to the employee's rating official for appropriate consideration
- Change in Positions: if employee is reassigned, transferred, promoted, etc. and has worked at least 90 days under performance standards, the losing official prepares an interim appraisal, discusses it with the employee, and forwards it to the employee's new rating official for appropriate consideration

Interim Appraisals - cont

➤ A practical method of documenting interim appraisals is to use the Progress Review capability in EmpowHR. There is no limit to the number of progress reviews that can be placed in an employee's performance plan. This is an excellent way for the documentation to stay with the employee's electronic file and not become a separated hard copy. Current supervisors can even enter ratings from details in the progress review section.

Performance Appraisal and Performance Counseling

Performance Appraisal is the process of communicating work expectations, evaluating employee performance, and encouraging performance improvements

Performance Appraisal and Performance Counseling cont.

- Results can be used to:
 - determine training needs
 - identify candidates with the potential for promotion, and
 - allocate rewards

Additionally, the feedback given to employees can improve

- motivation
- performance

Obstacles to Effective Performance Appraisals

- Rating instrument challenges
 - absent or vague appraisal criteria or performance standards
 - appraisal criteria or performance standards are insufficiently job related
 - use of inappropriate measures of performance

- Rater judgment challenges
 - personal bias
 - judgment errors
 - deliberate manipulation of ratings

Obstacles to Effective Performance Appraisals cont.

- Appraisal process
 - insufficient organizational commitment
 - insufficient employee feedback
 - performance rating software (or lack thereof)
 - natural distaste for judging and being judged



Providing Effective Feedback

Constructive Feedback

Definition – Information about the impact of a behavior or action

- The information itself is not negative
- Opportunity for learning and building relationships

When done properly, constructive feedback can:

- Prevent conflicts
- Correct problems early, and have them stay corrected
- Build strong lasting relationships
- Help everyone learn from each other

When giving feedback, you may find it hard to:

- Leave room for problem solving vs. telling the person what to do
- State feedback in a way that conveys respect and support
- Respond to what the person receiving your feedback says
- Give upward or sideways feedback

When receiving feedback, you may find it hard to:

- Listen objectively without interruption
- Avoid taking feedback so personally that you become defensive
- Respond constructively if you feel you are under “attack”
- Hear the truth behind the feedback and take appropriate action

Tips for Giving Feedback

- + Ask permission to share information
- + Provide specific behaviors and examples – what was said or done
- + Provide recent examples that are known by you
- + Private discussions (right time, right place)
- + Convey feelings of concern – intention to be helpful
- + Equal power – we both control the exchange
- + Be descriptive – not evaluative of the other person
- + Describe your own feelings (“I” statements) as a consequence of others’ behavior and impact on you

Hindrances to Giving Feedback

- Giving general or vague feedback
- Providing old examples
- Public discussion (wrong place, wrong time)
- Using position or personal power to “dump”
- Evaluating and judging other persons
- Attributing negative motives
- Finding fault, accusations, blaming (“You” statements)
- Bring up behaviors or characteristics that others cannot change

Tips for Receiving Feedback

- + Ask for feedback generally and specifically
- + Paraphrase what you have heard
- + Give non-defensive responses
- + Request clarification – ask questions
- + Summarize what people have said
- + Provide examples of your own behavior that may have led to the feedback, and ask if it is accurate
- + Explore the feelings created by the feedback – yours and theirs
- + Thank the person for caring enough to tell you what they observed

Hindrances to Receiving Feedback

Look angry or hurt when feedback is shared

- Poor listening – editing, ignoring, interrupting
- Justifying your actions and/or getting defensive
- Retaliation to the giver
- Lack of responsiveness to feedback provider
- Over-internalizing feedback (assuming it is all true) beating one's self up

5 Key Actions for Constructive Feedback

1. Convey your positive intent

- Point to a common goal
- Mentally prepare to give the feedback
- Consider the timing
- Briefly state what you would like to cover

2. Describe specifically what you have observed

- Be specific
- Be brief and to the point
- Focus on the behavior or action, not the person
- Limit your feedback to one behavior or action

5 Key Actions for Constructive Feedback cont.

3. State the impact of the behavior or action

- Link the behavior or action to important business needs or challenges. State how the behavior or actions impacted you
- State only one or two of the most significant consequences

4. Ask the other person to respond

- Ask open ended questions about what they think
- Listen carefully and objectively to the response
- Summarize (active listen) the person's key points
- Limit your feedback to one behavior or action

5 Key Actions for Constructive Feedback cont.

5. Focus the discussion on solutions (not blame)
 - Determine next steps (may need to revisit 1-4)
 - When appropriate, ask for the change you want
 - If you are making suggestions, be open to other solutions
 - Leave responsibility for action with the other person
 - Manage your own expectations and follow-up

Formula for providing feedback

I know _____ (give benefit of doubt)

and I appreciate _____ (value person)

but I feel _____ (your own feeling)

when _____ (situation or behavior causing feeling)

and I would like _____ . (specific desired results)

How do you feel about this? _____

Performance & Conduct

Problem Employees

- Employees who commit serious or repeated acts of misconduct, which are unacceptable in the workplace and cause a loss of efficiency if allowed to continue
- Employees whose performance is unacceptable
- Employees who have committed no act of misconduct and who are working hard to meet performance standards but, for some reason through no fault of the employee, are unable to carry out the basic requirements of the job

Barriers to Dealing With Problem Employees

- Takes too much time
- Employee will file an EEO complaint or grievance
- Takes too much documentation
- Higher level management won't support the first level supervisor

Barriers to Dealing with Problem Employees cont.

- Many managers do not understand or are afraid of the process
- Process is too complicated
- HR/Employee relations is not helpful
- Insert your own reason/excuse

Performance and Conduct Issues

- Employee deficiencies fall into two categories:
 - 1) performance
 - 2) conduct



Performance Deficiencies

- Performance = **CAN'T**



Effective DC Training

4 Basic Reasons for Performance Problems

1. Lack of knowledge or skills, or lack of ability to learn them
2. Poor working conditions, inadequate equipment and supplies, insufficient management assistance
3. Physical or mental conditions that interfere with performance
4. Able to, but won't do the job for one reason or another
 - try to find out what is causing the "won't do" attitude
 - may result in a conduct deficiency

Checklist for Performance

- For all employees, draft performance standards that effectively, objectively and completely measure level of performance
- Define unacceptable performance in the performance standards
- Communicate performance standards, clear up any confusion, answer questions, and document the meeting

Checklist for Performance Con't

- Recognize unacceptable performance and take action immediately. Do not wait for Progress Review or Summary Rating
- Offer the employee a meaningful opportunity to improve (OTI) plan
- Closely monitor performance, regularly review, and meet with employee

Checklist for Performance cont.

- At conclusion of OTI period, determine whether performance remains unacceptable; apply actual performance during OTI period to performance standards
- If performance remains unacceptable, propose the adverse action and continue to work closely with HR
- Afford employee notice and rights

Conduct Deficiencies

■ **Conduct**
=
**WON'T
OR FAILS
TO**



Conduct Deficiencies cont.

- Conduct deficiencies stem from an employee's failure or refusal to comply with requirements or restrictions (includes conduct on and off the job) which has an adverse impact on the "efficiency of the agency"



Checklist for Conduct

- Assess the problem and determine whether it is performance or conduct
- Consult with HRO
- Determine whether progressive discipline is appropriate
- Consider whether alcohol or drugs is a factor and, if so, afford the employee reasonable accommodation

Checklist for Conduct cont.

- Conduct needed counseling for minor offenses
- Document instances of misconduct and document counseling
- Consult with HR with proposed action prior to presenting to employee
- Afford the employee all procedural rights

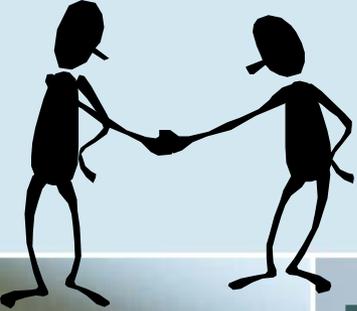
Checklist for Conduct cont.

- Make decision based on the evidence supporting the charges and with consideration of the appropriate Douglas factors. Consider nexus requirement (relationship to job/agency) if off-duty conduct is involved
- Impose the least penalty to promote the efficiency of the service
 - Rehabilitate the employee, if possible, before employee is fired

Seek Assistance

- Supervisors must notify HR when it appears an employee's conduct or performance is/may be deficient
- HR will work with the supervisor on a strategy to effectively correct the performance or conduct deficiencies





Success Happens

- Success is defined as returning an employee to acceptable standards and/or behavior
- Poor performers and employees with conduct problems have been removed
- Conduct and performance problems do not always lead to removal actions—the goal is to rehabilitate the problem employee
- If a lesser penalty or alternative to discipline will correct the problem, it is used prior to taking a more severe action
- Resources are available to resolve conflicts and other problems (EAP, HR, EEO, ADR and the administrative grievance process)

Corrective Actions

- Should begin by using **non-disciplinary** methods, such as performance feedback, clarification of expectations, counseling memoranda, progress reviews and Opportunities to Improve (OTI)
- Employees should be assisted in improving their performance through additional training, closer supervision, more frequent feedback, etc.

Corrective Actions cont.

- Action must be taken as soon as you notice a performance problem
- Do not wait to the end of the rating period to issue an Opportunity to Improve
- If performance does not improve, a performance-based action may be necessary. This includes:
 - *reassignment (**non-disciplinary**)
 - *reduction in grade or removal (**disciplinary**)

Corrective Actions cont.

- Corrective actions can be **non-disciplinary** (verbal warnings and/or counseling or admonishment memoranda), or
- **disciplinary** (official reprimands, suspensions or removal)
- Corrective actions should be **progressive**

Goal of Discipline

- Correct the problem;
not punish

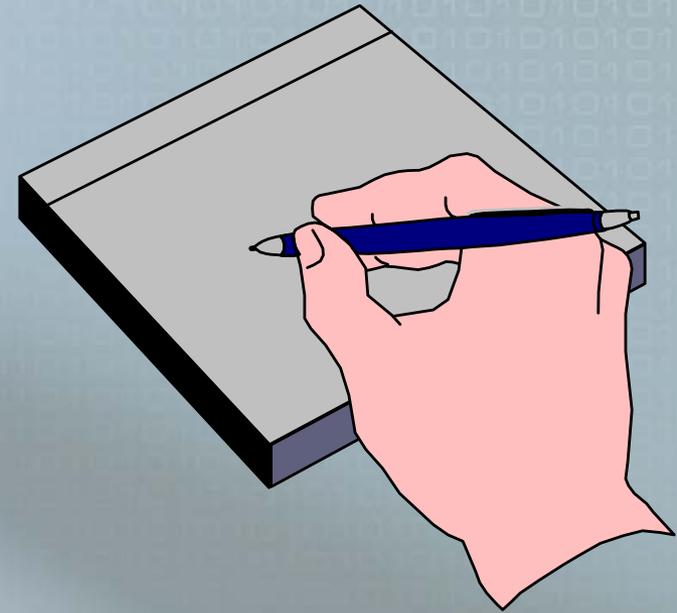


Documentation

- Documentation of performance or conduct problems and the corrective actions management has taken to resolve the problems is key to any conduct or performance based action
- Failure to document: the most common failure of supervisors!

Document!
Document!

Document!



Documentation cont.

- Documentation includes copies of memos, work products, witness statements, written letters of counseling, or other written communication which provides evidence of the conduct or performance deficiency AND evidence you have discussed the deficiency with the employee
- ***Document! Document!***

Documentation for Performance Based Actions

In order to take a performance based action, management must have:

- 1) provided employee with a performance work plan with measurable & obtainable standards



Documentation for Performance Based Actions cont.

- 2) had the employee on the performance plan for a minimum of 90 days
- 3) conducted at least one progress review (mandatory-more are preferred)



Documentation for Performance Based Actions cont.

- 4) made the employee aware of the performance deficiencies and expectations for improvement
- 5) notified the employee that his/her performance is unacceptable



Documentation for Performance Based Actions cont.

- 6) given the employee assistance and an opportunity to improve



Documentation for Performance Based Actions cont.

- 7) notified the employee of the results of his/her performance during the OTI, and
- 8) informed the employee in writing of any action to be taken



Documentation for Performance Based Actions cont.

- If the decision is to demote or remove the employee, the action must be proposed in writing, the employee must be given an opportunity to respond and a final written decision is issued by the State Conservationist or Delegated Representative



Role of the HR Office and Supervisors

- You, the 1st line supervisor, are the real managers of personnel
- Any decisions to take or recommend actions are your responsibility, not HR
- However, you need to consult with management and HR
- HR exists to carry out agency's human resource policies
 - one of its most important responsibilities is to serve you in a staff advisory and consultation role

Role of the HR Office and the Employee

- Human Resources Office does not function as an employee representative
- Employees are entitled to consult HR to receive explanations on agency personnel policy
- HR gives employees information on a range of subjects, from promotion and training opportunities to performance and disciplinary actions

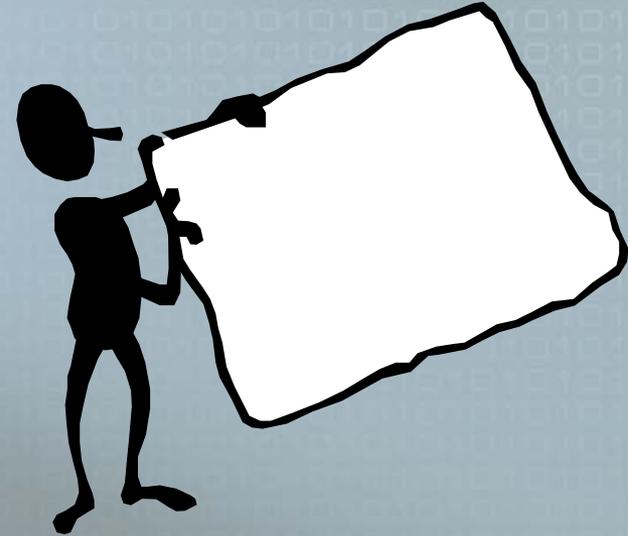
Who decides on the action taken?

- HR consults with Employee Relations, if necessary, and offers management options by providing advice and guidance in accordance with laws, regulations and policies
- The appropriate management team official decides on the course of action in consultation with all parties involved and makes a recommendation to the STC



Taking Action

- Your Human Resources Office:
 - 1) is available to guide and assist supervisors and management throughout the process;
 - 2) assists supervisors and management in developing memos and other necessary documents; and
 - 3) will work with management to develop, review and revise documents as needed to assure they meet regulatory and legal requirements



Supervisory Responsibility

- It improves employee morale
- It will set a good example for others
- Actions taken can be successful and effective

Doing the Right
Thing Works

We have evidence to
back this up



NRCS Performance Policy

■ Summary:

You should now be familiar with the basics of NRCS policy on managing performance, doing appraisals, providing constructive feedback, determining whether an issue is conduct or performance, and handling poor performers.

■ Questions:

What training and guidance have you and your staffs received on managing performance?

Are you clear on what is meant by linkage, cascading goals from State Conservationists, etc?

Who can help you locally?