



DISCIPLINE & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT GUIDE

In an effort to provide consistency in dealing with discipline and performance issues, this guide has been prepared to assist supervisors in carrying out the progressive discipline process to address employee performance or behavioral issues. Although each discipline issue will have its own unique components, using a consistent format across the City will ensure that everyone involved has a clear understanding of expectations.

Progressive discipline is a way to discipline employees for poor performance or inappropriate behaviors so that the severity of the discipline increases with the continuance of the performance or behavioral issue. It provides an opportunity for motivated employees to immediately correct an issue before it becomes too severe and provides the City with performance related documentation.

This guide is intended to help address both discipline issues for violations of the City's Code of Conduct policy, as well as job-specific performance issues. It is generally recommended that the progressive discipline process include:

- Step 1: Informal Verbal Coaching/Warning
- Step 2: Written Warning
- Step 3: Work Improvement Plan
- Step 4: Meets Performance Standards OR Demotion/Suspension/Termination

In addition to this guide, Human Resources is available to assist in constructing a discipline plan. If an issue is raised to the level of demotion, suspension or termination, your Division Director and Human Resources must be contacted prior to taking any action.

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CITY OF IDAHO FALLS POLICIES

The City of Idaho Falls maintains policies regarding acceptable employee performance and conduct. These policies should be referenced when considering disciplinary action for an employee. The policies can be found in the Personnel Policy Manual at <http://www.idahofallsidaho.gov/city/city-departments/human-resources/policies-and-procedures.html>

MANAGEMENT DISCRETION

All employees of the City are employed “at will” and at the discretion of the Mayor and City Council (except as may be agreed in writing or in an approved collective bargaining agreement). The course of action to correct deficiencies in job performance or inappropriate behavior will depend on how management views the severity of the problem. Management has discretion to determine what steps of the progressive discipline process, if any, are appropriate in a particular case.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Progressive discipline is the responsibility of the Supervisor with review by the Division Director, and in some cases, Human Resources. Employees may be provided with an opportunity to correct deficiencies in performance or behavior, when deemed appropriate by management. Some infractions of City policies/Code of Conduct will be cause for immediate termination.

Factors to be considered in determining the course of action are:

- Whether the employee had notice of what was expected.
- The extent to which the employee was given an opportunity to correct the deficiency.
- The degree to which the employee had advance notice of the consequences of not meeting the expectations.
- An evaluation of the employee’s explanation of why expectations were not achieved.
- Consideration of proportionality: the relationship between the offense and the discipline imposed (eg. seriousness of the offense, employee’s past performance, circumstances surrounding the particular event, Division practice in similar events).

The Mayor or Division Director must approve all terminations. Contact Human Resources for more information.



DISCIPLINE PROCESS

It is generally recommended that the complete progressive discipline process include the following steps, but not all will be necessary for every situation:

- Step 1: Informal Verbal Coaching/Warning
- Step 2: Written Warning
- Step 3: Work Improvement Plan
- Step 3: Meets Performance Standards OR Demotion/Suspension/Termination

1. Informal Verbal Coaching/Warning

In most cases, informal coaching may be an ongoing part of the supervisor/employee relationship and problems can be addressed as they arise. Informal coaching may be carried out by the supervisor verbally discussing the problem with the employee and explaining that this is the first step in the improvement process:

- State the problem, refer to any previous discussions.
- Describe the poor performance/behavior and state why it is not acceptable.
- State clearly the performance expectations and the consequences of failure to improve (written warning, work improvement plan, demotion, suspension, termination).
- Set goals necessary to improve performance (goals should be S.M.A.R.T. – specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented and bound by a timetable).
- Assure employee of interest and support in their success.
- ❖ *The supervisor should keep a written record of the discussion.*

2. Written Warning

If improvement in an employee's performance or behavior is not apparent after the informal coaching/verbal warning, a formal written warning may be given. The purpose of the written warning is to impart to the employee the gravity of the situation and to document the performance expectations and the need for improvement. This is a written document and verbal discussion delivered by the employee's supervisor.

- The same points should be covered as those in the verbal warning, including referencing the verbal warning itself.
- If possible, have the employee sign the document simply as an acknowledgment that they have received the information, eg. "I am signing this letter to indicate that I have read and understand what is expected of me."
- ❖ *A copy of the letter should be provided to the employee and supervisor. The original letter should be placed in the employee's personnel file.*



3. Work Improvement Plan

If the performance or behavioral problem continues, despite the verbal and written warnings, a formal Work Improvement Plan may be appropriate. The purpose of the Work Improvement Plan is to document a formal plan to improve performance, including a specified timetable by which the employee must meet acceptable performance or behavioral standards and consequences of not doing so.

- The same points should be covered as those in the verbal and written warnings.
- A specific timetable should be established by which the improvements must be achieved.
- All prior verbal and written warning documentation should be attached to and/or referenced in the Work Improvement plan.
- ❖ *A copy of the Plan should be provided to the employee and supervisor. The original Plan should be placed in the employee's personnel file.*

4. Meets Performance Standards OR Demotion/Suspension/Termination

If the employee's performance or behavior improves sufficiently enough at the end of the Work Improvement Plan to meet all performance standards for the position that he or she holds, the employee can be removed from the Plan. If the performance or behavior does not improve sufficiently enough to meet performance standards, the next discipline step may include a job demotion, suspension or termination from employment.

- ❖ *Contact your Division Director and Human Resources to address a demotion, suspension or termination issue.*

Example Warning Letter

(red areas indicate areas to be completed by supervisor)

To: Name
From: Supervisor Name
CC: Division Director
Human Resources
Date: Date
Re: Written Warning

This letter is a warning in your position of **job title** in the department of **department name**. (Discuss **absenteeism, lack of productivity, increased workload for others, behavioral issue, etc.**) This action is a result of your following behaviors:

- Example (Habitual pattern of failure to report for duty at the assigned time and place.)
- Example (Failure to perform the duties.)

We have previously discussed this on **date** and you have received **reminders/counseling statements** on **date**.

Your behavior must improve in the following ways:

- Example (eg. No further tardiness or unexcused absence.)
- Example (eg. Improve politeness to public customers.)

Lack of improvement in the cited areas may lead to further disciplinary action. I am confident that you can make a positive contribution to our department and we will meet (**periodically, 30 days**) in the future to discuss your work performance.

The City provides access to an Employee Assistance Program for your use. I recognize that this may be a difficult time for you and the Employee Assistance Program is available for support at 800-633-3353. You are encouraged to utilize this program as a tool to achieve what is being required of you if you feel it would be of assistance.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand what is expected of me.

Employee Date

Supervisor Date

Example Work Improvement Plan
(red areas indicate areas to be completed by supervisor)

To: Name
From: Supervisor Name
CC: Division Director
Human Resources
Date: Date
Re: Performance Improvement Plan

This is official notification that your overall performance is at an unacceptable level. This notification will be effective immediately and will remain in place for the next 60 calendar days at which time your performance will be reevaluated.

The performance deficiencies which have initiated this action are as follows:

- (identify **SPECIFIC** performance items that have occurred, such as habitual absenteeism, insubordination, failure to follow operating procedures, etc.);

Throughout your employment with the department name, we have discussed the areas that need improvement on several occasions (cite dates of discussions and documents). These performance deficiencies are serious and need your immediate attention. Your performance must improve in the following ways over the next 60 days:

- (identify **SPECIFIC** goals that must be achieved in the review period related to the items identified as needing improvement);

We will meet each (specify which day of the week) at (specify time) for the next 60 days to assess your progress towards meeting the expectations of your position. Your overall performance will be evaluated again in 60 days. At that time, your performance must be at an acceptable level. If it is not, I will make a recommendation for disciplinary action, which may include your dismissal.

(First Name), I appreciate the positive contributions you have made to our department. I am confident that over the next 60 days you will be able to bring your performance to an acceptable standard and continue to be a valued member of our team. I recognize that this may be a difficult time for you and the Employee Assistance Program is available for support at 800-633-3353. You are encouraged to utilize this program as a tool to achieve what is being required of you if you feel it would be of assistance.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand what is expected of me.

Employee Date

Supervisor Date

Example Letter Removing Employee from Work Improvement Plan
(red areas indicate areas to be completed by supervisor)

To: Name
From: Supervisor Name
CC: Division Director
Human Resources
Date: Date
Re: Removal from Warning

On **date**, you were placed on a Work Improvement Plan due to specific problems with **your job performance/behavioral issues**. After reviewing your results in relation to that Plan over the last **30/60/90 days**, I have noted improvements in the specific areas listed on the Plan. Therefore, I am removing you from the Work Improvement Plan effective **date**.

I am pleased you were able to meet the requirements of this Plan and am confident that you will maintain this level of performance in the future. However, should there be any re-occurrence of these issues, further disciplinary action may be taken, up to and including your termination from the City of Idaho Falls.

Employee Date

Supervisor Date