

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

SUPERVISOR'S GUIDE TO PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

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Supervisor Responsibility

Your role as a supervisor or manager is to counsel and coach your employees effectively in order to obtain the best possible job performance and job behavior. To the extent that either of these is not consistent with desired work standards; it is your responsibility to coach your employees to achieve this acceptable performance.

The accomplishment of work through the efforts of others is really what the supervisor's job is all about. Essentially, you are being paid to manage the performance of your employees, to direct your employee's work efforts towards TTUHSCEP objectives.

Disciplinary practices should be nondiscriminatory, consistently applied, and proper documentation is required of all supervisors in the disciplinary process.

1. Effective Supervision

To be an effective supervisor, disciplinary action should emphasize correcting the problem rather than punishing the employee. It should maintain the employee's dignity and self-respect. The disciplinary action you chose to take should provide for increasingly serious steps if the problem is not resolved. And, it should result in a change in the employee's behavior and performance.

Effective supervision can be achieved through the use of four supervisory actions: 1) Reinforcement, 2) Encouragement, 3) Positive Incentive, and 4) Feedback.

a. Reinforcement

The "Law of Reinforcement" says that you aren't limited to punishment when you discipline, for discipline can be attained by rewards as well - positive incentives as well as negative ones.

b. Encouragement

There are times, then, when a positive incentive works better than a negative incentive. The positive incentive works better whenever the employee has been engaging in some behavior you want to encourage rather than discourage: correct work methods, high productivity, constructive relations with other employees, creative solutions to work problems, and the like.

c. Positive Incentive

One of the most potent is recognition through praise. Praise, even simple recognition for a job well done, is a positive incentive to many people. It is safe to say that most employees never get tired of it and that most supervisors could use it to their advantage far more than they do. The prospect of promotion or a merit salary increase, are other incentives. Even though you may not have the power to promote an employee or grant a merit salary increase anytime you would like, you do have the power to recommend employees take advantage of promotional opportunities, to promote meritorious employees to higher level positions within your own department if and when vacancies occur, and to recommend salary increases on the basis of outstanding merit within the guidelines provided by TTUHSCEP policies. You can use these positive incentives to make certain that your employees realize that you are noticing

and remembering their performance. This realization becomes an important incentive to most employees.

d. **Feedback**

Feedback is simply letting the employees know how they're doing, good or bad, and not waiting to do so solely when you are completing their evaluation. When given promptly and frequently, it can work better than you might expect. The reason is that people can control their own actions more effectively if they are told how they are doing. It is often surprising how little employees know about their supervisor's opinion of their work. This means you should tell employees what you think about their work, even if it seems that you're telling them the obvious.

None of these positive incentives works with everyone all the time. Different employees are motivated by different incentives. But you will probably find some that work with enough of your employees to be worth your trouble in using them.

2. **Assist employees in achieving self-control**

Your time is valuable. Any time you spend controlling your workers is time you don't have to do the other things you should be doing. Wouldn't it be better if your workers would control themselves without your having to spend your time controlling them?

Once most of your employees accept the rules and the work you give them, group pressure will be your ally in converting the rest. Group pressure motivates many employees who are not motivated by a desire to otherwise obey the rules or to do good work. The combination of group standards and the TTUHSCEP standards is a powerful one in encouraging employee self-control. The only other ingredient you need is communication.

What you should communicate to your employees:

- What you expect from them;
- The rewards, if they adhere to standards of conduct; and
- The consequences, if they don't adhere to certain standards.

a. **Components of Effective Communication**

A thorough discussion of the rules and other expectations should be a part of every new employee's orientation. Only after all your employees are fully aware of your expectations will they begin to live up to them. To succeed in bringing about self-control, make sure your expectations are:

(1) **Intelligible**

The employee should understand what you expect. What is understandable to supervisors is not always understandable to workers. It is important to speak in words that your employees understand. It is also a good idea to check their understanding. Ask them to repeat what you said in their own terms.

(2) **Consistent**

The expectation should not conflict with other expectations. Whenever you have to ask employees to act against normal policies or procedures, you should carefully explain the reasons for the deviation.

(3) **Specific**

Employees should be able to tell whether or not they have succeeded in living up to your expectations. Spell out your expectations in such a way that there is little or no room for misinterpretation. For example, if you expect an employee to complete an assignment within a "reasonable" time, you should specify what time would be reasonable. With that kind of specificity, it is hard for misunderstandings to occur. Also, it gives the employee specific objectives to aim for and judge their performance against.

When "self-control" fails, "supervisor control" through progressive disciplinary steps must take its place.

3. **Progressive Discipline**

a. **Description**

A progressive discipline system is one in which repeated offenses result in progressively more severe disciplinary actions. Documentation is an important part of progressive discipline. Supervisors should document problem areas and discussions with employees; however, the problem area should be shared with the employee as they occur to give the employee ample opportunity to correct the problem.

Progressive discipline is used as a way of correcting employee misconduct. The object is to impose appropriate discipline while giving the employee the opportunity to improve their performance. If the employee will not change his ways, the progression works up to dismissal. Progressive steps are used in a progressive discipline system. However, TTUHSCEP, with the concurrence of the AVPHR, reserves the right to begin the process at any level, depending on the nature and/or severity of the offense being disciplined.

Steps in the Progressive Discipline System Process:

- Informal talk
- Oral warning (Performance Coaching)
- Written warning (Disciplinary Letter of Reprimand)
- Disciplinary suspension
- Letter of final warning
- Termination

(1) **Informal Talk**

When a good worker commits a minor offense, you may find that an informal talk will clear up the situation. Here you can discuss the employee's behavior and explain how it departs from the standard expected of employees. Make a point to listen to why the employee took such action.

(2) **Performance Coaching**

The difference between an informal talk and an oral warning are not absolute, but are more a matter of degree. In the oral warning, you concentrate very specifically on the infraction and its consequences. The supervisor should retain a record of this action on a Performance

Coaching Record form (Attachment A, p. 8).

(3) Written Warning (Letter of Disciplinary Reprimand)

If the problem continues after performance coaching, the supervisor is encouraged to have a more formal discussion in the form of an interview, confirmed by a Letter of Disciplinary Reprimand (Attachment A, p. 9) to the employee which details how performance or conduct has failed to meet standards. The letter should restate what was said in the interview, outlining for the employee specific goals that should be met including a deadline for improved performance or conduct to meet acceptable standards. A copy of the letter should be sent to the TTUHSCEP Human Resources Department for the official file. Employees should be informed of the right to respond in writing to the letter of reprimand.

At this point, the supervisor should apprise Human Resources Department of the situation.

(4) Disciplinary Suspension (Letter of Disciplinary Suspension)

A supervisor may not suspend an employee without prior concurrence of the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources and the appropriate divisional vice president/dean. An alternative suspension is a Letter of Final Warning (Attachment A, p. 9) with prior approval by the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources and the appropriate divisional vice president/dean.

A disciplinary leave without prior reprimand may be justified for offenses which violate major rules of conduct.

Disciplinary suspension should be imposed in a private interview and confirmed with a Letter of Disciplinary Suspension (Attachment A, p. 9) to the employee (a copy for the employee and a copy for the official Personnel File) outlining the details of how the employee failed to meet performance or conduct standards. The letter should also outline the schedule for the disciplinary leave without pay and specify what is expected of the employee on returning to work, and further indicate that should the employee fail to meet performance or conduct standards as outlined, further disciplinary action will be taken that may include dismissal.

(a) Disciplinary Suspension With Pay

This is an ordered absence from duty while in full pay status for a prescribed period of time, usually one to two days. This type of suspension allows the supervisor to respond immediately to a suspected but not fully substantiated offense. This allows a period in which an investigation can be thoroughly pursued and in which administrative approval can be obtained before further action is taken.

(b) Disciplinary Suspension Without Pay

If misconduct continues after coaching or issuing a disciplinary letter(s) of reprimand, the administrative officer should discuss the matter with the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources.

With concurrence of the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources and the appropriate vice president/dean, a disciplinary leave without pay may be imposed. A disciplinary leave without pay may range from the balance of a shift to several days.

(5) Termination

Termination is reserved for the most serious offenses or the unreformable repeat offenders. A supervisor may not terminate an employee without the prior concurrence of the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources and the appropriate vice president/dean.

A written request to terminate an employee attached to a Discharge Letter form (Attachment A) or Request for Separation Form (Attachment B) whichever is applicable, must be submitted to the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources where it will be prepared for review and approval or disapproval by the appropriate vice president/dean. The request should outline the justification for the dismissal and the steps that have been followed to attempt to correct the problem, including copies of all documentation.

b. How to Use a Progressive Discipline System

(1) Cooling Off Period

Even if an infraction is very serious, a supervisor should never lose control of his temper in administering discipline. If the infraction is bad enough, you can suspend the employee (with AVPHR approval) while you investigate and decide on a reasoned course of action.

(2) Investigate

Even when discrimination charges aren't likely, you should make an effort to uncover all the facts before considering disciplinary action. These facts include not only what happened and the circumstances under which it happened, but also any facts about the situation or about the employee that might affect the appropriate punishment.

(3) Act Promptly

When discipline is delayed, it loses much of its impact. (The "Law of Reinforcement" works only when the negative incentive is administered promptly - quickly enough after the violation for the employee to make the connection between punishment and the offense).

(4) Discipline in Private

A public reprimand builds resentment needlessly. Not only does it humiliate the employee, but it can hurt the morale of your entire work group. The only exception to this rule is the employee who challenges your authority in front of other employees. Then you must act promptly and decisively in order to keep the respect of your other workers. But even in that kind of use, it may be possible for you to keep their respect without making a public example of the offender. Often it makes as much of an impression to see an insubordinate

employee brought around after a short talk in your office as after a dressing down in public. You usually lose your effectiveness as a supervisor if you lose your temper.

(5) **Don't Be Personal**

Remember that you are passing judgment on an action, not a person. And remember that self-fulfilling prophecy: the employees who commit serious offenses may be fully capable of behaving appropriately if you treat them as though they are capable of it. But, if you treat them like incorrigibles or incompetents, they will well prove you're right.

c. **Appeal**

An employee of TTUHSCEP may appeal the decision to impose disciplinary action through the Grievance Procedure. The employee should be permitted to present oral or written material in mitigation. The employee may submit a written response to disciplinary action to be included in the official personnel file.

d. **Dismissal for Other Reasons**

A Request for Separation Form (Attachment A, p. 12) should be completed when an employee is being separated for the following reasons:

- Position is discontinued
- Lack of funding
- Completion of Contract
- Reorganization/Reduction in Force (Refer to Reduction in Force OP)
- Employee quit without notice per HSCEP OP 70.31 "...missing three consecutive work shifts without notifying his/her administrative office of the reason for the absence."
- Leave of Absence Expiration (Verified by Leave Administrator)

All supporting documentation including, but not limited to, a separation justification memo and a separation letter addressed to the employee must accompany request for separation memo. Refer to HSC Reduction in Force OP for actions relating to reductions in personnel.

e. **Involve the Human Resources Department**

The most effective safeguard for a supervisor is to involve his supervisor and the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources before the decision to impose any disciplinary action beyond the oral warning.

This practice is TTUHSCEP policy as well as an effective safeguard for the supervisor.

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

PERFORMANCE COACHING RECORD

Name of Employee: _____ R# _____

Position Title: _____

Department: _____

Supervisor: _____

The following is a brief statement of this employee's action which gave cause for performance coaching, together with suggestions for avoiding disciplinary measures in the future.

1. Employee's action or lack of action:

2. Reason given by employee:

3. What instructions were given to employee?

4. Employee's reaction to these instructions:

5. Supervisor's reactions and remarks:

In accordance with TTUHSCEP policy, a repetition of this offense or other acts of a similar nature may necessitate disciplinary action.

Signature of Supervisor: _____ Date _____

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

LETTER TO:

Name of Employee: _____ R# _____
Position Title: _____
Department: _____
Supervisor: _____

SUBJECT: (check one) _____ **LETTER OF DISCIPLINARY REPRIMAND**
_____ **LETTER OF DISCIPLINARY SUSPENSION**
(From _____ to _____)
_____ **LETTER OF FINAL WARNING**

The intent of this notice is to inform you that your performance has not been satisfactory for the reasons indicated below and to provide you with an opportunity to correct this situation. If this situation is not corrected, you will be subject to further disciplinary action.

1. Dates and explanation of incidents of previous performance coaching and disciplinary action taken:

2. Specific examples of the problems leading to this disciplinary action (reference specific policy or policies violated):

3. Specific action that you need in order to improve:

4. The time frame for improvement to be accomplished:

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LETTER TO: (Continued)

Name of Employee: _____ R# _____
Position Title: _____
Department: _____
Supervisor: _____

You are expected to achieve and to continue to maintain an acceptable level of performance for the duration of employment. Failure to do so will lead to further disciplinary action.

You may respond to this coaching in writing and that response will be placed in your personnel file.

Signing this form does not indicate agreement, but only signifies you have been informed of the above action and have received a copy of the discipline notice.

Signature of Employee: _____ Date _____

Signature of Supervisor: _____ Date _____

For Disciplinary Suspension / Letter of Final Warnings ONLY:

Reviewed

Signature of AVP Human Resources: _____ Date _____

xc: Human Resources Department
Employee
Supervisor

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

DISCHARGE LETTER

LETTER TO:

Name of Employee: _____ R# _____

Position Title: _____

Department: _____

The intent of this notice is to inform you that your employment with Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso will be terminated on _____ and your services will no longer be required.

RECOMMENDED:

Signature of Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Department Head: _____ Date: _____

REVIEWED:

Signature of Asst VP for Human Resources: _____ Date: _____

APPROVED:

Signature of Vice President/Dean: _____ Date: _____

**TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO
REQUEST FOR SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

Name of Employee: _____ R# _____

Position Title: _____ Department: _____

Effective Date of Separation: _____

Reason:

- Position Discontinued (All)**
- Lack of Funding**
- Completion of Contract**
- Reorganization/Reduction in Force**
- Quit without Notice per HSCEP OP 70.31 “...missing three consecutive work shifts without notifying his/her administrative office of the reason for the absence.”**
- Leave of Absence Expiration**

- Verified by Leave Administrator _____ Date _____

Attach all supporting documentation including, but not limited to, a separation justification memo and a separation letter addressed to the employee.

REQUESTED BY:

Supervisor/Manager: _____ Date: _____

Director/Administrator: _____ Date: _____

REVIEWED:

Asst. VP for Human Resources: _____ Date: _____

APPROVED:

Vice President/Dean: _____ Date: _____