

Guidelines & Templates for Performance Management Documentation

Progressive discipline is an opportunity to educate an employee and promote successful performance. The goal of any disciplinary action is to improve performance and/or behavior. Policies related to performance management can be found at <http://policies.emory.edu/> under Employee Relations, specifically, the Progressive Discipline Policy, <http://policies.emory.edu/4.63>

Verbal Warning

When appropriate, the initial disciplinary action should be a verbal warning. The discussion should be firm but fair and should ensure that the employee clearly understands the established standards and expectations with respect to the performance, attendance or behavior (including rude or inappropriate communication). Divisional Human Resources Directors and central Employee Relations Directors <https://hr.emory.edu/eu/employee-relations/index.html> can provide guidance to supervisors preparing to give a verbal warning.

Elements of a Verbal Warning

1. State the problem*
2. If applicable, refer to previous discussion(s) with the employee and/or the action(s) taken to date.
3. State the specific directives for correcting the unacceptable performance and/or conduct.
4. Indicate that a verbal warning is formal discipline.
5. Inform the employee of the consequences for lack of improvement/correction, and/or that continued failure to meet expectations will result in further disciplinary action.
6. After the meeting, provide the employee with a letter or email that summarizes the discussion and articulates the performance expectations going forward. The supervisor should maintain a copy of this communication. If a letter is provided, include a signature and date line for the employee to acknowledge receipt.

state the facts of the situation without reference to a protected class, inferences, assumptions, or legal or medical opinions such as,
“You seem to have a really bad attitude.” or,
“You fraudulently obtained....” or,
“I think you may be depressed.”*

***race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, gender, genetic information, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran’s status*

Some departments, depending on their internal procedures, use a form for recording performance discussions. Consult with your leadership if a performance management tool of this kind is used in your department.

Moving to a Written Warning

When discussions with an employee do not result in the needed improvement or if the initial situation indicates a need for more significant action, the next step is a written warning. A written warning outlines the performance, attendance or behavior issues, states expectations, and lists consequences if issues continue.

See https://hr.emory.edu/eu/_includes/documents/sections/employee-relations/written-warning-letter.pdf