

Handling poor employee behavior is a dreaded task among most managers and business owners. In order to have a high performing team, employees must understand when their behavior or performance is not meeting job requirements. If you have an employee who is off track, here are some tips to help you get them moving in the right direction:

### WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE?

Progressive discipline is a process to encourage employee improvement by providing verbal and written warnings. Each warning notifies the employee of the performance or behavior issue, outline expectations and deadlines for improvement and consequences if there is no improvement. Both verbal and written warnings are documented by the manager using the Corrective Action Report.

### WHY IS PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE IMPORTANT?

Following this process protects your company from potential unemployment or discrimination claims in the future. In fact, should you take part in an unemployment hearing, the judge will likely ask if you have a progressive discipline process and if you followed the process.

Progressive discipline is not only about protecting your company. The goal is to get the employee back on track. Following a progressive discipline process helps your company avoid unnecessary turnover, by giving employees an opportunity to improve their performance or behavior, rather than just terminating the employee.

### WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN THE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCESS?

1. **Verbal Warning:** Giving a verbal warning to an employee is the first step when you notice that there is a gap between expectations and actual employee performance or behavior. Verbal warnings should be documented using the Corrective Action Report.
2. **Written Warning:** If the behavior of an employee doesn't improve after the verbal warning, you should issue a written warning. You may have more than one written warning depending on the situation and the process your company chooses to follow. Written warnings should be documented using the Corrective Action Report and detailing all previous warnings.
3. **Final Warning:** If the situation or behavior is severe enough, OR if you have already completed the Verbal and Written warning processes, this is the next step. This step informs the employee a final time that if the performance/behavior does not improve, immediate termination may occur.
4. **Decision Making Leave:** This is an **optional** step that companies may take if the employee is still not making the necessary improvements after a final warning has been issued. This is a last step prior to termination. It gives employees one last chance to continue their employment by improving their performance or behavior to meet expectations. Decision Making Leave should be documented using the Decision Making Leave Worksheet.
5. **Termination.** If the performance or behavior issue doesn't improve after following the outlined steps, the employee should be terminated. Keeping "bad apples" on your team lowers productivity and morale. Replacing them may be the best option.

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