

CRCOG

HR Guidelines

Employee Reviews and Evaluations

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Disclaimer

These HR Guidelines are provided to member cities/towns for use as a guide. While our suggestions incorporate best practices on these topics, it is understood that member cities/towns may have many of their own formal policies and practices which may or must be followed. We hope that these guidelines will assist communities with their personnel policies and practices.

Please note that these guidelines are for non-union employees. Those employees who are represented by a labor union will be governed by the terms of employment described in their collective bargaining agreement. To that extent, many of the practices described herein may not be applicable or appropriate in the union context. Additionally, if your city's/town's Charter, ordinances or other formal policies mandate that employees be treated in a fashion other than at-will, then those documents must be followed. Finally, keep in mind that most public employees enjoy some form of due process before their employment may be terminated – even when employment is at-will.

Please contact CRCOG with any questions.

I. Effective Communication

Effective communication between the employer and employee will in many instances avoid or limit costs related to mistakes, inefficiency and misunderstandings. Moreover, effective communication will maintain employee morale by putting each employee on notice of what is expected of him or her. Finally, effective communication will assist the employer in eliminating poor productivity, problem employees and legal exposure. Effective communication comes in the form of performance reviews, evaluations and appropriate discipline.

II. Establish Employee Goals and Performance Standards

It is incumbent on all employers to have appropriate job descriptions, written performance goals and objectives upon which to base employment standards. Without these items in place to act as performance targets, position requirements may not be

met due to the employee's lack of understanding of those requirements, which could result in ineffective discipline.

Follow these guidelines in preparing the Employee Performance Evaluation:

(1) Be fair and consistent with all employees.

Performance evaluations should be fair, honest and factually demonstrable.

(2) Be objective

Performance reviews should be carefully considered and **supported by facts**.

Assure that performance reviews correlate with job descriptions and performance objectives for the position requirements.

(3) Take your time

Don't rush through the drafting and preparation of the written review without giving thought to the impact it may have on the employee and the employer.

(4) Be thorough

Often, a performance review is prepared in a fashion that does not demonstrate to the employee his/her problem areas. In an effort not to hurt or embarrass the employee the reviewer simply crafts a review that extols every possible virtue without mentioning obvious performance deficiencies. This causes more harm than good because it creates a false impression that the employee is perfect, when in fact the supervisor knows of problems with the employee's performance. This type of review also creates difficulties in any subsequent disciplinary action and/or litigation because the employee was never put on notice of any performance problems.

The other improper type of employee review is one that fails to provide any praise at all. This type of review -- *when unwarranted* -- demoralizes the employee and may cause poor morale.

(5) Avoid legal exposure

Do not write or say things that could be construed as harassing or discriminatory. Do not single out people based on their protected class. Do not base the evaluation on a particular protected status (e.g., disabilities, pregnancies, religion, age).

(6) Summarize communications that have taken place over time

Reflect the previous communications and guidance over the evaluation period, assuring feedback is not a surprise. Do not write or say things during the review process that are contradictory to things that you previously wrote or said about the employee. In fact, very little should be a surprise to the employee because the supervisor should have informed the employee of his/her strengths and weaknesses throughout the evaluation time period.

III. Guidelines for Preparing Written Reviews

1. Consider the *ENTIRE* Time Period Covered by the Review. While unusual or isolated incidences may be mentioned, they should be taken into consideration as part of the entire review period.
2. Base the evaluation on factual information verses opinion.
3. Determine whether the employee has improved, or failed to improve, in areas that have been previously identified to him/her.

4. Do not compare employees. Each employee performance review should be compared against global standards for all employees. Do not take into consideration issues such as pregnancy, race, religious activities, age, or anything other than work performance.

5 Do not rush through the preparation of the evaluation.

6. Do not be afraid to be honest.

IV. The Performance Evaluation Meeting

During the Performance Evaluation *meeting* follow the following guidelines.

1. The meeting should be private with no interruptions. You and one other member of management, preferably one from human resources, should be present.
2. Be honest, open and considerate.
3. Listen to what the employee says in response.
4. Be clear in what areas are needed for improvement.
5. Clearly state the performance expectations.
6. Offer to provide training/re-training if applicable.
7. Reinforce positive aspects of employment.
8. Avoid stating anything that could be construed as discriminatory or involving an illegal inquiry.
9. If appropriate, end the meeting on either a positive note or a warning note regarding the need for improvement and possibly require a formal "Performance Improvement Plan."
10. The employee should be told in writing that he/she has the right to provide a written response to the evaluation, disagreeing with its contents, and that both documents will become part of the employee's personnel file. (C.G.S. Sec. 31-128e)

11. If a formal Performance Improvement Plan is in place, then that should be noted as part of the evaluation process – including whether the plan is working and the employee is improving.

V. Special Concerns

Contact management and/or legal counsel before responding to these concerns:

A. Serious misconduct

1. Health and safety of employees must be protected.
2. Criminal issues should be evaluated quickly and with legal counsel.

B. Insubordination

C. Alcohol or Drug Use/Abuse

D. Disabilities

E. Threats of Violence

F. Threats of Litigation