

Policies and Procedures Related to Discipline

Performance problems should be addressed when they occur and not “held” for the performance review meeting. Supervisors must discipline staff consistently, addressing all violations of university policy, procedure or standards. Your disciplinary action should be reasonable, timely and related in severity to the seriousness of the offense. Although the university generally follows a system of progressive discipline, each situation must be handled based on its individual facts. If a problem merits disciplinary action beyond an oral reprimand, you must consult with the Associate Vice President of Human Resources. Likewise, if you become aware of a situation that may result in suspension or termination, you should discuss the incident with Human Resources as soon as possible after it occurs and before disciplinary action is taken.

The role of the Human Resources Department is to facilitate discussion and resolution of problems in a consistent and legal manner. Critical to avoiding wrongful termination claims is consistent, evenhanded adherence to both the substance and the procedure of university employment policies. Although the university functions under the doctrine of employment-at-will, employees who subjectively feel that they have gotten all a process that is due with respect to difficulties encountered in their employment relationship will be far less inclined to resort to litigation. Supervisors are not authorized to discharge or threaten to discharge employees without the approval of the respective vice president and the associate vice president of Human Resources.

If you suspect that a staff member's work is being affected adversely by personal problems, you can obtain additional assistance through the Human Resources Department.

Disciplinary Procedures

The following process is intended only as a guide in considering the possible response to performance problems or misconduct.

- Verbal Reprimand: A verbal reprimand may be sufficient to correct a staff member's first time and/or minor misconduct.
- Written Reprimand: If a verbal reprimand has not been effective in correcting an offense or if the offense demands stronger disciplinary action than a verbal reprimand, the employee may receive a written reprimand. A copy will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

- **Disciplinary Suspension:** When a reprimand is insufficient, a disciplinary suspension without pay may be imposed. The university will determine the length of the suspension in its sole discretion.
- **Disciplinary suspensions of hourly staff members:** These suspensions are unpaid and, generally, range from one to three consecutive workdays in duration. In cases of severe infractions, longer suspensions may be given and scheduled at the discretion of the supervisor.
- **Disciplinary suspension of administrative staff members:** The Fair Labor Standards Act, sets stipulations on the suspension of exempt staff member without pay. The Human Resource Office needs to assess every recommendation for suspension of an exempt staff member against the regulations of the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- **Termination from Employment:** In serious cases, the university may choose to terminate the employee from employment, rather than to impose a reprimand or suspension.

Supervisors who need assistance in dealing with a disciplinary issue or who would like further information about the university's disciplinary processes should contact the Human Resources department.