Guide For Addressing Performance Issues

In addition to working with Human Resources, this quick guide can help you avoid common pitfalls in addressing performance issues with your employees. I encourage you to contact me as soon as you have an issue and we can work through it together. —Angela Thompson, CEMML Human Resources

- Be aware that it is in everyone’s best interest for the employee to be successful, so your effort is merited in addressing and helping the employee overcome performance issues.
- Always use respect, be honest and direct to avoid confusion and loss of trust from employee. Success will not be gained if the employee does not trust that you have their best interest in mind.
- Make your expectations clear to the employee and follow up in writing. The purpose is to confirm that you are serious, document specific actions/changes required, and to minimize miscommunication. There is a possibility that the employee is unaware of some expectations even though you think it should be obvious.
- Ask the employee if there is anything that he/she anticipates would get in the way of achieving the desired outcome.
- Ask what you can do to help the employee be successful in the position.
- Listen to what the employee has to say; there may be obstacles that you are unaware of.
- Provide reasonable tools to help success where possible (time, training, software, etc.).
- Do not let emotions take over even if you are frustrated or disappointed. Explain and rely on the business reasons you have for requesting a change or addressing an issue.
- Do not set the employee up to fail; ensure that your expectations for the position are reasonable and have been properly communicated to the employee.
- Give consideration to your overall timeline, but provide the employee deadlines one step at a time to provide yourself the most flexibility. If the employee is able and desires to improve, it could take time. If you need to see immediate improvement but are able to allow two months for complete improvement, state to the employee that you need to see immediate improvement and you will reevaluate regularly. What you don’t want to do is provide the two month deadline without the mention of immediate improvement because you have committed to waiting two months before further action can be taken.
- Understand that the employee’s learning of shortcomings can be personal and highly emotional for the employee, so provide them with an environment safe from embarrassment for working through the issues. Maintain confidentiality and be a source of help to them.
- Maintain professional boundaries and your role as supervisor. It’s easy to become personally invested and want to play the role of friend or counselor. Playing a role other than supervisor could minimize your effectiveness in helping resolve the issue.
- Have ownership over the need to address the issues being brought forward. Do not blame your boss or POC or poor rules as the reason why you have to address an issue. This will minimize the need for change in their eyes, which is setting them up for failure by making this seem like a formality with no basis. Understand that CEMML has the right to expect all employees to
perform their essential duties successfully, and it is your responsibility to recognize issues and work toward a solution.

- Follow through. Albeit tough, bringing up the issue is not enough. If there is improvement, address it with the employee; if there is none, address it and prepare for the next step in resolving the issue. If all is resolved, state so and close the issue with the employee.
- Stay engaged, provide updates, and make changes as needed to reach the overall goal.

Addressing performance issues may be the toughest thing you do in your position as supervisor. Addressing issues is necessary for the success of the program, so know that you have support here to help you work through the issues successfully.