Policy 4.63
Progressive Discipline

Responsible Official: VP for Human Resources
Administering Division/Department: Employee Relations
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Overview

The Progressive Discipline process is designed to be constructive and corrective and to promote employee success. It gives employees the information necessary to understand what aspect of work performance, attendance or behavior is unacceptable, identifies the improvements that are expected, and provides the opportunity for employees to demonstrate the expected improvements. The goal is to improve performance, attendance, or behavior of employees and to assist employees in taking ownership of their performance, attendance, or behavior.

Nothing in this policy and procedure, however, requires management to utilize any particular step or series of steps in disciplinary action. Management may impose any level of discipline, including dismissal, whether or not this is the employee's first unacceptable work performance, attendance or behavior and whether or not a less serious form of discipline has been imposed for any prior performance, attendance, or behavior issues.

It is the responsibility of employees to adhere to the standards of conduct and Emory's policies and procedures. For additional information please refer to the Standards of Conduct policy.

Policy Details

Employee Relations consultation is recommended prior to any disciplinary action to verify that it is consistent with Emory’s policies and procedures.

Progressive discipline by a supervisor should be used to correct or improve unacceptable work performance, attendance or behavior; to prevent recurrence of unacceptable performance, attendance, or behavior; to provide an opportunity for employee growth; and to protect the interests of Emory. Discipline should be timely and consistent.

When it appears that an employee has violated a policy or procedure, management, in consultation with ER, should decide what type of discipline should be taken.

The following should be done prior to discipline:

- Identify the facts.
- Consider the overall history of performance, attendance, or behavior in the job and length of service.
- Consider the nature, severity and effects of the unacceptable performance, attendance or behavior.
- Review and consider previous discipline, if any.
- Determine appropriate action based on available information.

Any discussion with an employee concerning discipline should be conducted in a place and manner that respect the privacy of the employee.
PROCEDURES
It is recommended that department management document all steps of the corrective discipline process as they occur, as well as warnings of further corrective action if the performance, attendance, or behavior is not corrected.

In each step, department management is advised to state the next step to be taken if the performance does not improve. However, in cases of serious misconduct, the employee may be immediately suspended or terminated.

When an employee’s performance, attendance, or behavior is unsatisfactory, a progressive process is strongly advised. The steps involved in the process may include verbal discussion, written warning, suspension without pay, administrative leave, and dismissal. **Any disciplinary step may be omitted depending upon the severity of the incident or other relevant circumstances.**

All disciplinary documents must be maintained in the appropriate department file and copies provided to ER.

NOTE: The steps of the progressive discipline process should be followed for new employees. The process may be shorter for a new employee as Emory does not have a probationary period. For purposes of this policy only, “new employee” is defined as an employee who has been employed less than one year with Emory or an employee who has been employed in the current department less than one year.

VERBAL
When appropriate, the initial disciplinary action should be verbal. 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.

Documentation of a verbal warning should be maintained in the department file. Templates for disciplinary documents are available on the Human Resources website.

WRITTEN
When a discussion with an employee does not result in the needed improvement or if the initial situation indicates a need for stronger action, the next step is a formal discussion, followed with written documentation of the discussion. This written warning outlines the performance, attendance or behavior issues, states expectations, and lists consequences if issues continue.

SUSPENSION WITHOUT PAY
In some circumstances, suspension may be part of the Progressive Discipline process. Suspension can range from one to five days.

ER must be consulted concerning any proposed suspension of an employee.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE
Under certain circumstances, administrative leave may be a part of the progressive discipline process. Provisions for administrative leave can be found in the Administrative Leave policy.

During an investigation, all Emory property in the possession of the employee (e.g., ID, keys, etc.) should be collected by department management. Notice should be given to University Technology Services to suspend employee access to electronic systems until the investigation is complete.

TERMINATION
Termination is advised when an employee has engaged in serious misconduct or an employee has not corrected performance, attendance or behavior.

**Prior to terminating an employee, department management must review the situation and related information with ER and supply appropriate documentation.**

It is advised that the termination be verbally communicated to an employee. An employee must receive a formal letter of termination that has been approved by OD/ER. This letter includes the reason for termination, effective date, and applicable information regarding final pay.

**Employees terminated for unsatisfactory performance, attendance, or behavior are not eligible for rehire at Emory University or Emory Healthcare. Emory reserves the right to designate other terminated employees as ineligible for rehire depending upon the circumstances.**

Refer to the Separations from Employment policy regarding final pay.

Emory reserves the sole right to discipline and dismiss employees at any time with or without cause and to modify at any time the terms and conditions of employment (without limitation to salaries, work schedules, or otherwise).

Related Links
Emory University policies are subject to change at any time. If you are reading this policy in paper or PDF format, you are strongly encouraged to visit policies.emory.edu to ensure that you are relying on the current version.