

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Purpose

It is Rockdale County's policy to treat employees with respect at all times. The County is committed to provide the direction and support employees need to enhance their performance, to stimulate individual accountability, and to foster self-discipline.

General Guidelines

Rockdale County properly places the responsibility for good performance on employees. Good performance is recognized and rewarded. The term performance is used to denote behavior and productivity relative to job expectations. When performance or behavior does not meet job expectations, employees are reminded of the need to meet job expectations and are asked to commit to improving their performance immediately. Failure to improve within a reasonable time may result in escalation of discipline up to and including termination.

The County has adopted a progressive discipline system. In the case of serious infractions, any or all steps in the discipline system may be omitted. **Some infractions such as, but not limited to, theft, violence, and serious policy violations may result in immediate termination.**

The Performance Tracking Record (Attachment A) is recommended as a tool to prepare for discussions with the employee and to document the discussion, action plans and commitments made by the employee.

Reinforcement

Discipline starts with clear job expectations and reinforcement of good performance. Employees are expected to do their jobs well. Managers are expected to reinforce good performance through informal conversations with the employee and/or memos to the employee and the employee's personnel file. It is appropriate to recognize employees for sustained good performance, which performance may include, for example, providing extra support to other employees, contributing innovative ideas that help the County perform better, and accomplishing tasks beyond assigned responsibilities.

Keeping notes on employee performance is an important part of daily performance management. Behavior worth noting is also worthy of discussion with the employee. Frequent conversation is the key to early correction and positive reinforcement.

Coaching

Performance can be strengthened, and many performance problems can be improved or even eliminated through coaching. The purpose of coaching is to make the employee aware of a gap between job performance and expectations and to develop effective steps to close the gap. Coaching is also used to help talented employees develop ways to prepare themselves for greater responsibilities or advancement.

Performance Tracking Record

The Performance Tracking Record (or PTR) is recommended as preparation for coaching discussions. Documentation of coaching discussions is kept by the manager. Whether a performance problem warrants continued coaching, the development of a PIP or a formal level of discipline depends on the seriousness of the performance problem and other relevant factors discussed below. It is permissible with County guidelines, however, to impose formal discipline without coaching. Managers should consult with Talent Management for guidance in determining when to use coaching and when to apply discipline.

Deciding When to Apply Discipline

Discipline should be applied in a manner that is appropriate to the seriousness of the problem. Managers should rely upon Talent Management for assistance in making a good decision in light of the following:

- Discipline applied to other County employees with similar performance or behavior
- Other steps of discipline that are currently active for the employee
- Past discipline of the employee for similar performance or behavior
- Findings of any investigation regarding the circumstances surrounding the performance or behavior
- Documented attempts to resolve the issue prior to applying formal discipline.

Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary actions are cumulative. Generally, any employee who receives three offenses resulting in a final written reprimand within a 2-year annual period will be terminated. Notwithstanding the disciplinary process outlined below, employees may be discharged *at any time* for incidents deemed by management to constitute serious misconduct, e.g. serious infractions or violations of County policy.

The severity of the performance issue or behavior will dictate what level of discipline is implemented. Generally, the following progressive disciplinary steps should be taken:

Levels of Disciplinary Action

- 1) *Verbal reprimand.* A Manager or Supervisor may administer a verbal reprimand to correct detrimental employee behavior or unsatisfactory job performance. The Manager or Supervisor will submit a written record of verbal reprimands, using the PTR, to Talent Management, which shall contain the time, date, and a brief, yet specific description of the problem and direction given the employee.
- 2) *Written reprimand.* A Manager or Supervisor may submit a written reprimand to an employee when a verbal reprimand has not resulted in the expected improvement, or when more severe initial action is warranted. Using the PTR, written reprimands must contain specific time, date, place of offense, the signature of the employee.
- 3) *Final Written reprimand.* A Manager or Supervisor may submit a final written reprimand to an employee when a written reprimand has not resulted in the expected improvement, or

when more severe initial action is warranted. Using the PTR, final written reprimands must contain specific time, date, place of offense, the signature of the employee, a statement of expected corrective action to be **completed within a stated timeframe** by the employee. A Disciplinary Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) should be implemented and provided to the employee if the violation is based on performance. The PIP explains to the employee the expectations and the timeframe needed for the employee to improve his or her performance.

If the employee does not meet the conditions of the PIP, the Department Head/Elected Official should escalate the discipline up to and including termination. A copy of the final written reprimand shall be sent to the Director of Talent Management. Talent Management shall file a copy of the final written reprimand in the employee's personnel file, where it will remain active for a period of two (2) years, provided that the employee has received no additional reprimands.

4) *Suspension.* A Manager or Supervisor, after receiving approval from his or her Department Head/Elected Official and the Director of Talent Management, may suspend an employee in his/her department without pay. Using the PTR, a written statement specifically setting forth reasons for suspension and **specific dates** of the suspension shall be furnished to the employee. A copy shall be sent to Talent Management. Talent Management shall file a copy of the reprimand in the employee's personnel file, where it will remain active for a period of two (2) years, provided that the employee has received no additional reprimands.

5) *Demotions.* Refer to policy #2006-4-28

6) *Termination.* A Department Head/Elected Official, after receiving approval from the Director of Talent Management, may terminate an employee. The Director of Talent Management will ensure appropriate review by County legal counsel, if any is needed. Employees should be aware that some offenses are sufficiently severe and may result in **immediate termination**.

The employee shall attend a pre-termination meeting, and be furnished notice of dismissal in writing, using the PTR, containing the date and the reasons for dismissal. A copy shall be sent to Talent Management and filed in the employee's personnel file. Procedures for appeal of a dismissal are provided in the Appeals Process Policy.

Investigative Suspensions/Administrative Leave

There are certain occasions when an employee may be suspended so that the manager can investigate certain serious violations. A non-exhaustive list of these occasions includes theft, violence, violation of the alcohol and drug policy, insubordination or major violations of other County policies. Once placed on investigative suspension/administrative leave, an employee will be paid his or her regular straight time wage provided the employee is not discharged. This period is not to exceed ten (10) working days without approval from the Director of Talent Management.

Impact and Scope

This policy excludes employees in their working test period. If these employees demonstrate performance problems, which are not improved with coaching, and formal discipline is otherwise required, these employees will be discharged.

When an employee is on a long-term absence (including FMLA-covered absences) during formal levels of discipline and; therefore, the employee is not able to meet his or her commitment to solve a performance problem, the active period of the discipline step may be extended.

Policy Changes

The County reserves the right to delete, modify, amend or terminate this policy at any time with or without prior notice.


Approved this 8th day of December 2020.

Rockdale County Board of Commissioners



Oz Nesbitt, Sr., Chairman

ATTEST:


Jennifer Rutledge, County Clerk

Disciplinary Performance Improvement Plan: Provide details of actions to be taken and the dates for accomplishment.

Supervisor **Date**

Employee **Date**