

Begin the Session:

- Set and maintain a constructive tone; be calm, professional, and focused.
- Seek cooperation, not confrontation, by focusing on how the employee's conduct or performance fits into the total organization.
- Decide if this is a conduct or a performance problem.
 - Is your employee a technically competent employee who just can't get to work on time?
 - If so, then this is a conduct issue.
- Acknowledge the good performance but address the failure to follow your agency's policy on reporting to work on time.

Stick to the Facts:

- Be prepared for the "strategy of ignorance" on the employee's part by having concrete examples ready.
- The only way to counteract ignorance or denial is with hard data.
Keep your objectives in mind; don't get pulled off target by an employee's excuses. The more you get involved in making suggestions and dealing with excuses, the further you are getting from the objective of your meeting.

Ask Questions:

- Unless you think the employee will attempt to take control of the discussion, choose several points throughout your comments where you can stop and get confirmation that he or she understands the problems and your expectations.
- Provide opportunities for your employee to respond.
- This will keep the employee active in the discussion and may lessen the negative connotation of a "lecture."

Listen Actively:

- Most people are better at talking than listening. If you are in a meeting in which you expect the employee to be participative, you are going to have to restrain your urge to be directive.
- Active listening is an interpersonal skill that can be learned, just like your technical knowledge and skills.
- It demonstrates to the other person that you hear and understand their point of view.
- Paraphrase by restating in your own words what the other person has said. This will ensure you heard them correctly and that you understand the meaning. Paraphrasing also confirms to the other person that you are really listening.
- Avoid interruptions and distractions.
- Use silence to encourage the employee to take responsibility for the problem and solution.

Avoid Arguments:

- Remember your objective; you are not there to win an argument.
- Keep the meeting on track; keep coming back to the main issue.
- Modulate your voice; be mindful of your body language.

Take Notes:

- Keep notes of the meeting. Although many times there is no requirement to document a session, you will benefit by at least documenting the main points of the meeting.
- Your notes provide you and your employee with a reference for an agreed upon plan of action.
- Immediately after any such discussion with an employee, you should take a few minutes and make a dated note for the file to document the matters discussed and any assistance offered.
- If such a note would help confirm your mutual understanding of the matters discussed, you should share it with the employee.
- It is expected that you may take "supervisory" notes to serve as "memory joggers" regarding an employee's performance. For example, these notes can include dates or the number of times an employee was given an instruction.
- This type of "supervisory" information does not have to be included in notes given to an employee.
- Contact Employee Relations for information on Privacy Act requirements concerning supervisory notes.

End the Session:

- At the conclusion of the meeting, end on a positive note by emphasizing that improving the employee's performance is a mutually beneficial goal.
- Summarize the results of the meeting and action plan.
 - Make sure your employee understands the action plan and that you both agree on the resources that will be provided, including time, training, etc.
 - Go over what is expected of you (the supervisor/manager) and in turn what you expect the employee to accomplish.
 - Establish a process to follow up on your employee's progress.
- Offer a written summary (immediately or to be given to the employee later).
- A written summary is particularly valuable if you will be trying something new or changing any work assignment routine.
- Keep notes for yourself documenting the date of the discussion and any specific agreements you reached with the employee regarding changes to the way work is assigned or structured.