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1. Preventive Discipline

Preventive discipline is a specific approach to discipline that rests on three important ideas:

- Discipline means control.
- The best control is self-control.
- To get self-control, you need to communicate three things:
  - What you expect from employees;
  - The rewards, if they adhere to standards of conduct; and
  - The consequences, if they don't adhere to certain standards.

a. Discipline Means Control

The accomplishment of work through the efforts of others is really what the supervisor's job is all about. Essentially, you are being paid to control people, to direct your worker's efforts towards TTUHSC objectives.

(1) Reinforce

The “Law of Reinforcement” says that you aren't limited to punishment when you discipline, for discipline (control) can be attained by rewards as well - positive incentives as well as negative ones.

(2) Encourage

There are times, then, when a positive incentive works better than a negative incentive. The positive incentive works better whenever the employee has been engaging in some behavior you want to encourage rather than discourage: correct work methods, high productivity, constructive relations with other employees, creative solutions to work problems, and the like.

(3) Positive Incentive

One of the most potent is recognition through praise. Praise, even simple recognition for a job well done, is a positive incentive to many people. It is safe to say that most employees never get tired of it and that most supervisors could use it to their advantage far more than they do. The prospect of promotion or a merit salary increase are other incentives. Even though you may not have the power to promote an employee or grant a merit salary increase anytime you would like, you do have the power to recommend employees take advantage of promotional opportunities made available through the TTU/TTUHSC Promotional Opportunity Program, to promote meritorious employees to higher level positions within your own department if and when vacancies occur, and to recommend salary increases on the basis of outstanding merit within the guidelines provided by TTUHSC policies. You can use these positive incentives to make certain that your employees realize that you are noticing and remembering their performance. This realization becomes an important incentive to most employees.
(4) **Feedback**

Feedback is simply letting the employees know how they’re doing, good or bad. When given promptly and frequently, it can work better than you might expect. The reason is that people can control their own actions more effectively if they are told how they are doing. It is often surprising how little employees know about their supervisor’s opinion of their work. This means you should tell employees what you think about their work, even if it seems that you’re telling them the obvious.

None of these positive incentives works with everyone all the time. Different employees are motivated by different incentives. But you will probably find some that work with enough of your employees to be worth your trouble in using them.

b. **Self-Control**

Self-control means that workers do the work and obey the rules on their own.

Your time is valuable. Any time you spend controlling your workers is time you don't have to do the other things you should be doing. Wouldn't it be better if your workers would control themselves without your having to spend your time controlling them?

Once most of your employees accept the rules and the work you give them, group pressure will be your ally in converting the rest. Group pressure motivates many employees who are not motivated by a desire to otherwise obey the rules or to do good work. The combination of group standards and the TTUHSC standards is a powerful one in encouraging employee self-control. The only other ingredient you need is communication.

c. **Communication**

A thorough discussion of the rules and other expectations should be a part of every new employee's briefing. Only after all your employees are fully aware of your expectations will they begin to live up to them. To succeed in bringing about self-control, make sure your expectations are:

(1) **Intelligible**

The employee should understand what you expect. What is understandable to supervisors is not always understandable to workers. It is important to speak in words that your employees understand. It is also a good idea to check their understanding. Ask them to repeat what you said in their own terms.

(2) **Consistent**

The expectation should not conflict with other expectations. Whenever you have to ask employees to act against normal policies or procedures, you should carefully explain the reasons for the deviation.
(3) Specific

Employees should be able to tell whether or not they have succeeded in living up to your expectations. Spell out your expectations in such a way that there is little or no room for misinterpretation. For example, if you expect an employee to complete an assignment within a "reasonable" time, you should specify what time would be reasonable. With that kind of specificity, it is hard for misunderstandings to occur. Also, it gives the employee specific objectives to aim for and judge their performance against.

When "self-control" fails, "supervisor control" through progressive disciplinary steps must take its place.

2. Progressive Discipline

a. Description

A progressive discipline system is one in which repeated offenses result in progressively more severe disciplinary actions. Documentation is an important part of progressive discipline. Supervisors should document problem areas; however, the problem area should be shared with the employee as they occur to give the employee ample opportunity to correct the problem.

Progressive discipline is used as a way of correcting employee misconduct. The object is to make the punishment fit the crime and to get the employee to reform. If the employee will not change his ways, the progression works up to dismissal. Progressive steps are used in a progressive discipline system. However, TTUHSC reserves the right to begin the process at any level, depending on the nature and/or severity of the offense being disciplined.

The maximum sequence is:

- Informal talk
- Oral warning (Disciplinary Counseling)
- Written warning (Disciplinary Letter of Reprimand)
- Disciplinary suspension
  - Suspension with pay
  - Suspension without pay, or
  - Letter of final warning
- Dismissal

(1) Informal Talk

When a good worker commits a minor offense, you may find that an informal talk will clear up the situation. Here you can discuss the employee's behavior and explain how it departs from the standard expected of employees. Make a point to listen to why the employee took such action.
Oral Warning (Disciplinary Counseling)

The difference between an informal talk and an oral warning are not absolute, but are more a matter of degree. In the oral warning, you concentrate very specifically on the infraction and its consequences. The supervisor should retain a record of this action on a Disciplinary Counseling Record form (Attachment A, p. 8 or p. 9).

Written Warning (Letter of Disciplinary Reprimand)

If the problem continues after counseling, the supervisor is encouraged to have a more formal discussion in the form of an interview, confirmed by a Letter of Disciplinary Reprimand (Attach. A, pp. 10-11) to the employee which details how performance or conduct has failed to meet standards. The letter should restate what was said in the interview, outlining for the employee specific goals that should be met including a deadline for improved performance or conduct to meet acceptable standards. A copy of the letter should be sent to the TTUHSC Human Resources Office for the official file. Employees should be informed of the right to respond in writing to the letter of reprimand.

At this point, the supervisor should apprise the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources of the situation.

Disciplinary Suspension (Letter of Disciplinary Suspension)

A supervisor may not suspend an employee without prior concurrence of the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources and the appropriate divisional vice president. An alternative suspension is a Letter of Final Warning (Attach. A, pp. 10-11) with prior approval by the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources and the appropriate divisional vice president.

A disciplinary leave without prior reprimand may be justified for offenses which violate major rules of conduct.

Disciplinary suspension should be imposed in a private interview and confirmed with a Letter of Disciplinary Suspension (Attach. A, pp. 10-11) to the employee (a copy for the employee and a copy for the official Personnel File) outlining the details of how the employee failed to meet performance or conduct standards. The letter should also outline the schedule for the disciplinary leave without pay and specify what is expected of the employee on returning to work, and further indicate that should the employee fail to meet performance or conduct standards as outlined, further disciplinary action will be taken that may include dismissal.

Disciplinary Suspension With Pay

This is an ordered absence from duty while in full pay status for a prescribed period of time, usually one to two days. This type of suspension allows the supervisor to respond immediately to a suspected but not fully substantiated offense. This allows a period in which an investigation can be thoroughly pursued and in which administrative approval can be obtained before further action is taken.
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

Supervisor's Guide to Progressive Discipline

(b) Disciplinary Suspension Without Pay

If misconduct continues after counseling or issuing a disciplinary letter(s) of reprimand, the administrative officer should discuss the matter with the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources. With concurrence of the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources and the appropriate vice president, a disciplinary leave without pay may be imposed. A disciplinary leave without pay may range from the balance of a shift to several days.

(5) Dismissal

Dismissal is reserved for the most serious offenses or the unreformable repeat offenders. A supervisor may not dismiss an employee without the prior concurrence of the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources and the appropriate vice president.

A written request to dismiss an employee attached to a Discharge Letter form (Attachment A, p. 12), must be submitted to the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources where it will be prepared for review and approval or disapproval by the appropriate vice president. The request should outline the justification for the dismissal and the steps that have been followed to attempt to correct the problem, including copies of all documentation.

b. How to Use a Progressive Discipline System

(1) Cooling Off Period

Even if an infraction is very serious, a supervisor should never lose control of his temper in administering discipline. If the infraction is bad enough, you can suspend the employee while you investigate and decide on a reasoned course of action.

(2) Investigate

Even when discrimination charges aren't likely, you should make an effort to uncover all the facts before considering disciplinary action. These facts include not only what happened and the circumstances under which it happened, but also any facts about the situation or about the employee that might affect the appropriate punishment.

(3) Act Promptly

When discipline is delayed, it loses much of its impact. (The “Law of Reinforcement” works only when the negative incentive is administered promptly - quickly enough after the violation for the employee to make the connection between punishment and the offense).

(4) Discipline in Private

A public reprimand builds resentment needlessly. Not only does it humiliate the employee, but it can hurt the morale of your entire work group. The only exception to this rule is the employee who challenges your authority in front of other employees. Then you must act promptly and decisively in order to keep the respect of your other workers. But even in that kind of use, it may be possible for you to keep their respect without making a public example of the offender. Often it makes as much of an
impression to see an insubordinate employee brought around after a short talk in your office as after a dressing down in public. You usually lose your effectiveness as a supervisor if you lose your temper.

(5) Don't Be Personal

Remember that you are passing judgment on an action, not a person. And remember that self-fulfilling prophecy: the employees who commit serious offenses may be fully capable of behaving appropriately if you treat them as though they are capable of it. But, if you treat them like incorrigibles or incompetents, they will well prove you're right.

(6) Wipe the Slate Clean After a Certain Period of Time

If you think an offense is ancient history, don't let it influence your discipline. Of course, some offenses are serious enough to never be forgotten, but for most offenses, it is generally advisable to disregard them after three years have passed.

c. Appeal

An employee of TTUHSC may appeal the decision to impose disciplinary action through the Grievance Procedure. The employee should be permitted to present oral or written material in mitigation. The employee may submit a written response to disciplinary action to be included in the official personnel file.

d. Involve the Human Resources Department

The most effective safeguard for a supervisor is to involve his supervisor and the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources before the decision to impose any disciplinary action beyond the oral warning.

This practice is TTUHSC policy as well as an effective safeguard for the supervisor.
The following is a brief statement of this employee’s action which gave cause for counseling, together with suggestions for avoiding disciplinary measures in the future.

1. Employee’s action or lack of action:

2. Reason given by employee:

3. What instructions were given employee:

4. Employee’s reaction to these instructions:

5. Supervisor’s reactions and remarks:

In accordance with TTUHSC policy, a repetition of this offense or other acts of a similar nature may necessitate disciplinary action.

Employee Signature: ___________________________ Date ____________

Signature of Supervisor: ___________________________ Date ____________
LETTER TO:

Name of Employee: ___________________________ R# ___________________________

Position Title: ________________________________________________________________
Department: _________________________________________________________________

SUBJECT: (check one) _____ LETTER OF DISCIPLINARY REPRIMAND
                 _____ LETTER OF DISCIPLINARY SUSPENSION
                 _____ LETTER OF FINAL WARNING

The intent of this notice is to inform you that your performance has not been satisfactory for the reasons indicated below and to provide you with an opportunity to correct this situation. If this situation is not corrected, you will be subject to further disciplinary action.

1. Dates and explanation of incidents of previous counseling sessions:

2. Specific examples of the problems leading to this disciplinary action (reference specific policy or policies violated):

3. Specific action that you need in order to improve:

4. The time frame for improvement to be accomplished:
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center

Letter to: (Continued)

Name of Employee: ____________________________________________ R# _____________

Position Title: _________________________________________________

Department: ___________________________________________________

You are expected to achieve and to continue to maintain an acceptable level of performance for the duration of employment. Failure to do so will lead to further disciplinary action.

You may respond to this counseling in writing and that response will be placed in your personnel file.

Signing this form does not indicate agreement, but only signifies you have been informed of the above action and have received a copy of the discipline notice.

Signature of Employee: ________________________________________ Date________________

Signature of Supervisor: ________________________________________ Date________________

Xc: Human Resources
    Employee
    Supervisor
TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

DISCHARGE LETTER

LETTER TO:

Name of Employee: ___________________________ R#

Position Title: _______________________________

Department: _________________________________

The intent of this notice is to inform you that your employment with Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center will be terminated on _________________ and your services will no longer be required.

RECOMMENDED:

Signature of Supervisor: ___________________________ Date: _______________

Signature of Department Head: _________________________ Date: _______________

RECOMMENDED:

Signature of Asst VP for Human Resources: _________________ Date: _______________

RECOMMENDED:

Signature of Vice President/Dean: _________________________ Date: _______________