Performance Improvement Plan
Guidelines

Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) may be used for employees new to a role, employees who are unclear on performance expectations or employees who are regularly not meeting performance expectations and whose performance may necessitate the beginning of a progressive discipline process.

1. Document areas of the employee's performance that need improvement
   a. Be objective
   b. Be specific
   c. Provide facts and examples that include such things as dates, expected performance, description of actual performance, description of performance discrepancy/gap
      i. This information must be factual and not hearsay or opinions. There are two types of performance discrepancies – results and behavior. A results discrepancy would be failure to meet a specified goal or deadline. A behavior discrepancy would include not following directions or activities that hinder successful performance of the job.
      ii. Impacts of such discrepancies may be documented. Examples of impacts would be: time lost or wasted; materials wasted; equipment damaged or under- or over-utilized; quantity of work completed; quality of work completed; accidents or other safety concerns; need for extra supervision; impact on co-workers; impact on customers.

2. Develop an action plan
   a. Include SMART (specific, measurable, accurate, relevant, time-bound) goals. Some categories of goals are as follows:
      i. Job Description Goals – these goals are based on achievement of a pre-established set of job duties. They are expected to be accomplished continuously until the job description changes. For a firefighter, examples might be manual/maintenance skills, public relations, technical skills, etc.
      ii. Project Goals – these goals are based on achievement of a project objective.
      iii. Behavioral Goals – these goals are based on certain behaviors. They are expected to be accomplished continuously. Behavioral goals are “how” things need to be accomplished. For a firefighter, examples might be being able to work under stress or manage stress, being able to “think on your feet”, working well on a team, etc.
      iv. Stretch Goals – these goals are especially challenging to reach and are usually used to expand knowledge, skills and abilities of high-potential employees. Some organizations require at least one stretch goal for every employee. A stretch goal would not be recommended for a PIP.
b. Both the manager and the employee should participate in developing the goals to ensure understanding and commitment.

c. Goals must be documented.

d. Consider and list resources needed.

e. Consider time needed – how long is the probationary period? Usually 60-90 days.

f. What training/coaching will be needed? Who will provide it?

g. What are the consequences for not meeting the goals? Sample statements of consequences include:

   i. If expectations are not completely met, further disciplinary action, up to and including termination, may be taken.

   ii. If the individual fails to meet performance expectations, he will be demoted to a level, job or role commensurate with his current skills, abilities and behaviors.

   iii. If the described expectations are not satisfactorily achieved, but progress is being made, the individual may be given additional time to meet and sustain expectations. If the individual fails to meet and sustain expectations, further action, which may include termination, will be taken.

   iv. If the individual has more than one re-occurrence of the existing performance deficiency during the next 60 days, he will be terminated immediately.

3. Review draft PIP with HR to ensure action plan is specific, relevant, measurable and attainable. Plan must be written clearly and without emotion. You might consider an outline like the following to develop the PIP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Standard</th>
<th>Performance Issue/Concern</th>
<th>Action and/or Support Provided</th>
<th>Deadline for Attaining Goal</th>
<th>Outcome (results and attainment date)</th>
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4. Meet with employee

   a. Lay out areas for improvement and plan of action

   b. May need to modify PIP after receiving employee’s feedback

   c. Make any changes before the manager and the employee sign the PIP

   d. Provide employee with a copy of the PIP; keep a copy for the employee’s personnel file

   e. Establish regular follow-up meetings (weekly, biweekly, monthly) to discuss and document progress toward goals.

5. Follow-up meetings with employee

   a. Allow employee to ask questions and seek guidance or clarification on performance expectations.

   b. Ensure the necessary tools and training are provided.
6. PIP conclusion
   a. If employee is unable or unwilling to improve or performance gets worse, close the PIP and terminate employment.
   b. If improvement is shown in some but not all objectives, you might:
      i. Extend PIP timeline
      ii. End the PIP, accepting the progress that has been observed
   c. When the employee responds positively by meeting the objectives, close the PIP and return the employee to regular employment, being clear that continued good performance is expected.

Documentation
Job description(s)
Policies