

Managing Performance

(MGT1004)

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The Arizona Learning Center
Human Resources Division
Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA)*

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About this Course

In this course, you'll learn about

- Performance Management Principles
- Performance Planning and setting performance expectations with your employees
- Monitoring your employee's performance and providing feedback
- Conducting the formal performance review



Important
CBT

Information

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About this CBT

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Important CBT Information



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Important CBT Information



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-
- CBT Content** Click the "CBT Content" button to select course modules.
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CBT Chapters

- ✓ Introduction to Performance Management
- ✓ Performance Planning and Setting Expectations
- ✓ Monitoring Performance and Providing Feedback
- ✓ Conducting the Formal Performance Review
- ✓ Frequently Asked Questions
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Introduction

How do agencies accomplish their missions? How do supervisors and managers decide what goals their employees should achieve? How do employees know what they should be doing? The answer to all of these questions is *Performance Management*. As a supervisor, one of your most important responsibilities is managing employee performance. Performance management is not a once per year event. It is ongoing, long-term, and goal-oriented.



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Performance Management

The most familiar aspect of performance management to many of us is the *Performance Evaluation*, but performance management actually involves much more. The purpose of performance management is to

- Improve employee understanding of his/her assignments, the established standards for performance, and his/her progress in meeting those standards
- Enhance employee motivation, commitment, and productivity
- Encourage employee development for better job performance
- Recognize employee contributions to the work unit and agency as a whole
- Assist in identifying training needs
- Ensure objectivity, consistency and fairness in evaluating all employees



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Performance Management (continued)

Most importantly, performance management helps you to manage your work unit more effectively. The performance management concepts you will learn in this course will help you determine how well the employees in your work unit are performing relative to established work standards; how the work unit is performing as a whole; and if you have more than one work unit under your supervision, how the units compare with each other.



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Benefits of Performance Management

When you implement the performance management concepts outlined in this training module

- Your employees will know what they need to do, how they should do it, and how their performance compares with the standards you have set
- You will have ongoing conversations with your employees about their performance so there will be no surprises at the time of the formal evaluation, making it easier on both you and your employees
- You will have a greater opportunity to assess your employees' strengths, weaknesses, and areas that need further development
- You will assume an important role in developing your employees so they are capable of contributing more to the goals of your work unit and agency



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Performance Evaluations

What about formal performance evaluations? Are they still important?

Yes, very much so. Performance evaluations are used to support many decisions that significantly affect employees. Performance evaluations may be used to support actions related to promotion, demotion, and transfer or termination, to name a few. When you are considering a current State employee for a new position, you will want to review the performance evaluations in the individual's official personnel file in order to assess the employee's likelihood of success in the new job.



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Covered Versus Uncovered Employees

Performance evaluations are required for nearly all employees whether they are covered or uncovered. The strategies provided in this course are equally useful for both types of employees.



R2-5A-702

Personnel Rule R2-5A-702 requires that employees receive performance evaluations at least annually. This is a minimum standard; evaluations can be performed more frequently. Additionally, the rules require that **covered** employees on original or promotional probation must be evaluated prior to the end of the employee's probationary period. The Personnel Rules provide for the automatic granting of permanent status to a probationary employee in the event a timely performance appraisal is not completed.

As you will learn later in this course, providing frequent and timely performance feedback to all of your employees is critical. In most cases, you should strive to provide feedback much more frequently than once or twice per year.

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Chapter Summary: Introduction to Performance Management

In this chapter you learned the basic concepts of performance management and why it is such an important part of your job as a supervisor for the State of Arizona. Next, we will explore the three phases of performance management in more detail, beginning with performance planning and setting expectations.



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Performance Planning and Setting Expectations

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I thought performance management was just an annual review meeting.



Actually, effective performance management involves three phases:

1. **Performance planning and setting expectations**
(beginning of the rating period)
2. **Monitoring performance, providing feedback and receiving employee input**
(throughout the rating period)
3. **Assigning ratings and administering the formal performance review** (end of the rating period)

Let's review each of these phases in more detail.

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The Performance Management Plan

The first phase of the evaluation process is establishing a management plan. The purpose of the performance plan is for you to discuss with your employees

1. What you expect of them
2. How you will measure their performance

Personnel Rule R2-5A-702 requires supervisors to establish performance plans within 30 days of becoming the employee's supervisor. Your agency may also require new performance plans annually or at other specified intervals. The performance plan must be updated any time there is a significant change in duties, responsibilities or expectations. Normally, both the employee and the supervisor sign the performance plan acknowledging that they have met and discussed its contents.

Review of the performance plan is one of the most important discussions you will have with your employees. This should be a two-way conversation so they can ask questions and you can ensure they understand what you will be requiring of them and how you will be measuring their achievement.

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The Performance Management Plan (continued)

It's not necessarily required that all expectations be specifically stated in the performance management plan. If your work unit has standards that apply to all employees in the unit or to all employees who do the same job, those standards can be incorporated in the performance management plan by referencing the document that details the standards.



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Measuring and Documenting Performance

Good performance plans are useless if a strategy is not in place to collect performance data. The following pages describe a variety of ways you can measure performance. In some evaluation systems these methods are called "Verification Methods." There are several methods from which you may choose. Be sure you discuss the performance management methods you intend to use with your supervisor to make certain you have agreement with the standards selected.



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Measuring and Documenting Performance (continued)

Empirical Data - Using available empirical data is the most practical means of measuring performance. This form of data is usually the result of an employee's work. Examples include the number of transactions completed, the quantity of projects or cases completed, or results of customer service surveys.

Random Sampling - When it is not practical to observe or track 100% of an employee's performance, a method of sampling might be appropriate. An example of random sampling might be evaluating 10 randomly selected invoices per month.



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Measuring and Documenting Performance (continued)

Counted Intervals - In this method, every "nth" item is selected (for example, pulling every 20th case for review). To use this method, it is important to screen for recurring patterns that could bias results. For example, if the selection is based on intervals of workdays and the workload is routinely heavier the first day of the month, then that day's sample will be biased.

Periodic Assessments - In this method, the rater sets up a schedule to periodically gather data such as with a customer survey. A check sheet is often a useful tool to gather and record data in a consistent manner for this type of assessment.



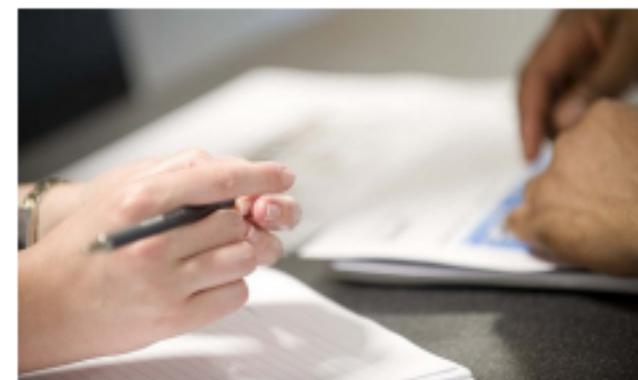
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Measuring and Documenting Performance (continued)

Self Reporting - In the self reporting method, the employee keeps track of his or her progress toward meeting objectives and reports the data to the rater on a predefined schedule, such as in a monthly report.

Third Party Data - This method is also known as field review. Individuals, who have had opportunity to observe the performance of the employee, even if it is a limited part, can be an important source of information. Their input can be gathered by interview, written or electronic survey, or in the form of an actual performance rating such as a 360° rating.



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Measuring and Documenting Performance (continued)

Critical Incidents - A critical incident is an "exception" method of reporting. While it is easy to use, the person being rated may be just lucky or unlucky in the number of critical incidents that have come to the rater's attention. This is the least effective method of measuring performance, but can be useful when there are unusual circumstances or to record particularly good or poor performance.

Action Plans and Objectives - Action plans and objectives provide an excellent source of data in the form of "landmarks" or deliverables against which to monitor and assess performance. They are very effective for large, complex projects, and can also be used for process improvement assignments as well as performance improvement tools for individual employees. The next screen describes how to write good performance objectives.



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SMART Objectives

A useful acronym for helping write good performance objectives is S.M.A.R.T.

Good objectives are

- **Specific** - The objective should include language that is specific to the task that will be evaluated. Avoid vague or overly broad language.
- **Measurable** - The objective should describe how accomplishment of the task will be measured or monitored. Using ranges rather than absolute values makes the objective more achievable while promoting a higher aspiration.
- **Achievable**, but aggressive - The objective should be achievable, but strive for a higher level of performance.
- **Realistic** - Good objectives can be realistically achieved. Unrealistic expectations will lower morale.
- **Time-bound** - It is important to include language that specifies the due date of the task. This helps the employee to manage his/her own time.

SMART

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Chapter Summary: Performance Planning and Setting Expectations

In this chapter, you learned about the first phase of performance management: performance planning and setting expectations.

The next chapter discusses how to monitor performance and provide feedback.



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Monitoring Performance and Providing Feedback

With performance management plans in place, now come the critical responsibilities of monitoring performance and providing feedback. Your employees should receive ongoing feedback throughout the evaluation period. You should address areas where the employee did well and areas that need improvement. This will help them reach the performance levels you want them to achieve.



I'm seeing now that feedback isn't only given in the formal review meeting.

Right. Feedback during the rating period should be ongoing and may be verbal or written, but it's informal - no score or rating will be given.

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Frequent Feedback

Studies show that employees are most satisfied and productive when they receive *frequent, timely feedback*. Employees want to understand your expectations and improve their performance. Your goal is to have an efficiently performing work unit and it is to your advantage to have employees who excel at their jobs. Frequent informal feedback is a very effective coaching tool. If an employee is not performing according to standards, it is best to address this as soon as possible and to help the employee make incremental changes to enhance performance. Even employees who are doing well appreciate feedback to help them move toward excellence.



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Frequent Feedback (continued)

If you find it difficult to address performance issues with your employees, you may wish to set up standing meetings and use an agenda to make sure you cover all relevant areas. Here is a sample agenda for a performance management meeting:

- Open discussion - ask employee how work is going
- Review performance standards and employee's performance relative to those standards
- Discuss progress on long-term projects
- Discuss any deficiencies and plans to correct them as well as discussing outstanding performance
- Discuss any issues affecting the employee's ability to meet expectations (e.g., computer problems, lack of supplies, lack of training, etc.)
- Discuss employee's plans for future development

If you have standing meetings and use the same agenda with every employee at every meeting, giving and receiving feedback will become more routine and less threatening for both you and your employees. Remember, frequent, open communication is key.

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Documentation

You will need to keep records about the work performance of your employees throughout the rating period. This documentation should include their performance in relation to the work standards you established at the beginning of the rating period. Feedback discussions you have had with them, as well as employee recognition awards or corrective action or discipline, should be documented. This documentation will assist you in preparing formal evaluations. Performance narratives can have a great impact if written well. The following screen provides guidelines for writing effective performance narratives.



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Guidelines for Effective Narrative Descriptions

Effective performance narratives

- Include specific comments that are behavioral or performance based
- Use clear statements that do not include terms open to argument like "always" or "usually"
- Present comprehensive, constructive suggestions and valuable feedback
- Provide encouragement, guidance, and direction for support and growth
- Describe enough of the event or behavior to be meaningful
- Provide a justification for ratings
- Avoid personal attacks and are respectful in presentation and tone
- Focus on behaviors, not personality traits
- Avoid statements referring to age, race, sex, religion, national origin, veteran status, disability or time off for Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave



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Chapter Summary: Monitoring Performance and Providing Feedback

In this chapter, you learned the importance of providing and documenting ongoing feedback. The next chapter discusses the formal performance review.

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Conducting the Formal Performance Evaluation

The formal performance evaluation is the culmination of all phases of performance management. As you know, before you begin to formulate the formal performance evaluation, you'll want to review all records you have kept throughout the rating period. Reviewing these records serves as a useful reminder when contemplating performance ratings and hopefully helps you to avoid common rating errors.



There are several common rating errors that occur in performance management. What follows is an overview of the most common of these errors and how to avoid them.

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Common Errors: Halo Effect

The **Halo Effect** is rating (positively or negatively) an employee on one factor and letting that rating influence your ratings for all the other factors. This problem often occurs with employees who are especially friendly or unfriendly toward the supervisor. It can also occur if the employee is especially strong or weak in one skill.

To avoid the halo effect, evaluate all your employees on one performance factor at a time before going on to another. This way the evaluation is based on work performance factors rather than your overall impression of the individual.

Common



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Common Errors: Personal Bias

Another common error involves **Personal Bias**. Some people give a higher rating because the employee has qualities similar to themselves. Or, they give a lower rating because the employee seems dissimilar. Another way personal bias affects ratings is your personal relationship with an employee. You may simply like certain employees better than others and may be inclined to give them higher ratings because of this feeling.

Common



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Common Errors: Recency Bias

Supervisors who base their evaluations on recent events are displaying the **Recency Bias**. Some employees are aware of this tendency and will temporarily improve their performance when they know their review is about to take place.

Get involved in the daily management of performance by coaching and documenting results. Base your evaluation on the employee's performance during the entire rating period. If you have had regular meetings with your employees and have documented their performance at regular intervals, you will find it easier to avoid the Recency Bias.

Common



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Common Errors: First Impression

Whether your **First Impression** is positive or negative, don't use it as the basis for your performance evaluation.

Common



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Common Errors: Leniency or Harshness

Some raters see all performance as "good" and consequently are lenient. Some raters see everything as "bad" and are harsh raters. Examine your ratings for evidence of the **Leniency** or **Harshness** errors. The performance data and narrative documentation should support the ratings.

Common



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Common Errors: Central Tendency

Some people avoid using high or low ratings. The **Central Tendency** error is what happens when you tend to put everyone in the middle and rate all of your employees as "meets expectations."

The problem with this tendency is it fails to differentiate between employees and offers little information employees can use to improve performance. If you have this tendency, remember that this kind of rating will not help you in assessing training needs, providing appropriate feedback to your employees or making decisions on raises or promotions.

Common



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Assigning Ratings

Avoiding these common rating errors, it is now time to complete the appropriate forms and assign ratings to your employee's performance evaluation. These ratings should not surprise your employee but instead reflect the ongoing feedback he/she has received from you throughout the rating period. Compare the performance data you have been tracking on an on-going basis against the performance standards established in the performance management plan to assist you in assigning the appropriate rating for each category.



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Before the Performance Meeting

When you have completed your formal evaluation, give it to your supervisor for review before giving it to the employee. Once approved, you will meet with the employee to administer the formal evaluation.

Normally it's advisable to notify your employee a week or so in advance of the review meeting. Set a date and time that's mutually convenient. Explain that the purpose of the meeting is to provide performance feedback and set goals for the future. Ask the employee to be prepared to work with you to address constructive areas for growth and improvement.

Conduct the discussion in your office or some other room where the two of you can talk privately without being disturbed. Either turn off or forward your phone to someone who can take messages for you. You want to convey to your employee that time with him/her and his/her performance is important.



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During the Performance Meeting

The following guidelines can help during the review meeting:

- Describe exactly what you hope to accomplish.
- Set a positive and friendly atmosphere. Thank the employee for the work that has been done.
- Discuss the results of the evaluation. If you haven't already done so, provide the evaluation to the employee.
- Ask for general comments about the evaluation.
- Allow the employee to ask questions or comment.
- Ask open-ended questions: "What parts of your job do you enjoy the most? How about the least?"
Listen attentively.



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During the Performance Meeting (continued)

- Find ways to share performance improvement topics constructively. Share a strong area with the employee and then follow it with an area for improvement.
- End the performance discussion on a positive note and then begin planning for the next rating period. *The new appraisal period begins on the first calendar day (not workday) after the closing date of the previous appraisal period.*
- Establish new performance goals. Although obtaining the employee's agreement is ideal, it isn't required.
- Specify what each of you will do to achieve these new goals, including ways you can support the employee's efforts.
- Express your confidence that the employee can achieve the new goals you developed together.



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Be Positive!

Your role is to encourage ideal performance!
Keep the discussion positive by focusing on

- Performance rather than personality
- Insight rather than indictment
- Development rather than discipline
- Discussion rather than direction



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Difficult Evaluations

Occasionally you will have to deliver an unsatisfactory evaluation. The following guidelines may assist you in handling this type of situation:

- Describe the behavior or deficiency using objective, behaviorally based terms.
- Give specific examples of problem areas, including impact on customers, co-workers, suppliers, etc.
- Provide samples of unsatisfactory work products, if applicable.
- Create a plan of action to address problem areas. Involving the employee in the planning will increase the employee's feeling of ownership in the process and enhance commitment to making the plan work.



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Difficult Evaluations (continued)

Always remain professional. Do not argue with the employee or become defensive. If the employee disagrees with the evaluation, the employee has the right to make comments on the evaluation form.

Note: If the employee's performance is below standard overall or in any specific area, contact your agency Human Resources office for further information before giving the evaluation to the employee. This is particularly important for covered employees on original or promotional probation.



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Chapter Summary: Conducting the Formal Performance Review

In this chapter, you learned how to conduct a formal performance review and common errors to avoid. Next, let's answer some frequently asked questions.

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Frequently Asked Questions

I see how the process works now, but I have questions. For example, what if an employee refuses to sign a performance plan? Also, what if an employee transfers to another supervisor in the middle of a rating period?



Those are good questions. Let's take a look at some frequently asked questions.

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Tailoring Plans

Should I have the same performance management plan for all employees?

Your agency may have standardized plans and therefore standardized plans are your only option. If not, standardized plans and standardized levels of performance are acceptable if employees are performing the same job and it is reasonable to expect the same level of performance. In some cases it is wise to keep the statements in the plan broader and reference a document that is more easily updated outside the plan. Consider the typical learning curve in the job when setting standards for a new employee.

FAQ

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Refusal to Sign Evaluation Plan

What if an employee refuses to sign his/her performance management planning document?

If the employee refuses to sign, write "employee refuses to sign" on the signature line and record the date that the employee received the performance plan. The employee is still responsible for meeting the performance expectations outlined in the planner. Supervisors have a right to assign and prioritize workload (regardless of whether the employee agrees with the assignment) as long as the workload reflects the employee's "fair share" and the duties, assignments, and expectations are consistent with the employee's job description.

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Changes During Evaluation Period

What do I do if there is a change in supervision or job duties during the evaluation period?

If there is a change in supervisors, the former supervisor completes an evaluation for the portion of the rating period that he or she supervised the employee, typically known as a "close-out" evaluation. A new performance management plan is then established for the remainder of the rating period by the new supervisor.

If the employee's job changes, the performance management plan should be evaluated to determine if changes are needed. Significant changes in duties, responsibilities or expectations require a new performance management plan.

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Completing Evaluations

How much time do I have after the evaluation period ends to complete the evaluation?

Usually evaluations must be completed within 30 days after the end of the rating period or change in supervisors, but your agency may require that the evaluation be completed sooner to allow the Human Resources office to record the information. Also, remember to allow time for the reviewing manager to review the evaluation prior to administering it to the employee at the evaluation meeting.

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Rating Justifications

Do I have to write justifications for the ratings I give?

Some agencies require written justification for all ratings. Others require written justifications only for ratings that are either above or below the standard expectation level. It is ALWAYS a good idea to include information about the basis for the rating so that the employee knows which behaviors were effective and which were not. Employees cannot change or grow in the absence of feedback.

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Employee Comments on Evaluations

What if an employee wants to write his/her own comments on the evaluation?

Employees may add comments to their performance appraisals.

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Addressing Low Evaluation Scores

What if a person's performance is below standard?

Whenever it is determined the employee's performance is not meeting expectations, the supervisor should contact the agency Human Resources office for advice on the best way to proceed. Some situations can be handled with verbal counseling, specific instructions or additional training. Other situations require documenting the specific areas in which improvement is needed, the action steps required, and time frames in which performance is expected to improve. Occasionally you must put the employee on notice that improvement must happen or disciplinary steps will be initiated, including the possibility of dismissal. ALWAYS check with your Human Resources office in these circumstances.

FAQ

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Career Development

Is career development a required part of the performance planning and evaluation process?

For some agencies it is and special forms have been designed for this purpose. Generally, employee development is an important part of performance management. All plans and evaluations should involve some level of discussion if not overtly stated standards that encourage and expect employee growth.

FAQ

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Evaluation Upon Separation

When an employee is leaving, is an evaluation required?

Close-out evaluations are not administered to employees who are dismissed. If the employee is voluntarily separating and is available to do a close-out evaluation, one should be done. If the employee is not available to do a close-out evaluation, do NOT do one. Nothing should be added to an employee's personnel file that the employee has not seen or to which the employee has not had the opportunity to respond.

FAQ

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Involving Others in Rating

Can I involve others in the rating process?

If your agency allows input from others into the evaluation, this is an excellent means to ensure that the evaluation is more balanced and less subject to bias. Asking for input throughout the evaluation period, such as through customer service survey cards, can be a valuable source of performance information. Some agencies may also allow for peer or team ratings.

FAQ

Chapter Summary: Frequently Asked Questions

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In this chapter, you learned answers to common questions about performance management.

The next section of this course is the final exam.

Click the next arrow to continue the course.

