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Did You Know...

An employee's poor performance should be documented and addressed with the employee?

Employer Risks and Exposures

Although it may seem easier to overlook an employee's poor performance, the problem does not usually go away on its own. In fact, when poor performance is ignored, it may get worse. Failure to address the issue can give the employee the impression that his/her performance is adequate. Or, if the employee realizes that his/her performance is not meeting standards, the supervisor's silence can imply that the performance standard is not enforced and that continued poor performance will not result in negative consequences. Ignoring poor performance can also negatively affect employee morale in the entire department.

Lastly, if the employee never receives any written warnings and is later terminated for poor performance, the employee may assume that the real reason for termination is a discriminatory one, thus increasing the likelihood that a claim will be filed against the organization.

Avoiding Disaster

Supervisors should review job performance with employees on a regular basis and address problems before they become serious. Problems should be handled promptly, fairly, and with a specific action plan to help the employee improve. The employee is more likely to address the problem if the issue has been clearly identified and if he/she knows the consequences if performance does not improve.

Counseling an employee with poor performance should be looked at as a proactive step that is meant to turn the employee's performance around and hopefully eliminate the need for any further action. Both formal and informal performance discussions should be documented, and written warnings should be placed in the employee's personnel file. If the employee's performance does not improve, the disciplinary steps that have been taken show the employer's good faith effort to work with the employee and provide important documentation for the organization's records.

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