

POLICY

SOMERSET COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION

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1. PURPOSE

Somerset County Board of Education is committed to providing a quality work environment for all employees. It is the policy of Somerset County Public School to establish a progressive discipline policy pertaining to employee conduct, performance, **accountability** and responsibilities so that all personnel can conduct themselves according to certain rules of good behavior and good conduct.

The purpose of the progressive discipline policy is not to restrict the rights of anyone, but rather to help people work together harmoniously according to the standards established for efficient and courteous service for our customers. Reasonable processes and procedures concerning personal conduct of employees are necessary if the organization is to function safely, effectively, and efficiently.

Somerset County Public Schools believes that every employee wants to do a good job; therefore it is necessary that every employee should know what is required to perform the job properly. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the employees what is expected on the job. Further, Somerset County Public Schools believes that employees be given ample opportunity to improve in their job performance.

2. PROCEDURE

- A. **Progressive** Discipline is the process of using increasingly severe steps or measures when an employee fails to correct a problem after being given a reasonable opportunity to do so. The underlying principle of sound progressive discipline is to use the **least** severe action necessary to correct the undesirable solution; with increased severity of action only if the condition is not corrected (Indiana University).
- B. Performance Improvement Plan is an action plan developed by the supervisor and the employee, with a definite time frame in which behavior/performance problems is expected to be correct.

3. GUIDELINES

- A. Every situation will be thoroughly investigated which will include obtaining the employee's explanation or response prior to administering discipline.
- B. Document the process and results of the investigation.
- C. It is acceptable to repeat a step if you feel that it will correct the problem. This may be the case if some time has passed since it was last necessary to address the issue and the situation has only recently reappeared. Or perhaps, the employee misunderstood or you feel there is value in doing it again in a clearer fashion. If repeating the step works, the situation has been resolved without escalating it unnecessarily. However, be aware that an employee may be led to believe that nothing worse will happen if you continually repeat a step. If repeating a step does not resolve the problem, you can then move on to a higher step.
- D. The objective will be to modify the unacceptable behavior or improve the performance. The objective is not to punish the employee but to more strongly alert the need to correct the problem.
- E. There is no rigid set of steps nor is there an inflexible rule that all steps must be followed before terminating an employee. The circumstances of each case and the judgment of the supervisor as to the least severe action that is necessary to correct the situation will help determine which step to use.
- F. Early less stringent measures are skipped for serious offenses such as theft, fight, drug or alcohol use or sale. All steps are typically used for attendance or general work performance problems.
- G. While usually unnecessary, it is acceptable to have a witness or note taker present when meeting with the employee during the progressive discipline process. The supervisor's witness/note taker should never be a peer of the employee and preferably should be someone from Human Resources. The employee is also permitted to have a witness if he or she wishes.
- H. Human Resources will be available for any step of the process, but it is especially important at the steps of suspension and termination.

4. PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

The progressive discipline process will be the typical four step process. The steps are: counseling, written warning, suspension without pay, and termination.

The counseling session will be documented by the supervisor and signed by the employee acknowledging that the counseling occurred (sometimes referred to as a verbal warning). The session will be used to bring a problem to the attention of the employee before it becomes so serious that it has to become part of a written warning and placed in the employee's file.

The written warning is a letter that is specific about the behavior/performance that is need of change. The written letter of warning will be accompanied by a written performance improvement plan.

Suspension without pay will be used for major infractions of safety or performance infractions of major significance with suspensions of up to five days.

Termination is the last step in the progressive discipline process and used when earlier steps have not produced the needed results.

- 5. The Progressive Discipline Process Guide** will be available to both supervisors and employees on the Somerset County Public School website and is an attachment to this policy.