

## **How to Establish a Performance Improvement Plan**

A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is an effective way to provide employees an action plan to help them succeed in their position while still holding them accountable for past and current performance.

It is not always clear why an employee has poor performance. Did he or she not receive appropriate training? Does he or she not understand the expectations of the job? Are there unforeseen roadblocks in the way? Until you allow for open dialogue and consistent feedback, you may not fully be able to provide an employee the opportunity to be successful.

### **Step 1: Getting started**

The first step in the PIP process is for the supervisor to document the employee's performance areas that need improvement and check them against the job description. In documenting the main performance issues, be objective and specific. Provide facts and examples to further clarify the severity or pattern of performance concerns.

### **Step 2: Initial meeting with employee**

Meet with the employee to let him/her know the performance concern(s). This meeting should take place as soon as possible after the concern arose. Let the employee know you would like to create a PIP. Ask the employee to think of ideas for the PIP. Let the employee know you will meet together soon (give employee a due date) to finalize the action plan.

### **Step 3: Develop an action plan**

Upon receipt of the employee's input, the supervisor should prepare action items to review with the employee. Consider if the employee may need any additional resources, time, training or coaching in order to meet these objectives.

### **Step 4: Finalize PIP with employee**

The supervisor should meet with the employee in a confidential setting and review the performance standard(s), the employee's related performance problem(s), and outline the action steps. The supervisor should seek and consider the employee's input to incorporate into the PIP. The supervisor and employee should establish reasonable, mutually agreed upon timelines for improved performance on each expectation.

This action plan should include goals that are specific, measurable, accurate, relevant and time-bound (SMART). Please refer to the Human Resources website and review the documents found under Performance Reviews and Resources to assist you in the development of these objectives- <http://www.gonzaga.edu/Campus-Resources/Offices-and-Services-A-Z/Human-Resources/EmployeeRelations/PerfReviewsandResources.asp>

As a part of a supervisor's efforts to improve the performance of an employee, s/he should also consider referrals to the following support resources:

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) - [www.guidanceresources.com](http://www.guidanceresources.com) or 1-877-595-5284
- Disability Resources, Education and Access Management (DREAM) – [www.gonzaga.edu/dream](http://www.gonzaga.edu/dream)
- Human Resources (HR) – [www.gonzaga.edu/hr](http://www.gonzaga.edu/hr)

## **Step 5: Follow up**

The employee and supervisor should establish regular follow-up meetings with the frequency of the meetings (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly) determined by the urgency of addressing the performance concerns. These meetings should discuss and document progress toward objectives. It is best when employees are provided the opportunity in follow-up meetings to ask questions and seek guidance or clarification on performance expectations. The supervisor should ensure any potential roadblocks are discussed and that the employee has been provided the necessary tools and training.

The supervisor should ensure that the PIP is consistent with performance review criteria ratings and also performance review goals.

## **Step 6: PIP conclusion**

If an employee is unable to improve, refuses to commit to the PIP or his or her performance gets worse, then the supervisor should discuss the situation with Human Resources to establish next steps which may include a corrective action plan (CAP) or letter of expectations (LOE).

When the employee does show some improvement, but is unable to achieve some or all of their action plan objectives within the PIP timeline, the following options should be considered:

- If the supervisor feels the employee is making an honest effort, but just can't meet one or more objectives, the supervisor may agree to extend a PIP for a reasonable amount of time.
- If the supervisor determines in retrospect that the objectives are too difficult to attain or not completely within the employee's control, the supervisor may decide to either extend the PIP or end the PIP due to the progress that was observed.
- If the supervisor determines the employee isn't trying to improve or is unable to improve after this effort, then the supervisor should discuss the situation with Human Resources.

When the employee has responded positively by meeting the objectives, the supervisor should formally close the PIP. The supervisor should indicate on the PIP form that the employee has met the expectations of the PIP and the supervisor may also draft a letter for the employee indicating the progress that s/he has made. Human Resources can assist the supervisor in drafting this communication. This should be a positive occasion for the employee, but be sure the employee understands that the level of performance they attained during the period of the PIP is expected to be continued throughout the course of their employment.