

DOCUMENTING WORK PERFORMANCE ISSUES

When faced with declining or erratic job performance, the supervisor needs to document observable, verifiable facts. Complete, accurate documentation is essential when confronting employee performance problems. Good documentation helps the supervisor to:

- Provide objective, factual information. It shows the performance picture over a period of time.
- Set the stage. It shows the employee that the supervisor and employer are concerned about the individual's situation.
- Support corrective action process. Documentation is a necessity if an employee is to be disciplined.
- Be objective, fair and consistent.
- Avoid counseling the employee on personal problems. A troubled employee will often try to draw the supervisor into accepting excuses for behavior.

What follows are some guidelines offered by the EAP when it comes to what should be documented:

- Any decline in work performance. Include very specific, concrete information on the behaviors you observed. Of importance are the date, time, place and exact nature of each incident.
- Attendance records—don't rely on your memory as to whether or not an employee was at work on a given day and/or was late or left early.
- Develop a formal performance improvement plan if warranted.
- Disciplinary actions taken—verbal as well as written warnings.
- Any and all recommendations made to solve the problem, including referrals or recommendations to use the services of the EAP.
- Expected time frame for improvement. This is for the employee's sake as well as for your own so you continue to monitor the employee's performance to determine if and when the next step in the disciplinary process needs to take place.
- Don't forget to document the positives—don't just wait until their annual review to express appreciation for a job well done.