

Good Practice Guides: Building Foundations

No. 10 – Disciplinary Policy and Procedures

Key Points

There may be times when the performance or conduct of a volunteer falls below what is expected. Having a clear and established disciplinary process in place will help and if shared with all your volunteers prevents misunderstandings and seeks to protect the volunteer and the organisation. The aim of the policy should be to encourage improvement in individual conduct and performance and reduce the need for “counselling out”. Because of the legal status of employees you cannot just re use your employee disciplinary policy your volunteering disciplinary policy has to be specific.

Informal Discussions

Most problems can be resolved by informal discussions or counselling. Before taking formal disciplinary action every effort should be made to resolve the matter by informal discussion. This may include mediation or additional training or support for the volunteer, This would not be recorded as disciplinary action and would be seen as a process of constructive dialogue.

The Formal Procedure

Stage 1 – Formal Verbal Warning

If, despite informal discussions or training, the conduct or performance still does not meet acceptable standards, the volunteer may, following an appropriate disciplinary meeting, be given a formal verbal warning by their Line Manager.

A brief note of the warning should be kept but it will lapse after 6 months, subject to satisfactory conduct and/or performance.

Stage 2 – Written Warning

If there is no improvement in standards within the prescribed time, or if a further offence occurs, the volunteer should receive a letter from their manager inviting them to attend a further disciplinary meeting.

The disciplinary meeting should take place as soon as is reasonably possible but with sufficient time for the volunteer to consider their response to the information contained in the letter. The meeting should be an opportunity for both the volunteer (with their representative) and the Manager to talk about the allegations being made, review the information with a view to establishing whether to progress the disciplinary action.

Where, following the disciplinary meeting, it is decided that no further action is warranted, the volunteer will be informed in writing.

Where, the volunteer is found to be performing unsatisfactorily or their behaviour is deemed unsatisfactory; they will be given a written warning.

A copy of the written warning should be kept on file but the warning will lapse after 12 months subject to satisfactory conduct and/or performance. Where a written warning is given, the Chair of the Board of Directors should be advised and kept up to date with any progress.

Stage 3 – Final Written Warning

If the conduct or performance still remains unsatisfactory by the stipulated date, or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious to warrant only one written warning, a further disciplinary meeting (where the Director will be present) should be called with the employee and their representative. The disciplinary meeting will be an opportunity for the employee to answer the issues raised.

Where this meeting establishes that there has been a failure to improve or change behaviour, then a final written warning should be given to the employee.

Dismissal

If the volunteer's conduct or performance still fails to improve or if further serious misconduct occurs, the final stage in the disciplinary process may be instituted and the volunteer dismissed.

Gross Misconduct

Where a volunteer is found guilty of gross misconduct, they will normally be subject to summary dismissal (instant dismissal without notice) and the above procedures regarding progression of warnings should not apply.



Examples of gross misconduct would be:

- theft, fraud, deliberate falsification of company documents
- violent behaviour, fighting, assault on another person
- deliberate damage to company property
- harassment
- being unfit for work through alcohol or illegal drugs
- gross negligence
- gross insubordination.

Appeals

If an employee wishes to appeal against any disciplinary decision, they should appeal, in writing within five working days of the decision being communicated to them to the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors.

See the Example Disciplinary Policy and Procedures for further detail

More help?

If you would like more help or advice in relation to this Good Practice Guide please contact the Volunteer Centre Edinburgh on the following details:

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Or you can drop in and see us:

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