

## THE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCESS

The progressive discipline process provides a clear and well-defined set of actions for dealing with employee misconduct or performance issues. When used effectively, it can help correct problem behaviours, increase retention and ensure terminations are legal and binding. The basis for all progressive discipline is that it shifts the focus from “punishing” the employee to deterring recurrence of any unwanted behaviour (s) by providing the support and tools required to correct or change the behaviour in question.

Effective progressive discipline policies are clear and must be applied consistently to all employees. Here are some tips to ensure you have an effective progressive discipline process:

- Act early before poor work becomes a habit; the earlier a problem or concern regarding employee performance is addressed, the more likelihood there is a positive and ongoing change.
- Ensure fairness by making job expectations clear to employees from the start and informing them of any changes to these expectations.
- Provide appropriate direction when required.
- Ensure the employee is clear about potential consequences for failure to correct the behaviour, including additional disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- Use the process to do everything you can to solve the problem before it gets to the dismissal stage.
- Utilize a Performance Improvement Plan to set clear goals/expectations

Regardless of what your progressive discipline process consists of, it is important to maintain complete records, including dates of meetings and discussions, follow-up training sessions, written and verbal warnings, suspensions and performance reviews. Most progressive discipline processes will include a series of corrective actions that range from informal meetings, written warnings to suspensions.

While these steps outline the ideal process that may lead to termination of employment, there may be situations that require immediate action and possible termination, such as theft, assault, or unethical behaviours. Following progressive disciplinary steps in these types of serious situations could put your business and employees at severe risk, so it would not be appropriate or wise to continue the employment relationship. Be sure to document all your discussions using a progressive disciplinary action form or formal letter. Seek help from legal counsel for further advice if the situation with your employee becomes serious.

### Resources:

[Dealing Effectively with Under Performance](#)  
[Progressive Disciplinary Action Form template](#)  
[Performance Improvement Plan template](#)