Question: What is progressive discipline?

Answered by the HR Experts

Progressive discipline is a process for addressing performance or behavioral issues with corrective action. Instead of immediately demoting, suspending, or terminating an employee who messes up, you remind them of your policies, give them a chance to do better, and explain the consequences if they don't. The process usually begins with a relatively informal conversation to address the issue (which would generally count as the "oral warning") before moving on to a series of written warnings (e.g., first, second, final) followed by termination if the warnings don't correct the issue.

Following the same steps consistently for similar situations can help reduce the likelihood of discrimination. However, note that progressive discipline isn't appropriate for every infraction. Violations like theft, egregious harassment, or assault, for instance, might warrant immediate termination even on the first offense.

Learn more about progressive discipline by reading our guide on the platform.

This Q&A does not constitute legal advice and does not address state or local law.