



Workforce Management
Payroll - Human Resources - Timekeeping
Professional Employer Organization (PEO)

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Consider Progressive Discipline Before Termination

How Progressive Discipline Works

Progressive discipline generally **begins with a conversation**. This initial conversation is meant to nip any poor behavior in the bud. Often this conversation will be part of your regular coaching or check-ins with the employee, and some HR professionals view this as **a step before actual progressive discipline**. You make the employee aware of their unsatisfactory behavior or performance, make your expectations clear, **give them any guidance or tools available to help them succeed**, and allow them to bring their concerns to your attention.



If the employee fails to improve after coaching, the next step generally is to give them a **verbal warning** and let them know additional discipline may follow if they don't improve.

It is imperative that you document everything throughout the progressive discipline process, even a verbal warning.

The next escalation is usually a **written warning**, signed off on by the employee. This is also the point at which you may want to consider a **Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)**, which is essentially a formalized action plan for employee improvement. A PIP is typically at least 60 days, has commitments from both the employee and management, and contains realistic, attainable goals. **PIPs generally make more sense in situations where an employee is having performance issues rather than behavioral issues**; for instance, giving an otherwise good employee 90 days to improve their typing skills makes sense, whereas **giving someone even 30 days to stop sexually harassing their co-worker does not make sense**. Whether you give a simple written warning or implement a PIP, make sure you are perfectly clear as to what will happen should they fail to improve or modify their behavior.

If the problem isn't resolved after a written warning or PIP, stay true to your word and proceed to the next step, whether that is another written warning, a final written warning, suspension, or termination.