

# A GUIDE TO THE STATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



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# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE STATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.....</b>	<b>1</b>
PURPOSE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT .....	1
OBJECTIVES OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT .....	1
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CYCLE .....	2
<i>Phase I -- Performance Planning.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Phase II -- Coaching (Observation &amp; Feedback).....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Phase III -- Performance Review.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Diagram of Performance Management Cycle.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<b>MANAGING PERFORMANCE IN A MULTI-CULTURAL ORGANIZATION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
AN OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL FACTORS .....	6
1. <i>Sense of Self and Space.....</i>	<i>6</i>
2. <i>Communication and Language.....</i>	<i>6</i>
3. <i>Time and Time Consciousness.....</i>	<i>7</i>
4. <i>Relationships.....</i>	<i>7</i>
5. <i>Values and Norms.....</i>	<i>8</i>
6. <i>Beliefs and Attitudes.....</i>	<i>9</i>
7. <i>Mental Processes and Learning.....</i>	<i>9</i>
8. <i>Work Habits and Practices.....</i>	<i>10</i>
PERFORMANCE PLANNING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR DIVERSITY .....	10
CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN COACHING AND GIVING FEEDBACK .....	11
CULTURAL AWARENESS IN PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL.....	11
<b>PHASE I: PERFORMANCE PLANNING.....</b>	<b>13</b>
IDENTIFYING MAJOR JOB DUTIES .....	13
ESTABLISHING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS.....	15
<i>Performance Criteria.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Format.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>How to Determine Performance Expectations.....</i>	<i>16</i>
WRITING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS .....	17
GENERAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS .....	18
<i>3 Important Points about Performance Expectations.....</i>	<i>18</i>
CAREER DEVELOPMENT .....	19
KEY STEPS - PERFORMANCE PLANNING.....	21
<b>PHASE II: COACHING (OBSERVATION &amp; FEEDBACK).....</b>	<b>22</b>
OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION.....	22
OBSERVING AND DOCUMENTING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE.....	23
PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK .....	24
A FEEDBACK MODEL.....	25
MODIFYING THE PERFORMANCE PLAN .....	26
PERIODIC PROGRESS REVIEW .....	26
KEY STEPS - COACHING.....	27
<b>PHASE III: PERFORMANCE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>28</b>
COMPLETION OF THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT.....	28
SUPERVISOR COMMENTS .....	29
WRITING SUPERVISOR COMMENTS.....	30
OVERALL PERFORMANCE RATING .....	32
REVIEW & SIGNATURES.....	32
COMMON RATING ERRORS TO AVOID .....	33
PERFORMANCE REVIEW CONFERENCE.....	33
<i>Preparation for the Performance Review Conference.....</i>	<i>34</i>

CONDUCTING THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW MEETING .....	35
PERFORMANCE PLANNING FOR THE NEXT RATING PERIOD .....	35
EMPLOYEE RESPONSE.....	36
PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT .....	36
<i>Coaching for Improved Performance</i> .....	37
<i>Progressive Corrective Action</i> .....	39
CONDUCTING THE CORRECTIVE ACTION MEETING .....	40
KEY STEPS - PERFORMANCE REVIEW.....	41
<b>APPENDIX A.....</b>	<b>43</b>
EXAMPLES OF MAJOR JOB DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS .....	43
<b>APPENDIX B.....</b>	<b>47</b>
EXAMPLES OF GENERAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS .....	47
<i>Teamwork</i> .....	47
<i>Self-management</i> .....	47
<i>Innovation and change</i> .....	48
<i>Work processes and results</i> .....	48
<i>Supervision/Leadership/Management</i> .....	48
<b>APPENDIX C.....</b>	<b>51</b>
INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT .....	51
<b>APPENDIX D.....</b>	<b>57</b>
EXAMPLES OF RESULTS STATEMENTS .....	57
<b>APPENDIX E .....</b>	<b>57</b>
INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS (IDPs)	

The first edition of this *Guide to the State Performance Management System*, published in 1991, was written by Douglas Pine, Ph.D. This is the third edition, revised in 2004, with contributions from Gail Rushford, Audrey Quackenbush, Kimberley Persons, and Elizabeth Lester-Beaumont.



This document will be made available, upon request, in a form (such as Braille, large print or audio cassette) usable by individuals with disabilities.

### **Introduction to the State Performance Management System**

The mission of Vermont State Government is to provide essential services to Vermont citizens. Meeting this commitment requires that each state employee performs his or her job as capably as possible. To this end, among the most fundamental of a supervisor's responsibilities is the planning, observation, evaluation, and development of employee job performance.

Many supervisors find "performance evaluation" to be one of their most difficult and awkward tasks. Thus, it may be tempting to look for simple solutions -- to be able to just fill out a form, check a few boxes, and be done with it. In reality such approaches are, at best, ineffective. The concept behind the performance management system advocated in this guide is really quite simple: a supervisor needs to communicate what he or she expects the employee to do, then observe the employee's performance and provide feedback, and finally review the employee's performance in relation to the pre-established expectations. This approach does take some time and effort, but there are powerful benefits for both supervisor and employee.

This guide will start by discussing the purpose, objectives, and phases of the performance management system. Then each of the phases will be discussed in detail. To help in your learning process, you will find special sections labeled "Tips" and "Key Steps." Throughout the guide and in several appendices you will find many actual examples for comparison. While this guide will cover many of the provisions of the labor contract related to performance evaluation, the reader is encouraged to consult the current Agreements for complete details.

### **Purpose of Performance Management**

Performance management is an effective supervisory tool that can enhance the productivity and motivation of employees. Clear job responsibilities and expectations are established in relation to organizational goals and objectives. Continuous feedback is provided to improve communication between employees and supervisors. Formal performance reviews document and evaluate performance in relation to established expectations.

### **Objectives of Performance Management**

#### ***Fair, Consistent Treatment of All Employees***

- Job responsibilities and expectations are clearly defined and effectively communicated with employees.
- Job responsibilities, expectations, and performance evaluations are documented.

### ***Improve Communication between Supervisor and Employee***

- Employees and supervisors work together to reach a mutual understanding of job responsibilities and expectations for performance.
- Frequent and constructive communication about job performance takes place between the supervisor and the employee.

### ***Improve Job Performance and Day-to-Day Performance Management***

- Individual performance expectations are aligned with agency or department mission, goals, and objectives.
- Employees are recognized for a job well done and are provided constructive feedback to pinpoint areas for development and improvement.

### ***Employee Growth and Development***

- Employee's development and training needs are identified.
- Employee career growth is encouraged and supported.

### ***Adaptability and Flexibility***

- Performance review is tailored to the specific responsibilities and expectations associated with a particular job.

## **Performance Management Cycle**

Performance management is divided into three distinct phases:

### **Phase I -- Performance Planning**

During this phase, the supervisor and the employee meet to discuss the duties of the position and what constitutes successful performance of these duties. This meeting will give the employee a clear understanding of his or her job and the supervisor's expectations for satisfactory performance. A performance planning meeting should take place at least once a year (and when an employee is first hired or when you become a new supervisor).

**Career development** is an important part of the planning phase. It provides the opportunity to discuss employee interest in activities which could develop new knowledge, skills, abilities, and further career goals. Career development should be discussed at least once a year.

## **Phase II -- Coaching (Observation & Feedback)**

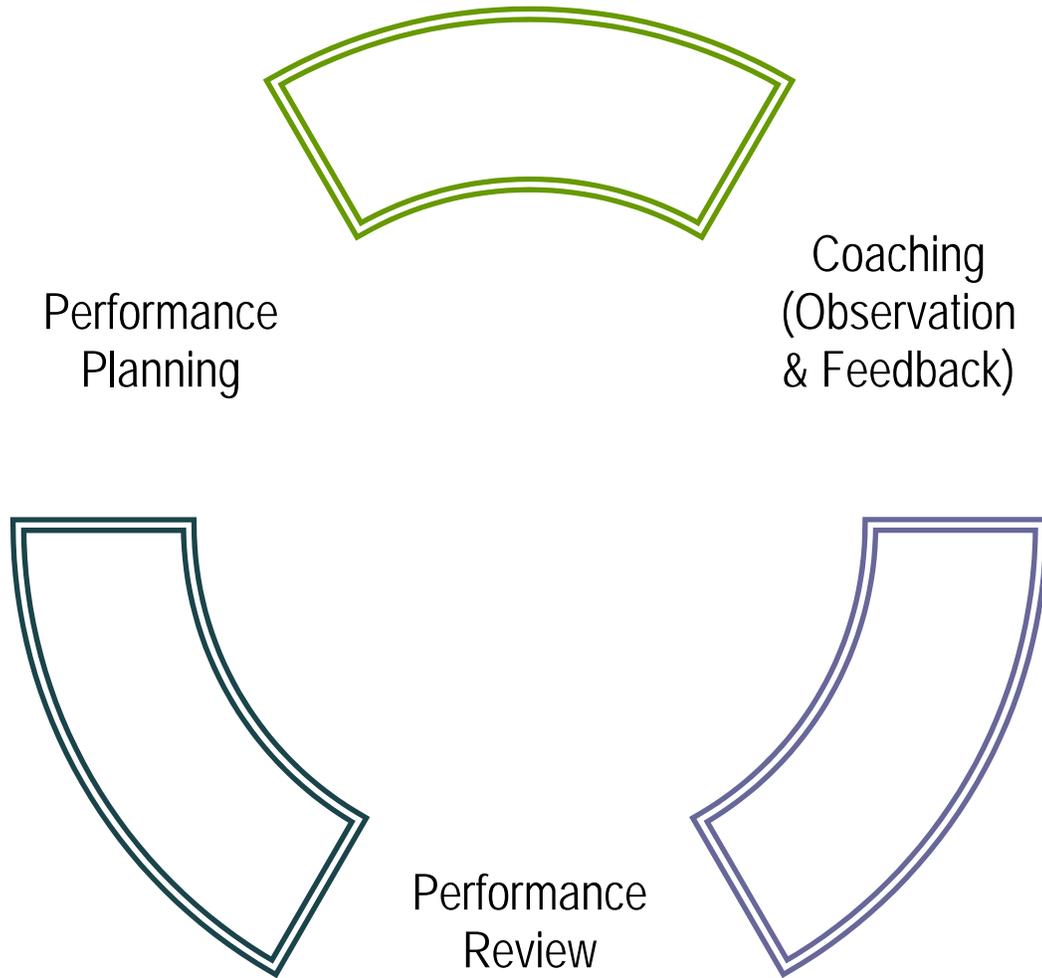
Performance observation and feedback should be conducted throughout the year. The overall effectiveness of the performance management process depends on regular feedback. During this phase, the supervisor should observe and document performance. Most important, the supervisor should communicate regularly and in a timely manner with the employee to recognize where expectations are being met and provide an avenue for correction where expectations are not being met. Ongoing communication between supervisor and employee helps to ensure that there are no "surprises" when the annual performance review is held.

## **Phase III -- Performance Review**

Performance reviews are normally completed annually near the anniversary of the employee's completion of original probation. A meeting to discuss the review must be held within 45 days after the employee's anniversary date. (Generally, this date remains the same even when an employee changes positions). The supervisor should review Phase II performance documentation and evaluate the employee's actual performance over the entire year compared to the performance expectations established in Phase I. A performance review conference should be scheduled with the employee to discuss performance effectiveness and begin planning for the next review period. The performance review should be a cooperative effort between employee and supervisor.



**Diagram of Performance Management Cycle**



### Managing Performance in a Multi-Cultural Organization

As an employer, the State of Vermont is committed to attracting and retaining an inclusive and diverse workforce. Our commitment to increasing diversity in the workforce is based on several factors:

- the benefits that result from a workforce that values and embraces different perspectives;
- the increasing diversity of the general population;
- the positive impact that diverse employees have on the State's ability to effectively serve our citizens (This is due, in part, because of their ability to understand and relate to the growing population of constituents from traditionally underrepresented groups.); and
- the need to expand the hiring pool to meet workforce planning goals.

Although Vermont is one of the least diverse states in the nation, the State's minority population is increasing at a much faster rate than our total population. According to the Census Bureau, Vermont's non-white residents comprised 3.2% of the population in 2000 as compared with 1.4% in 1990, an increase of 128% in ten years. This increase in the minority population can be partly attributed to migration from other states and successful refugee resettlement efforts. The non-white population totals 5.9% in Chittenden and 4.2% in Washington Counties respectively. The City of Burlington is the most racially diverse Vermont community with a non-white population total of 7.4%. As state departments become more diverse, supervisors will benefit by having a greater awareness of and understanding of cultural differences.

This guide presents a performance management system that works quite well in supervising employees from **all** backgrounds. It outlines a cyclical planning process that involves the employee in establishing expectations and meeting performance goals. It endorses a coaching style that fosters open communication, stresses the importance of establishing trust, and emphasizes the value of providing regular and ongoing feedback. The State's performance management system focuses on assessing and addressing **behavior**, not personal characteristics.

Although, this guide presents a fair and equitable process for all employees, there are some key diversity-related principles supervisors can become aware of to more effectively supervise employees from underrepresented groups or other cultures. In particular, supervisors can become attuned to cultural differences in the areas of coaching career or employee development, giving feedback, and conducting the performance appraisal meeting. This section is included to assist supervisors in understanding how an employee with a diverse cultural background might react in certain situations. It is not meant to excuse unsatisfactory behavior, but to help the employee meet his or her performance expectations in a sensitive and informed manner.

While the focus of this section is on cultural diversity, awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of people who have disabilities is also an important diversity issue. Provide accommodations such as large print for those who are visually impaired and interpreters for employees who are deaf.

## **An Overview of Cultural Factors**

Philip Harris and Robert Moran authors of *Managing Cultural Differences* described the differences in cultural rules related to ten areas of cultural programming. Familiarizing oneself with these differences helps to increase the supervisor's understanding of behaviors exhibited by employees with backgrounds different from the mainstream United States. The areas most relevant to the workplace are covered below. The information presented should be considered as a broad generalization to demonstrate some distinct differences among cultures. It is important to keep in mind, however, that within all cultures people are unique and that not all individuals in any given culture will react the same way or display the same characteristics. Much of the information for this section was condensed from *Managing Diversity: A Complete Desk and Reference Guide* by Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe.

### **1. Sense of Self and Space**

The degree of proximity that individuals tolerate differs among cultures. While members of the dominant U.S. culture feel uncomfortable if someone "invades their space," members of other cultures may either stand very close to someone they don't know or even prefer a greater distance than Americans do.

Greetings differ too. The Japanese bow, Americans value a hearty handshake, Latinos extend a warmer, softer handshake, and Middle Easterners hug.

#### ***Things to be mindful of:***

Most other cultures are more formal than that of the U.S. and acting too informally can make some employees feel embarrassed. Especially with new employees who have different cultural backgrounds, it is better to err on the side of more formality than informality. Ask people how they prefer to be addressed. Observe and learn how your employees prefer to interact with others.

### **2. Communication and Language**

Language differences are a significant factor among cultures, but communication is not just about the spoken word. Most communication occurs non-verbally and cultures communicate differently non-verbally as well as verbally. Take eye contact for example. In the dominant U.S. culture, direct eye contact is a sign of self-assurance and trustworthiness. If someone lacks eye contact we may assume that he or she has something to hide, is disinterested, or lacks confidence. However, in some other

cultures, averting one's eyes is a sign of respect.

Smiling is another non-verbal cue that can be misinterpreted. A smile is seen as a welcoming, friendly gesture in this culture. However, in some cultures it may be a sign of embarrassment, confusion, discomfort, or even ridicule.

Nodding can also cause misunderstanding. Because it is considered rude or disruptive to harmonious relations to disagree, a nod in some cultures can mean: "Yes, I heard you," not "Yes, I understand" or "Yes, I agree."

The degree of directness or indirectness or the amount of information that is stated or implied also differs among cultures. Direct communication is valued in the mainstream U.S. culture; however, in Japanese culture, more subtle communication is practiced. For example, if a Japanese supervisor wanted to point out errors in a report, he or she would ask the employee to look over the report again. The Japanese employee would understand that there was something wrong with the report. The American employee might be perplexed by the suggestion.

***Things to be mindful of:***

When there is a language barrier, assume confusion. Avoid using slang, gestures or expressions that can be misinterpreted. Don't take a nod or "yes" to indicate the individual understands or agrees. Realize that smiles or laughter may signify discomfort or embarrassment. Avoid smiling when giving directions or having serious work-related discussions. Be aware of subtle clues.

### **3. Time and Time Consciousness**

In the dominant U.S. culture, time is seen as a commodity to be used, divided, spent and saved. In other parts of the world such as Latin America and the Middle East, time is considered more relative and more elastic. When things happen depends on not just a schedule, but also other events, priorities, and even the will of God. A U.S. citizen may be frustrated with attitudes about time that seem irresponsible while citizens of other cultures may view the American as always in a hurry and more concerned with the task than with people.

***Things to be mindful of:***

Allow time in your schedule for the development of relationships. Spend some time each week with each employee. Explain the reasons for deadlines and schedules. Explain the part promptness plays in assessment of performance and work habits.

### **4. Relationships**

In many cultures, loyalty to the members of one's extended family is the norm and a

hierarchy of authority exists. An employee from such a family would first discuss any important decision with the head of the family before making his or her decision. The same sense of respect may transfer to the work unit, where employees apply a similar hierarchy within the group. Recognize that family responsibility and loyalty to kin will be a prime value of many workers.

***Things to be mindful of:***

Allow employees time to discuss important decisions with family members. Recognize the informal leadership long-term members may hold in the work unit. Realize that, as the boss, you may be seen as the “head of the work family.” Employees may come to seek your advice and counsel about problems in and out of work. Use caution in discussing your employees’ personal issues with them.

## **5. Values and Norms**

### ***Competition vs. cooperation***

Individual freedom is highly valued in the USA. In many cultures around the world, maintaining group cohesiveness and harmony has a higher priority than individualism. This norm relates to the notion of competition vs. cooperation. While competition is an accepted part of the life in the U.S., competition upsets the balance and harmony that some cultures prefer.

### ***Privacy***

People in the U.S, seem overly open about their thoughts, feelings and problems to people from cultures that safeguard their privacy and only open up to members of their own family. Yet, when it comes to personal space, people in the U.S. like their privacy in terms of private offices, cubicles with walls, etc. In other cultures, people share rooms and even the boss may not have a separate office, but share a work space with other employees.

### ***Loyalty***

Loyalty is displayed differently among cultures. In the U.S. we are loyal to abstract principles like truth and justice. In other cultures, loyalty to people takes precedence over ideas or concepts. In the workplace this view of loyalty may translate to being loyal to the boss instead of the organization.

### ***Respect***

Respect is a value that transcends national boundaries and cultures. People universally wish to be treated with respect. No one likes to be criticized in public or in front of peers. Criticism of performance may be taken as a personal insult.

***Things to be mindful of:***

Consider giving rewards to the whole work group rather than to individuals. Find ways to structure tasks that require teamwork rather than individual action. Give workers time to think about and formulate responses to your requests. Consider the face-losing potential of any actions you are planning.

## **6. Beliefs and Attitudes**

Religious beliefs play a large role in many cultures. The mainstream U.S. culture is dominated by Christian beliefs, which influence our holiday customs, for example. In multicultural workforces, employees do not celebrate all the same holidays. Some people shun the observance of holidays altogether. Sensitivity to the customs of others will result in recognition of other holidays and religious observances and reduce the pressure on individuals to participate in the rituals of the dominant culture.

Beliefs about women in the workforce may cause workplace conflicts for a female supervisor and male employee. With today's laws regarding equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative action, organizations need to educate employees about the legal risks involved in discriminating because of gender.

Another aspect of cultural programming regards attitudes about social order and authority. In Asia, students typically don't question teachers and children usually don't talk back to their parents. In the U.S. disagreement, even with one's elders is okay and frequently encouraged. The reticence of some employees to disagree with someone they perceive to be in a higher social class could manifest itself in the individual failing to participate in group discussions. Conversely, an employee may refuse to take direction from an individual they perceive to be at a lower social position than themselves.

***Things to be mindful of:***

Find out what religious holidays staff members celebrate. Keep those in mind when planning work-group activities, holiday celebrations, and individual schedules. Avoid scheduling meetings and training programs on any religious holidays. Help new employees understand the reasons for shared decision making and the need for suggestions and input from employees. Educate employees about EEO and discrimination. Explain the legal liabilities as well as the principles of equality that are observed in the U.S.

## **7. Mental Processes and Learning**

People have different learning styles, that is, some people learn better through reading and listening to lectures while others prefer hands-on learning. In the U.S. adult learning principles stress participative and experiential learning. In many other countries, a more instructive and formal approach is practiced. Staff from other

countries might feel lost in an American training session that stresses experiential learning and student involvement.

***Things to be mindful of:***

Explain cause and effect when engaging staff members in problem solving. Ask staff what they suggest be done about various concerns. Use nonlinear problem-solving methods such as brainstorming that capitalize on lateral thinking and intuition rather than logical analysis. Ask open-ended questions such as: “What would happen if...?” in order to get staff to think about possible consequences.

## **8. Work Habits and Practices**

In the United States, many people seek careers that are meaningful and fulfilling. In many other parts of the world, work is a necessity of life. The type of work one does is often a sign of status. Employees from some cultures may balk at certain tasks or prefer one kind of work over another.

## **Performance Planning and Career Development for Diversity**

Phase one of the performance management cycle is referred to as performance planning. In this phase the supervisor and employee discuss the performance expectations for the employee’s position. For some culturally diverse employees, who are more familiar with team accomplishments, the concept of achieving success based on personal initiative may seem strange and even disloyal to one’s co-workers. This phase is an appropriate time to discuss how the employee’s performance can enhance his or her job satisfaction as well as help meet professional goals and support the team. As a supervisor, you can use phase one to explain how the performance management system works and that its primary purpose is to help the employee meet and exceed performance expectations that are required to meet organizational goals.

An overview of career development activities in the performance management process is found on page 20 of this guide. Career development may be a new concept for employees from all backgrounds, who are unaccustomed to having their supervisor demonstrate an interest in or support their development, let alone their career growth. But, for employees with diverse cultural backgrounds the idea of individual career development may be a very unusual idea. As stated earlier, in many cultures outside the mainstream U.S. culture, group success is more important than individual achievement. The career development discussion provides an opportunity to explain how individual goals relate to organizational goals. In fostering a diverse workforce, the State of Vermont encourages the development of all individuals to their maximum potential and promotes the most effective use of all professional talents to accomplish the State’s mission. In this vein, supervisors should strive to develop all their employees, consistent with their skills and interests and provide opportunities to develop and grow at all levels while eliminating barriers and discrimination. Here are

some suggestions for facilitating career development for all of your employees:

- Offer all employees the opportunities to participate in education and training programs.
- Encourage all employees to participate in formal career development programs.
- Foster training through development of Individual Development Plans (IDPs).
- Provide developmental assignments that enable employees to acquire new or strengthen existing skills.
- Encourage employees to seek out mentors who can serve as role models and provide developmental feedback.

## **Cultural Sensitivity in Coaching and Giving Feedback**

Feedback is an essential part of performance management and one of the cornerstones of coaching. Negative feedback is difficult to give and difficult to receive even when the parties have similar cultural experiences. However, it is even more challenging to give feedback appropriately to someone of a different culture.

According to feedback models, feedback should be specific, timely, descriptive, work-related and ongoing. This model works well in a culture that values directness such as that of the mainstream United States. However, in many other cultures, subtle communication, maintaining harmony and saving face is the preferred communication style. In addition to being subtle, other differences in giving feedback cross-culturally include: using the passive rather than the active voice, giving feedback to the group rather than the individual, and using an intermediary. Awareness of key differences concerning how people from different cultures view feedback, although requiring adjustment in one's approach, can result in greater effectiveness when providing feedback cross-culturally.

However, before feedback will be accepted positively by any employee, the supervisor must establish a relationship of trust and mutual respect with the employee. This is especially true of employees who come from diverse cultures. Explaining the purpose of feedback (to help the employee meet and exceed performance expectations) will help facilitate how well it is received. As with all feedback, make sure you have a plan so that your feedback is constructive and does not cause the employee to become defensive. Above all, get to know the employee. Develop a trusting and respectful rapport. Be sensitive to the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture.

## **Cultural Awareness in Performance Appraisal**

While all employees experience some level of anxiety in anticipation of their performance appraisal, employees who are not part of the dominant culture may be

even more apprehensive. Their anxiety can stem from one or more of the following factors:

**Fear of Repercussions** – understanding that they are not in a position of power, diverse employees may experience fear when being evaluated. They may see it as a formalized reprimand and fear losing their jobs.

**Suggestion:** Explain the purpose of the evaluation, emphasizing that it is not a disciplinary meeting and that the employee is not going to lose his/her job.

**“Not One of Us”** – The employee may feel that it is not possible to be fairly evaluated by someone who may have little understanding or empathy for the employee’s problems.

**Suggestion:** Sit next to the person being evaluated at a table or in chairs rather than across a desk. Show empathy for the employee who may appear anxious.

**Lack of Understanding of the Process** – Employees who are unfamiliar or don’t understand the process may exhibit reluctance to participate. The forms may be confusing or intimidating.

**Suggestion:** Explain the performance evaluation process to the whole staff, including the reasons and benefits. Explain it again at the beginning of each evaluation session.

**It is a Foreign Experience** – For employees from other countries, the whole process may be strange and confusing. They may have little experience with the notions of individual responsibility, goal setting, and performance monitoring.

**Suggestion:** Use the evaluation as a teaching opportunity, explaining how individual performance and accomplishing goals leads to growth and development.

**All Task and No Relationship** – The formal and structured process may appear to be totally task-focused to the detriment of the personal relationship.

**Suggestion:** Try to maintain the same tone in the evaluation session that you generally have in relating to the employee. Use everyday language and avoid jargon or “legalese.”

### Phase I: Performance Planning

The first phase of the performance management cycle involves identifying major job duties, and establishing expectations for satisfactory performance of these duties.

#### Identifying Major Job Duties

Major job duties are those tasks, responsibilities, or assignments that are important to the employee's overall success or failure in the position. These major job duties must provide a clear understanding, for both the supervisor and employee, of the significant functions or activities involved in a particular job. They provide specific targets towards which employees can concentrate their efforts.

Descriptions of major job duties are:

- Fairly broad. Most jobs can be described within three to five major duties. As a general rule, if you have identified more than six major job duties, you may have defined the job too narrowly. If there are fewer than three principal job duties, you may have defined the job too broadly.
- Written so that the duties are clearly understood by both the supervisor and the employee.
- Phrased by using an action verb and its object. The description of a major job duty should also be written to the employee, rather than in the third person. For example:
  - *Type letters and monthly reports.*
  - *Prepare division budget and assist in preparation of department budget.*
  - *Maintain a home visiting schedule of program eligible clients.*
  - *Monitor inmate activity.*
  - *Conduct audits and analyses of the financial conditions and market conduct of insurers.*
  - *Develop employee training programs.*
  - *Determine eligibility for public assistance.*

Several sources of information are available to help you determine major job duties for a specific position.

1. **Agency/Department Mission, Goals, or Objectives.** All members of a group must be working in the same direction for the group to achieve its goals. An employee's major job duties must be consistent with and contribute to agency or department goals and objectives. For this reason, it is essential that the agency or department mission, goals or objectives be reviewed when determining major job duties.
2. **Discussion with Employee.** One of the best sources of information about the employee's job is the employee. Discussion with the employee, or a group of employees who have the same type of job, can be a valuable source of information, especially if you are a relatively new supervisor. Naturally, as supervisor you have the authority to make the final determination on what the major job duties are for a particular position.
3. **Job Description.** Another source of information is the job description. One should be able to identify most of the critical job duties for the position by reviewing the current job description. (Note: A job description is the job content questionnaire "RFR" which describes a particular position. The job specification, which is the official description of the duties of employees in a job class, may also be a good source of information, but may not specifically reflect the duties of a particular position.)



## Establishing Performance Expectations

The list of major job duties defines what the employee is to do. Performance expectations clarify how he or she should perform the duties and responsibilities. They describe the level of performance the employee is expected to achieve and/or the objectives the employee is expected to accomplish. Performance expectations are written to describe fully satisfactory performance.

### Performance Criteria

When you establish a performance expectation for an employee's work, you are telling the employee how his or her work will be measured or evaluated. Both work processes or activities, and work outputs or results can be measured. Identifying the best criteria for evaluating specific accomplishments will enable you to make meaningful evaluations. The most common measurement criteria are:

- **Quality**      How well is the work performed?  
                    How accurate, complete or effective is the final product?
- **Quantity**     How much or how many?
- **Timeliness**   How quickly?  
                    Are final products delivered by the assigned date?

Many supervisors find it easy to remember SMART criteria for setting performance expectations.

- **Specific** – what will be achieved and when it will be achieved
- **Measurable** – agree on success measures – how you will know the performance has been achieved
- **Achievable** – demanding but doable
- **Results-Focused** – how does this link to division and/or department goals?
- **Time Bound** – give a specific timeline for completion

### Format

Performance expectations, like major job duties, should be written in a certain format to ensure that information is provided in a consistent manner and that all relevant information is included. Performance expectations contain three key components:

- **What** is to be done (i.e., the action and/or output).
- The **criteria** on which the activity is assessed (e.g., quality).

- **How** performance will be monitored and measured.

An example written in this three-part format is as follows:

Major Duty: Coordinate annual program planning with community partners.

One of the performance expectations:

***Planning forms are completed accurately, in accordance with established procedures and requirements; forms are returned no more than once or twice, in a reporting period, for error corrections or additional information.***

### How to Determine Performance Expectations

As supervisor you must decide whether expectations will be established for how the employee works (the process), what is accomplished (the results) or both. Generally, a single major job duty will have several distinct performance expectations (e.g., the time to complete it, the way it is completed, what it looks like when completed, etc.). If a standard can be written with both quantitative (how much) and qualitative (how well) measures, it will enable you to obtain a better overall measure of the employee's performance.

One approach for determining performance expectations is to consider each critical job duty you have identified one at a time. As you review that major job duty think about each of the different measurement criteria and ask yourself whether it is important:

- Quality      Is it important how well the employee performs the duty?
- Quantity      Is it important how many of the results or products of the duty the employee accomplishes?
- Timeliness      Is it important how soon the employee completes the task or responsibility?

And so on. Each time the answer is "yes", you will need to establish an expectation. Follow the same process with each remaining major job duty.

**Appendix A (page 43) contains examples of major job duties and performance expectations.**



## **Writing performance expectations**

Expectations should be **concrete and specific**. They should enable the employee to know what he or she has to do to meet the expectation and should enable the supervisor to measure the employee's actual performance against the expectation to determine whether the performance was acceptable.

Expectations should be **practical** to measure in terms of cost, accuracy, and availability of data.

Expectations should be **meaningful**. They should assess what is important and relevant to the critical job duties.

Expectations should be **reasonable**. The expectations should be set at the performance level that you expect of an average fully-trained and competent employee. They should be realistic and attainable. Unreasonable expectations lead to a lack of commitment and frustration.

Expectations that can be expressed in terms of **specific quantities**, such as numbers or percentages, have definite advantages. Quantitative expectations may be identified through statements such as:

"No more than..."	(quality or quantity criteria)
"No less than..."	(quality or quantity criteria)
"Within..."	(timeliness measures)
"By..."	(timeliness measures)
"No later than..."	(timeliness measures)

However, expectations should not measure numbers merely for numbers' sake. Accurate measures -- those that really get at the important expectations -- are most important, even if you can't quantify them.

Employee **participation** in setting expectations is highly desirable. Such participation will ensure that employees understand what is expected of them and they will be more motivated to work toward expectations that they have helped to develop. Although the employee should be involved in the establishment of expectations, the supervisor has the final decision making authority.

Expectations can define **excellent or outstanding levels of performance**. Research has shown that goal setting is one of the best ways of motivating people. Performance expectations are goals set at a satisfactory level. Where appropriate, expectations may also include goals that define excellent or outstanding levels of performance.

## General Performance Expectations

In addition to expectations specifically related to the major duties of a position, often it is useful to spell out general expectations related to an employee's work conduct. For example:

*Display a positive attitude and communicate with others in a professional, courteous and helpful manner at all times.*

*Contribute to the development, cohesion and productivity of the team.*

*Demonstrate sensitivity to public attitudes and concerns.*

*Use work time efficiently.*

Many supervisors find it valuable to establish a set of general performance expectations and then include them as a section in the performance expectations of all staff members (e.g., "general expectations of all staff").

**Appendix B (page 47) contains examples of general performance expectations.**

NOTE: Employees are expected to adhere to general performance expectations applicable to all employees, even though they need not be listed, such as, reporting to work on time, following work rules and procedures, maintaining effective working relationships with the public and coworkers, etc. These general performance expectations can be used in determining the employee's overall rating.

### 3 Important Points about Performance Expectations

*First*, it is crucial to remember that a performance expectation is merely a yardstick that is used to help a supervisor make good judgments about how well an employee is performing critical job duties. However, the identified performance expectations are not intended to be a perfect or comprehensive measure of a major job duty -- most jobs are far too complex to be able to detail every aspect of expected performance.

*Second*, establishing performance expectations does take time and thought. First attempts may not be best, but any written expectation is better than vague generalities or nothing at all. In most cases a supervisor already has an expectation that is used to determine how well the employee is performing his or her duties. Writing performance expectations simply provides a framework for the supervisor to clearly communicate to the employee what the expectation is.

*Third*, performance expectations can be written for all positions. While they may be easier to establish for routine or repetitive operations, they can be written for high-level, non-routine positions. Imagining that written expectations cannot be established for a

position is the same as saying that the supervisor does not know what to expect of the employee and that the employee's work cannot be evaluated.

## **Career Development**

Career development activities are used to support staff in their professional development and career advancement. The performance planning phase can be a good time to discuss career development, although a separate scheduled meeting may be preferable.

Emphasis on career development is based on the belief that providing opportunities for growth and development is essential to retaining skilled employees and to meeting the State's future work force needs. Some of the purposes for discussing an individual's career development goals include:

- identifying job duties that could be strengthened or enriched to support growth and development in the current position
- determining training needs which could enhance performance and expertise
- discussing areas of dissatisfaction in the current position and possible areas for change
- identifying individuals who are interested in advancing within their occupational area
- coaching individuals who wish to pursue other career opportunities either because they desire a change or have reached a plateau in the current position

Career development has many benefits, such as demonstrating your interest and support of the employee's career growth and development, helping to retain skilled and motivated employees, and helping prepare employees for higher level positions within your department. A career development discussion may also head off potential performance problems due to loss of interest, insufficient training, or inadequate challenge.

Career development discussions should be viewed as an opportunity for employees to articulate how their current position fits into their overall career plan and to identify what they need to increase satisfaction in their current position. Employees should only be expected to participate in career development discussions on a voluntary basis, as it is not necessarily an issue for all staff members. However, a skillfully conducted discussion and ongoing follow-up can be instrumental in increasing employee morale and motivation resulting in enhanced job performance and increased retention of skilled and committed employees.

Employees must take responsibility for developing their own careers. They should

conduct a self-assessment of present skills, abilities, qualifications, and career ambitions before the meeting. The self-assessment should include identifying present strengths and weaknesses in their current position as well as including a plan for greater utilization of those strengths in the future.

The employee might have useful suggestions concerning developmental activities, but the supervisor should also be prepared with suggestions. Supervisors can consult with colleagues who have had employees with similar developmental needs, their personnel officer, and with the Human Resource Development Division of the Department of Human Resources. Options for employee development include:

- State sponsored training
- Tuition Reimbursement Program
- Outside training (seminars, workshops)
- Academic programs for adult learners at local secondary schools, colleges, or universities
- Reading materials, training videos, audio tapes, etc.
- Developmental assignments

Initially some employees might feel threatened or offended by the suggestion of additional training or continuing education. Supervisors should ensure any discussion about career development occurs in a positive and supportive atmosphere.





## **KEY STEPS - Performance Planning**

### **STEP 1 Schedule performance planning session with employee**

- Describe objectives of performance planning session.
- Provide background material, such as department mission.
- Encourage employee to "rough draft" a list of major job duties and performance expectations.
- Allow employee at least one week to prepare and plan.
- Prepare draft of employee major job duties and performance expectations.
  - ✓ Review departmental mission, goals, and objectives, as well as other sources of job information (e.g., job description).

### **STEP 2 Hold one or more performance planning sessions with employee**

- Review department mission, goals, and objectives.
- Discuss employee role and responsibilities.
- Discuss relationship between job and departmental objectives.
- Agree upon major job duties.
- Establish performance expectations.
  - ✓ Review employee draft of performance expectations.
  - ✓ Present your performance expectations.
  - ✓ Discuss performance expectations; strive for consensus.
- Be consistent in duties and expectations for employees in the same job class, while accounting for job related variables, individual differences and developmental needs.

### **STEP 3 Record major job duties and performance expectations on the Performance Evaluation Form.**

### **STEP 4 Obtain reviewing manager approval.**

### **STEP 5 Distribute copies of Performance Evaluation Form.**

- Copy to employee
- Supervisor retains original.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### Phase II: Coaching (Observation & Feedback)

The State of Vermont's performance management system employs a coaching model in the second, and central, phase of the cycle. During this phase, the supervisor is actively involved in observing, encouraging, guiding, and supporting an employee's performance and development. This process begins immediately after performance expectations are established in the performance planning phase.

During the continual process of performance observation and feedback, employee performance is observed and documented by the supervisor. Observations are then clearly and regularly communicated to the employee. Strengths and successes are noted and reinforced. Areas needing improvement are identified, discussed and addressed. Opportunities for development are agreed and acted upon.

Coaching involves the following strategies:

- Provide appropriate direction, resources, and support.
- Observe, assess, and address performance.
- Share constructive feedback.
- Create a motivational culture.
- Support employee development.

<p><b>“BEST PRACTICE” NOTE:</b> The coaching model used by the Department of Corrections is called Supportive Supervision. This model requires the supervisor's active engagement in employee development and prescribes monthly Performance Management Interviews (PMI) and a structure for documentation.</p>
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### Observation and Documentation

Observing and documenting employee performance is an integral part of this phase. It is important for supervisors to observe and document outcomes of the employee's work, as well as how the work is performed. This process does require effort, but regularly observing and documenting performance is critical to the effectiveness of the performance management process. Memory alone **is not** reliable enough to serve as a basis for a fair and objective evaluation over the course of a year.

What to document and how to document it inevitably requires a judgment by the supervisor. A documentation system can be as simple as an employee file folder kept for written documentation including, supervisor's notes, letters of commendation, or complaints. The use of computers has made documentation easier. Performance notes can be kept electronically, with files for individual employees. These employee files, or supervisor's logs, should contain documentation of all noteworthy activities. This provides a complete picture of the employee's performance. At the time of the performance review, the notes can be consolidated into a performance report.



## ***Observing and documenting employee performance***

There are several direct ways to observe employee performance, including:

- oral and written progress reports submitted by employees
- observing employee work activities
- reviewing work outputs, reports, charts
- feedback from internal and external customers
- noting and investigating commendations and/or complaints

Documentation should be recorded on an ongoing basis and reflect actual employee performance compared to the standard. In other words, document only those behaviors, actions, and results that relate to the major duties and expectations. Leave everything else, such as your opinions about an employee's motives, out of it.

There are several ways to ensure that your documentation is fair and accurate:

### **Be factual**

Record as much detailed information as possible. Dates and times, statistics, quotes, specific examples and other factual information enrich the quality of the feedback that is given and ensure a balanced perspective.

### **Be objective**

Document work performance rather than personality traits or characteristics. Documented observations of performance provide the most objective information for the performance review. This method encourages fairness and consistency and helps reduce the chances of employees reacting defensively. Rather than stating that an employee "shows a lot of initiative," record the specific work-related behaviors that lead you to draw that inference: "[Employee] has frequently composed written responses to routine inquiries for the supervisor's signature without being requested to do so; for example, . . ."

### **Be consistent**

- Keep documentation on all employees. Employees will be more willing to accept the system if they believe it is fair and consistent.
- Document all levels of performance to give you a complete picture of the employee's performance. Do not fall into the trap of trying to build a case one way or another.
- One way to ensure consistency is to document on a regular basis, not just when something "noteworthy" occurs. Making documentation a regular part of your schedule, whether weekly, biweekly, or monthly, will help to build a true picture of all employees' overall performance.

## Performance Feedback

Traditional once-a-year performance reviews are insufficient as a performance management and communications tool. It is essential that the supervisor communicate regularly with the employee about actual performance compared to the expectations established in the planning phase. Regular communication between supervisors and employees throughout the review period helps to ensure that there are no surprises during the performance review conference at the end of the review period.

An employee who meets or exceeds performance expectations should be recognized and praised to reinforce the desirable behavior. Reinforcement of good performance increases the motivation, morale, and productivity of employees.

It is also important to identify areas of performance weakness and correct them as soon as possible. Constructive feedback directs the employee's attention to the performance areas that are not meeting the established performance expectations. This feedback should provide the employee with specific information on how to improve performance. Critical or negative feedback can be turned into positive suggestions to encourage acceptance.

It is important to encourage the employee's participation in problem solving. The employee can then be encouraged to identify ways to improve performance. The supervisor should respond to the employee's ideas and expand on them if necessary.

Feedback guidelines:

- Information should be **specific** and convey concise explanations to the employee to increase understanding.
- Feedback should be given in a **timely** fashion so that immediate action can be taken to encourage and maintain good performance and improve areas of performance deficiencies.
- Feedback should be objective or descriptive and **work-related**. It should focus on the employee's job performance. Avoid addressing personality traits, which encourages defensiveness. Putting labels on the behavior like "Bob you're just not motivated" only personalizes the issue and may simply prompt the employee to be defensive, which inhibits future communication.
- **Frequent**, constructive feedback gives employees the opportunity to improve performance at an early stage. Employees are also more likely to accept constructive criticism with frequent feedback.



## A Feedback Model

### Praise & Recognition

1. Briefly review the situation.  
*Bring up the event on which you are commenting.*
2. Describe the employee's behavior.  
*Be specific about what worked or was appreciated.*
3. Describe the impact.  
*Tell your feelings and reactions – why the results are important.*
4. Close with encouragement and support.

Giving specific feedback using these steps will give the employee specific information about what they did well and why it matters. And, they will assist you in building a positive relationship with employees.

### Difficult & Recurring Problems

1. Raise the issue.  
*Identify the area of concern, avoiding negative terms.*
2. Describe the situation.
3. Describe the behavior.
4. Describe the impact of the behavior.  
*Avoid accusations and defensiveness by using "I" statements.*  
"When this happens . . .  
the result is . . .  
and I feel . . ."
5. Make it a two-way conversation.  
*Use open-ended questions to encourage the employee to discuss how he or she sees the situation.*  
*Summarize the other person's remarks to ensure that you understand his or her perception.*

(Continued on next page)

6. Request a change in behavior.

Mutually discuss ways of eliminating the problem.

Actively seek the employee's input and ownership of solutions.

Suggest alternatives, if you have any.

7. Agree on an action plan.

*Ask for a summary of what has been agreed.*

*Give the employee an opportunity to make any final suggestions.*

*Set a time and place for check-in/assessment.*

8. Close on a friendly, upbeat note.

9. Follow up.

## **Modifying the Performance Plan**

As priorities and circumstances change (including changes in personnel and resource availability), there may be legitimate reasons to modify major job duties and performance expectations. If modification is necessary, the supervisor and employee should meet to establish new or modified versions of the major job duties and performance expectations. This meeting can follow the guidelines outlined in "Phase I: Performance Planning."

## **Periodic Progress Review**

Effective performance management is an on-going communication and feedback process. There must be no end-of-the-year surprises for the employee. While performance feedback is an everyday, ongoing process, occasional formalized feedback, in the form of a progress review, helps in the overall evaluation. Periodic progress reviews allow for recognition of performance that meets or exceeds expectations, coaching in areas of performance deficiencies, or to discuss changes in priorities of major job duties, responsibilities, and performance expectations. These progress reviews should occur as frequently as necessary to ensure satisfactory performance. Generally, progress reviews are held on a quarterly basis.



## **KEY STEPS - Coaching**

### **STEP 1 Regularly Observe and Document Performance**

- Enter performance-related notes into a fact file, supervisor's log, or other method of documenting performance.

### **STEP 2 Regularly Give Employee Performance Feedback**

- Feedback should be specific, timely, work-related, and frequent.

### **STEP 3 Schedule one or more Progress Reviews**

- Explain that the purpose of the progress review session is to review major job duties and performance expectations, talk about "how things have been going," and identify any steps that can be taken to facilitate performance.
- Review critical job duties and performance expectations.
- Examine notes or other information on performance results or issues.
- Make a preliminary determination of the extent to which progress is meeting expectations.
- Consider whether job or departmental changes may require modification of the performance plan.
- Make a list of any other issues you want to make certain are covered.

### **STEP 4 Conduct the Progress Review Meeting**

- Ask employee for a self-assessment of progress on the performance plan.
- Add your perspective, sharing observations.
- Reinforce (positively) favorable performance and accomplishments.
- Discuss causes and solutions to performance issues/problems.
- Ask how you can help the employee succeed.
- Discuss whether changes justify modification of the performance plan.



## CHAPTER FIVE

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### Phase III: Performance Review

Phase III of the Performance Management System involves:

- completing the Performance Evaluation Report (AA-PER-6C)
- conducting a performance review conference
- planning for the next year.

Performance reviews are normally completed annually near the anniversary of the employee's completion of original probation. (An exception is the State Police where evaluations are conducted annually by work location.) A meeting to discuss the review must be held within 45 days after the employee's anniversary date. (Generally, this date remains the same even when an employee changes positions). This deadline may be extended to accommodate an employee's absence due to illness or injury.

If the performance review meeting is not held within the prescribed timelines, the employee is granted an annual overall performance rating equal to the employee's last annual overall rating, but not less than Satisfactory. This is called a "presumptive" rating. A "presumptive" rating does not acknowledge employee performance that is above satisfactory, nor does it offer assistance to employees whose performance needs improvement. Therefore, it is critical to complete the performance review within the established time period.

**More detailed information about both the employees' and managements' rights and responsibilities in the performance evaluation process may be found in the contract for the appropriate collective bargaining unit, available on-line at [http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/labor\\_cba.php](http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/labor_cba.php).**

### Completion of the Performance Evaluation Report

The performance of an individual employee is described in two ways:

- supervisor's comments expressed in the form of narrative results statements
- an overall performance rating that is consistent with the narrative results statements.

This report must be completed and forwarded to the appointing authority for approval before the performance review conference is held with the employee.

**Detailed instructions on how to complete the Performance Evaluation Report can be found in Appendix C (page 51).**

## Supervisor Comments

Supervisor comments are expressed in the form of results statements. They state the actual performance or results achieved for each major job duty as compared to the established performance expectations. These narrative results statements should:

- be tied directly to previously established performance expectations.
- describe actual behavior and compare it with expectations in terms of the established criteria (quantity, quality, etc.).
- be objectively phrased.

For example:

### Performance expectation

Research and write a grant proposal to study alternative energy sources that includes all the requirements outlined in Guidelines for D.O.E. Grant Program, by March 17.

---

Audit all purchase orders received within 2 working days of receipt, with no more than 5-8 errors totaling no more than \$5,000 per year.

---

Monitor compliance with case plan goals and facility rules and regulations. Establish time frames for goal achievement and progress. Conduct, at a minimum, monthly reviews of all cases and biweekly client contacts.

### Results statement

You completed the grant proposal, which contained all the required information and followed the prescribed format, on February 15, one month ahead of schedule.

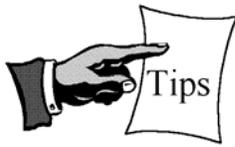
---

During the review period, you processed seven hundred purchase orders. Approximately 10% of the purchase orders were not completed within the established time limit. Ten errors totaling \$2,100 were detected.

---

You are very knowledgeable about your caseload and are able to provide current information about any resident assigned to you. You are consistent in setting appropriate time frames for goal achievement. For approximately three months during this rating period your client contacts did not meet the stated biweekly expectation. After our progress review, I noted immediate improvement, and this has not been a problem since.

**Other examples of results statements can be found in Appendix D (page 57).**



### ***Writing supervisor comments***

Always write your comments to the person who is being evaluated, not to the third person, "she" or "he".

Comments must be meaningful and consistent with the overall rating; this is critical if a performance evaluation has to be defended in court.

Comments should provide direct, specific feedback to the employee regarding problem areas. To say someone's performance is "improving" rather than "substandard" does not place the focus on the "problem". This can create a problem if the evaluation has to be defended in court.

All problem areas noted must also be addressed within your performance plan for the next evaluation period and must list specific action steps that are to be taken to improve or correct the performance deficiency.

Avoid comments that supply excuses such as "Although probably more our fault than his, John has not been able to meet some of his performance expectations."

Try to strike a balance between comments that are too specific and too general. If comments are too specific, it may appear the supervisor is "nickel and diming" the employee. If comments are too general, the supervisor may not be able to support them and the employee does not know exactly what problems need attention.





## Overall Performance Rating

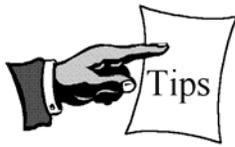
After completing the narrative section of the Performance Evaluation Report, the supervisor assigns a rating for the employee's overall performance level over the entire review period. The overall rating must be consistent with the narrative section and is defined as follows:

OUTSTANDING	The employee's overall performance significantly and consistently surpasses the performance expectations established for the position. This evaluation recognizes an employee's sustained excellence and accomplishments which are substantially above usual expectations.
EXCELLENT	The employee's overall performance in all areas frequently exceeds the performance expectations established for the position. This evaluation recognizes an employee's consistent effectiveness and accomplishments which are above usual expectations.
SATISFACTORY	The employee's overall performance consistently meets the established performance expectations for the position and regularly achieves expected results. An employee at this achievement level meets usual expectations and performs tasks in a timely and acceptable manner.
UNSATISFACTORY	The employee's overall performance inconsistently meets the established performance expectations for the position and indicates that significant tasks are not completed in the time or manner expected. Performance is below the minimum acceptable level for the position. Correction of performance deficiencies is necessary for continued employment.

NOTE: Supervisors must consult their personnel officer when the overall rating is unsatisfactory (See Personnel Policy 8.1 for further information).

## Review & Signatures

After completing the Performance Evaluation Report, the supervisor should forward it to the reviewer, generally the next level supervisor or manager. The reviewer ensures that the form has been properly completed, adds comments, and signs the Report. Next the Report is forwarded to the appointing authority, who also reviews, adds comments and signs it. The supervisor should keep track of the Report's progress to avoid any delays and ensure that the review conference can be held within the prescribed time period. The Performance Evaluation must be finalized by management before it is shown to the employee.



### ***Common rating errors to avoid***

**General Bias.** When raters are overly severe to employees in their evaluation they are making an error of negative bias; easy raters make the error of positive bias.

**Halo Effect.** The tendency for a supervisor to feel strongly about one trait and to let that feeling influence the evaluation of all work behavior.

**Recency Effect.** This results when an employee makes an outstanding contribution or an untimely mistake just before a performance review, and the supervisor's perception of the employee's performance for the entire review period is altered.

**Central Tendency.** Consistently rating employees' performance as average when the performance clearly warrants a substantially higher or lower rating. Weak supervisors try to make everyone happy by rating everyone as "average."

**Contrast Effect.** The tendency for a supervisor to evaluate the employee as compared to other individuals rather than on the job expectations.

**Similar-to-Me Effect.** The tendency on the part of a supervisor to review more favorably those people whom they perceive as similar to themselves.

## **Performance Review Conference**

A properly conducted conference, perhaps the most difficult and sensitive aspect of performance management, will reinforce communications between the supervisor and the employee. During the performance review conference the supervisor will:

- Discuss performance effectiveness during the last review period.
- Reinforce good performance.
- Identify specific ways in which the employee can improve performance during the next review period.
- Assess the employee's present job responsibilities and performance standards and redefine them if necessary.
- Discuss career development issues of concern to the employee.
- Begin performance planning for the next review period.

Performance management should be a dynamic process of regular, constructive feedback between supervisor and employee. The performance review conference is merely a formal summary of the events of the past rating period. If the supervisor has done a good job of keeping the employee current on his/her progress and problems, the employee should not be surprised by any unexpected criticisms of his/her performance.

### **Preparation for the Performance Review Conference**

Thorough preparation is key to an objective and practical performance review conference. The following are key points to keep in mind when planning and preparing for a performance review conference:

1. Gather information and materials. The supervisor should prepare by reviewing the employee's personnel record, supervisor's log, current job responsibilities, and major job duties. The necessary forms and documented, factual information must be ready to present at the appropriate time.
2. Encourage the employee to prepare for the conference. Ask the employee to review his or her performance over the review period. One approach is to provide the employee with a blank copy of the established performance expectations and performance review report. The employee can then do a "self evaluation" by writing down the results accomplished for major job duties and established performance expectations. This information can then be forwarded to the employee's supervisor for review. This preparation gives the employee the opportunity to make sure that the supervisor has all the relevant facts necessary to objectively review the employee's overall performance and also encourages employee participation in the review process. At least three weeks notice should be given to allow the employee sufficient time to prepare.
3. Schedule a mutually agreed upon time. Select a time for the meeting when there is a minimum amount of work pressure and when the employee would be most receptive. Allow at least an hour for the meeting, but keep your schedule open in case the meeting lasts longer. Performance review conferences are normally scheduled only once a year, and they are important enough to deserve sufficient time and your complete attention.
4. Decide on an appropriate setting. Select a private place that will be free from interruptions. Generally, the only people present at the review conference should be the supervisor and the employee. The exact time and setting of the conference should be communicated to the employee at least a few days in advance.



### ***Conducting the annual performance review meeting***

Create a friendly, business-like and constructive atmosphere. "Break the ice" by talking about mutual interests to encourage the employee to participate.

Set the agenda for the review meeting in a positive way, such as "As you know, the purpose of our meeting today is for us to discuss your annual performance evaluation. This is an opportunity to agree on what's working well - your strengths and accomplishments, as well as to identify any areas for improvement on which we want to focus in the coming year."

Start with a general discussion first. Invite the employee to share his or her self-assessment and/or perceptions about the year just completed and goals for the year to come. Verbally share the key points of your evaluation, summarizing the feedback that you have provided in the written narrative of the document.

Communicate openly. This should be a dialogue, not a lecture. The performance review meeting must include two-way communication. Encourage feedback by asking questions. It should be a give-and-take session in which you examine areas of agreement and disagreement. Show the employee that you are objective by actively listening to the employee's point of view.

Once the conversation has wound down, provide the employee with the written performance evaluation. This document should simply summarize everything that has been discussed during the year to date. The employee may read and sign the evaluation before you close the meeting, or choose to take a day or two to read it and reflect on your discussion before completing the review process. Either approach is fine. It may be helpful to schedule a follow-up meeting within the few days to "close the loop" and review agreements or plans for the coming year.

### **Performance Planning for the Next Rating Period**

Performance planning for the next period should begin before concluding the conference. The performance planning discussion can be scheduled as a separate conference meeting if extensive planning is necessary or if the performance review was generally negative.

The steps outlined in the performance planning section of this guidebook should be reviewed and followed when establishing major job duties and performance expectations for the next rating period. Revision of the major job duties and performance expectations may be necessary if an employee is consistently performing either below or above the established expectations or if duties or departmental objectives change. This is also an opportunity to clarify opportunities and mutual expectations related to the employee's career development. These might include developmental job assignments, special projects, training, added responsibilities and

other strategies available to support the employee's development in the coming year.

## **Employee Response**

After the performance review meeting the employee should be given time to complete the "Employee Comments" subsection of the form. The employee should then sign the form. Although the signature indicates that the employee has participated in and read the evaluation, the employee's signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with all comments. Employees should be informed of the appeals process available to them under the existing State-VSEA collective bargaining contract, which may include the opportunity to submit a rebuttal and/or formal self-evaluation.



## Performance Improvement

As a supervisor, it is your responsibility to take corrective action for inadequate performance. The coaching model is helpful in addressing specific performance problems – especially when the employee is weak only in one or two aspects of the job and otherwise performs at satisfactory or higher levels. Coaching is also effective in the early stages of addressing overall job performance that does not meet expectations. In most cases, performance problems can be corrected through the mutual attention and efforts of the employee and supervisor. When that does not occur, then it is necessary to move into the steps of progressive corrective action as outlined in the collective bargaining agreements.

### Coaching for Improved Performance

#### 1. *Look at total performance.*

It is important not to concentrate exclusively on poor performance when discussing job performance with an employee. Discussion should focus on supporting major job duties and responsibilities that are performed at the expected level or better; however, when major job duties and responsibilities are not performed as expected, then the focus should be on improvement.

#### 2. *Get the employee's agreement that performance needs improvement.*

An employee must be committed to improving performance in order to make a change. Employee acceptance of a plan to improve performance can be achieved through a specific discussion of how far the employee's current performance is from the established performance expectations. The supervisor's comments must be specific and clear enough for the employee to understand. Asking the employee's point of view encourages employee participation and clarifies the employee's understanding of your comments. Another way to get agreement that a problem exists is to discuss how the results of poor performance affect other co-workers, the agency/department, clients or the public. The [feedback model](#) in Chapter 3` of this guide provides a good framework for this discussion.

#### 3. *Find out why expectations are not being met.*

Talk with the employee to explore reasons why the expectations are not being met. Once specific reasons are identified, it is much easier to work with the employee to improve performance. Causes of poor performance might include problems in the system, such as:

- unclear expectations
- lack of regular feedback
- lack of training
- lack of available resources

- unreasonable time constraints

Variables affecting performance on the part of the employee may include:

- lack of knowledge
- lack of skill
- lack of motivation
- lack of confidence

Correctly identifying the underlying causes of unsatisfactory performance will greatly enhance the likelihood that you and the employee can identify mutually acceptable strategies and timeframes for improvement.

A WORD OF CAUTION is needed here. The role of the supervisor is to address job-related issues, results, and behaviors. Sometimes the problems affecting an employee's performance are of a personal nature. Although supervisors should be compassionate and caring toward their staff, employees have an expectation and right to privacy in their personal lives. At such times, supervisors may refer employees to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP contact information may be obtained from your personnel officer or the Department of Human Resources website at <http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/eap.php>.

#### 4. ***Develop a personalized improvement plan.***

An employee may be more committed to the improvement plan if he or she is involved in the development process. The improvement plan should include a set of expected performance standards, including the quality and quantity of work, and the amount of time allocated for improvement to take place. To ensure understanding, the improvement plan should be put in writing, with copies to the employee and the next level supervisor or manager. Follow up is also an important part of an improvement plan. If an employee improves performance, recognize that achievement.

## **Progressive Corrective Action**

When overall performance is unsatisfactory, Progressive Corrective Action is the contractual process used to provide employees with formal notice of deficient performance and reasonable opportunity to correct the performance to satisfactory levels. Supervisors should not initiate corrective action without first discussing the situation with their personnel officers.

There are four phases in Progressive Corrective Action:

1. Written or oral notice of performance deficiency  
This feedback does not go in the employee's official personnel file at this stage, is not grievable, and does not trigger the right to representation under the VSEA Collective Bargaining Agreement.
2. Written performance evaluation with an overall unsatisfactory rating and concurrent placement in a prescriptive period of remediation (PPR), usually for 3 – 6 months.
3. Written evaluation of performance at the conclusion of the PPR and, if still unsatisfactory, extension of the PPR for 1 – 3 months or placement in a warning period, usually for 1 – 3 months.
4. Written evaluation of performance at the conclusion of the warning period and, if still unsatisfactory, dismissal.

### **Special Notes:**

It is extremely important that you consult with your Personnel Administrator and/or the Department of Human Resources Labor Relations Division as you proceed through Steps 1 – 4 listed above.

Corrective action for officers in the Vermont State Police may also include transfer, reassignment, demotion, dismissal, or a combination thereof.



### ***Conducting the corrective action meeting***

If the purpose of the meeting is to provide the employee with an unsatisfactory performance evaluation and advise him or her of the right to representation outlined in the contract. However, if the purpose of the meeting is the first step of progressive corrective action – notice of a performance deficiency – then the right to representation is not applicable.

In opening the meeting, set a professional and constructive tone. “As you know, we scheduled this meeting to discuss some concerns I have about your performance. My goal is to ensure that we both have a clear understanding of what the issues are and what needs to happen to bring things back to a satisfactory level. It’s important to me that we are successful in achieving this.”

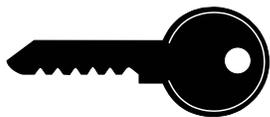
Invite the employee to express his or her thoughts on the matter. “I have some specific details to share with you. Before I begin, would you like to speak about your perceptions of how things are going and what should happen next?”

Share your evaluation with the employee, pointing out areas where you are in agreement first. Recognize where performance has met or exceeded expectations. Then discuss specific areas of concern, including any areas of disagreement. Explain your observations and rationale for your judgment. Ask the employee if there are other facts or circumstances that affected the employee's performance and need to be discussed.

Emphasize the future. Significant emphasis should be placed on how future performance expectations and goals can be met.

Try to manage the emotional level. Particularly when the discussion centers on behavior that is below expectations, employees can become angry or hostile. It's important that you remain calm. Letting the employee talk or "ventilate" without interruption is a good strategy. Listen carefully to try to understand the real reasons the employee is upset. It may help to restate the employee's position in your own words to confirm your understanding. If emotions get too strong, consider rescheduling the remainder of the session.

Whenever possible, make sure that the employee leaves the conference in a positive frame of mind rather than resentful toward any negative aspects of the discussion. The employee should at least feel it was worthwhile to discuss his or her performance and understand what must be done to improve future performance.



## ***KEY STEPS - Performance Review***

**STEP 1** Performance review conference must be held within 45 days of the employee's anniversary date.

**STEP 2** Complete Performance Evaluation Report

- Review all documentation collected on employee since his/her last review.
- Write supervisor comments.
- Record the overall performance rating.
- Confirm that this rating is consistent with supervisor comments.
- You must consult your personnel officer when the overall rating is unsatisfactory and follow the contractual process for progressive corrective action.

**STEP 3** Forward the Report for Review

- Forward completed form to the reviewer who: (1) ensures that the rater has properly completed the form; (2) reviews rater's comments and overall rating; and (3) enters reviewer's comments, signs the form and forwards to appointing authority.
- Forward completed form to appointing authority who reviews and signs the form and returns it to rater.

**STEP 4** Prepare for Performance Review Conference

- Provide employee with a copy of finalized evaluation to review (optional).
- Encourage employee to prepare for the conference by reviewing his/her performance since the last review and gathering any pertinent information.

**STEP 5** Hold Performance Review Conference with the Employee

- Review the major job duties and performance expectations.
- Have the employee summarize his or her self-assessment.
- Probe and clarify reasons for success and/or failure.
- Share observations and documentation.
- Recognize where expectations are met or exceeded.
- Provide a rationale of the overall evaluation.
- Seek input and reaction from the employee.

**KEY STEPS - Performance Review (Continued)**

- Identify areas of agreement and disagreement.
  - ✓ Try to reach consensus.
  - ✓ Allow employee to vent emotions.

**STEP 6 Discuss Performance Improvement (optional)**

- Determine the form and amount of improvement needed.
- Use a "problem-solving" approach.
- Establish specific improvement needs and actions.

**STEP 7 Discuss Employee Development (optional)**

- Have the employee conduct a self-assessment of their present skills and career ambitions.
- Identify options for development.

**STEP 8 Discuss Performance Planning for the Next Review Cycle**

- Conduct the performance planning discussion or schedule a meeting to conduct it later.
- Where appropriate, reaffirm existing major job duties and performance expectations.
- Where appropriate, revise or develop new major job duties and performance expectations, with consideration of the impact of such changes on the employee's job classification and on the work unit in general.
- Enter performance plan for next rating period onto new Performance Evaluation Report.

**STEP 9 Employee Response**

- Give the employee time (after the review conference) to complete the "Employee Comments" subsection of the form.
- Obtain employee signature. Inform employee that signature does not indicate their agreement or disagreement with the evaluation.

## APPENDIX A

### EXAMPLES OF MAJOR JOB DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS

#### Major Job Duties

Contacts employers in order to determine their employment needs and to provide the services and resources of VDOL.

#### Performance Expectations

A minimum of 30 employer contacts per month will be made. At least 20 in-person visits will be made to employers from whom no job order has been received in the last year. At least 10 maintenance contacts (by visit or by phone) will be made to employers who have listed a job order with VDOL in the last year.

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Case management

Monitor compliance with case plan goals and facility rules and regulations.

Establish time frames for goal achievement and progress.

Conduct, at a minimum, monthly reviews of all cases and bi-weekly client contacts.

Document reviews, client contact, reassessments, and classifications as required by the offender classification manual.

Explore and implement, as appropriate, responsible and creative avenues to achieve case plan goals.

---

Answers Switchboard

Incoming calls are answered within three rings. Calls are put on hold within three rings to answer other incoming calls.

Calls are directed to proper employee and accurate messages taken.

Accurate information is given in response to questions. Asks for assistance when uncertain.

Opens voice mail on agreed schedule and responds to requests for information.

### Major Job Duties

Provides public health nursing services to clients in clinic settings.

### Performance Expectations

Performance expectations in this area will be evaluated by: record review, clinic observation, individual conferences, feedback from clients, feedback from other community providers, and audit review.

Organizes and manages clinic to ensure appropriate staffing, proper equipment, and safe, adequate space according to pertinent protocols.

Appropriate to the clinic, provide guidance and education for client/parent, specific to assessment of needs.

Accurately interprets screening data, determines medical/nutritional eligibility, provides nutrition education, and assigns food packages according to WIC procedures.

After receipt of informed consent and discussion of possible side effects, administer immunizations, using proper technique, according to VDH protocol.

Clinic records are maintained according to VDH Record Manual and completed within 48 hours for Well Child Clinic and 24 hours for WIC Clinic.

Screening exams are correctly performed, results interpreted accurately, and follow-up is initiated according to VDH protocol.

---

Development, implementation, and maintenance of Agency accounting and other accounting functions such as the Federal indirect cost proposal and the annual audit.

Monthly reports are available within five working days after the end of the month and are distributed to those who need them. Federal reports are made by due dates. Requests for modifications or new programs are accepted and provided in a reasonable time.

### **Major Job Duties**

Conducts audits and analyses of the financial condition and market conduct of insurers.

Analyzes insurance operations and identifies problems. Reports violations of insurance laws and regulations discovered.

Makes recommendations to improve the financial condition and market conduct of insurers.

Writes reports on areas examined in accordance with NAIC guidelines.

### **Performance Expectations**

(1) For parts of examinations done by the Examiner II, the papers submitted to the Examiner III or Examiner in Charge show evidence that:

- the exam is fully supported by comprehensive, clear, efficient and auditable work papers;
- any item which might have been questionable has been raised, explored, and where possible, resolved;
- legal issues have been identified, researched when necessary, and where possible, addressed;
- all information needed to make a thorough review is included and is sensibly and neatly organized so that the Examiner III or Examiner in Charge can easily find needed backup material.
- the Examiner II understands statutory accounting principles, laws, regulations, and audit techniques.
- the Examiner II analyzes trends, evaluates, and interprets potential impact on the company.
- the Examiner II draws appropriate conclusions.

(2) Examinations are completed on time and on budget as defined by the job plan, any variance is adequately explained.

(3) The Examiner II works relatively independently without frequent guidance. However, there is evidence within the examination report, or as determined after the fact, that the Examiner II calls on supervisors for appropriate support and backup promptly when a problem outside of the Examiner's scope of knowledge or responsibility arises.

(4) Comments from company officials and the outcome of EIC's review notes and actions show that Examiner's relationship with insurer being examined is thoroughly professional, i.e., polite, fair & firm.

(5) Provides constructive input and analysis during the planning phase of the exam.

(6) Appropriate use of information gathered from other sections in creating work papers and developing an exam report.

(7) Examinations and other work performed by the Examiner II show evidence that statistical sampling methods have been appropriate, clearly understood, and carefully implemented.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **EXAMPLES OF GENERAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS\***

#### **Teamwork**

Understands, supports and focuses on the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of the organization and team.

Promotes and demonstrates trust, mutual respect, and a cooperative work environment.

Encourages and recognizes the contributions of others.

Contributes to the development, cohesion, and productivity of the team.

Promotes cooperation, communication, and coordination within the agency, other agencies and the public.

Shares appropriate information internally and externally.

Supports teamwork through open and honest communication.

#### **Self-management**

Displays a positive attitude and communicates with others in a professional, courteous, and helpful manner at all times.

Exhibits initiative and action in improving knowledge and skills.

Seeks and assumes additional responsibilities.

Arrives at work on time.

Attends work regularly.

Makes efficient use of work time.

Follows rules and procedures.

Works in a safe manner.

Uses and maintains equipment properly.

Demonstrates sensitivity to public attitudes and concerns.

Gives and accepts constructive feedback.

Supports cultural diversity in the workplace.

## **Innovation and change**

Uses creative and innovative thinking to contribute to organizational and individual objectives.

Identifies, shares, and is receptive to new ideas.

Looks for opportunities to continuously improve work processes.

Acts on opportunities to improve work processes.

Helps others overcome resistance to change.

## **Work processes and results**

Provides work products and services that consistently meet the needs and expectations of both internal and external customers.

Uses customer satisfaction as a key measure for quality.

Uses appropriate problem solving methods to improve processes.

Collects, evaluates and integrates relevant information to make decisions.

Sets and adheres to priorities.

Meets established productivity standards, deadlines, and work schedules.

Accomplishes accurate work with minimal assistance or supervision.

Applies technical knowledge to achieve results.

Pursues efficiency and economy when using resources.

Demonstrates an understanding of the benefits of teamwork.

## **Supervision/Leadership/Management**

Delegates tasks and holds staff accountable for effective completion of work assignments.

Assigns work or tasks to staff in way that fosters efficiency, enhancement of job-related skills, and developmental needs.

Keeps up-to-date on all contract requirements relating to supervisory responsibilities or obligations.

## Appendix B

Maintains sufficient awareness of interpersonal working relationships in area under supervisory control that disagreements and interpersonal difficulties are met head on, early, so they do not get out-of-hand.

When staff bring administrative problems to supervisor, supervisor acts as liaison/buffer to resolve (to the extent possible, anticipates and intervenes before issues become administrative problems to staff).

Shares information with subordinates that instills sense of teamwork, of belonging, and of involvement.

Gives technical advice, direction, demonstration, and instruction to staff on methods of performing important job tasks in order to enhance skills and increase effectiveness.

Establishes and communicates performance goals and standards to subordinates prior to rating period.

Reviews staff work to assess technical accuracy, compliance with job duties, and sufficiency of supporting documentation.

Approves or disapproves leave requests in order to ensure minimum impact on job progress within contract/rules.

Promotes teamwork, trust, and a cooperative work environment.

Empowers employees by delegating responsibility and authority to lowest level possible.

Demonstrates sensitivity to individual differences and promotes mutual respect of others.

Contributes to the development, cohesion, and productivity of the team.

Coaches and mentors.

Provides opportunities for others to develop leadership skills.

Provides growth and development opportunities to employees through a combination of work assignments, in-service training, and outside developmental programs and experiences.

Promotes cultural diversity in the workplace.

Sets clear and reasonable goals and objectives based on the vision and mission of the organization, and develops effective strategies and plans to meet those goals and objectives.

Involves employees in problem solving and decision making.

Ensures that work products and services consistently meet the needs and expectations of internal and external customers.

\* Many of these examples come from the State of Kansas, Performance Review System.

## APPENDIX C

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT

Listed below is an item-by-item analysis of the Performance Evaluation Report (AA-PER-6C) with an explanation of each item. Following is a hypothetical example of a completed Performance Evaluation Report.

**Employee:** Enter the name of the employee whose work is being evaluated.

**Department:** Enter the name of the State agency or department for which the employee being evaluated works.

**Position Title:** Enter the class title to which the employee's position has been assigned.

**Evaluation Period:** List the beginning and ending dates of the performance period that the report covers.

**Evaluation Date:** List the date on which the performance review conference was held.  
NOTE: An annual evaluation must be held within 45 days of the employee's anniversary date.

**Type of Evaluation:** Check the box which reflects the purpose of the evaluation.

1. Annual -- an evaluation completed yearly, normally the anniversary date of the employee's completion of original probation.
2. Warning -- an evaluation completed placing an employee in warning status under progressive corrective action. NOTE: Consult your personnel officer when placing an employee in warning status.
3. Original Probation -- an evaluation completed at the end of the original probationary period, normally six months from effective date of appointment, plus any extensions.
4. Separation -- an evaluation completed prior to an employee leaving the position.
5. Special -- an evaluation completed to place an employee in a prescriptive period of remediation (PPR) under progressive corrective action, or to successfully complete a PPR. NOTE: Special evaluation may not be used for late annual evaluations.

**Overall Performance Rating:** Check the box which best represents the level of the employee's overall performance during the evaluation period.

**Signatures:** All required signatures should be secured. The signatures indicate that all parties have been appropriately involved. The employee's signature indicates that the evaluation has been discussed. It does not constitute agreement with the evaluation.

**Summary of major job duties with performance expectations:** This section is to be completed at the beginning of the evaluation period. List the major job duties which have been identified for the position and expectations for satisfactory performance of each duty.

The first section of this guidebook -- Phase I: Performance Planning -- outlines the steps in identifying major job duties and establishing performance expectations.

**Performance Comments:** This section is completed at the end of the review period. Using narrative results statements, compare the employee's actual performance against the previously established expectations for the job.

**Performance expectations for the next rating period:** This space may be used to document on the current Evaluation Report any changes or additions to the employee's major job duties or performance expectations for the next rating period.

**Comments:** This space may be used for the reviewer, appointing authority and employee to make comments concerning the evaluation.

**PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT**

**DOCUMENT A - Evaluation Summary**

Employee: <b>Ellen Buchanan</b> Department: <b>Corrections</b> Position Title: <b>Corrections Services Specialist</b> Evaluation Period From: <b>11/22/03</b> To: <b>11/22/04</b> Performance Review Conference held on: <b>12/13/04</b>	Type of Evaluation: <input type="checkbox"/> Original Probation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Special <input type="checkbox"/> Warning <input type="checkbox"/> Separation
--	---

<b>OVERALL PERFORMANCE DURING THE EVALUATION PERIOD IS RATED AS: (Check one)</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The employee's overall performance significantly and consistently surpasses all performance standards established for the position. This evaluation recognizes an employee's sustained excellence and accomplishments which are substantially above usual expectations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The employee's overall performance in all areas frequently exceeds the performance standards established for the position. This evaluation recognizes an employee's consistent effectiveness and accomplishments which are above usual expectations.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The employee's overall performance consistently meets the performance standards established for the position and regularly achieves expected results. An employee at this achievement level meets usual expectations and performs tasks in a timely and acceptable manner.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The employee's overall performance inconsistently meets the performance standards established for the position and indicates that significant tasks are not completed in the time or manner expected. Performance is below the minimum acceptable level for the position. Correction of performance deficiencies is necessary for continued employment.

Name of Supervisor: <b>Kelley O'Malley</b> Title: <b>Casework Supervisor</b>	Signature: <b>Kelley O'Malley</b> Date: <i>12/2/04</i>
Name of Reviewer: <b>Claire Edwards</b> Title: <b>Assistant Superintendent</b>	Signature: <b>Claire Edwards</b> Date: <i>12/4/04</i>
Appointing Authority: <b>Lawrence Taylor</b> Title: <b>Area Manager</b>	Signature: <b>Lawrence Taylor</b> Date: <i>12/10/04</i>
Employee: <b>Ellen Buchanan</b> Title: <b>Corrections Services Specialist</b>	Signature: <b>Ellen Buchanan</b> Date: <i>12/13/04</i>

To the Employee: Signature only indicates receipt of the evaluation.

**SUMMARY OF MAJOR JOB DUTIES WITH PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

(Even though they need not be listed below, employees are also expected to adhere to general performance expectations applicable to all employees, such as, but not limited to: reporting for work on time, following work rules & procedures, maintaining effective working relationships with public and co-workers, etc. These general performance expectations can be used in determining the employee's final rating.)

**Major Job Duties/Performance Expectations:****Major Duty #1 Manages Caseload**

Monitor compliance with case plan goals and facility rules and regulations. Establish time frames for goal achievement and progress. Conduct, at a minimum, monthly reviews of all cases and biweekly client contacts. Document reviews, client contact, reassessments and classifications as required by the offender classification manual. Explore and implement, as appropriate, responsible and creative avenues to achieve case plan goals.

**Major Duty #2 Complete Classification and Case Planning**

Complete thorough, accurate, and timely initial classification as assigned. Submit reclassifications as scheduled or earlier if appropriate. Compile and submit, clear, thorough and appropriately documented classifications and case plans in accordance with the offender classification manual.

**Major Duty #3 Assess, identify and address offender treatment needs**

Assess, identify and address offender needs utilizing appropriate and available information from multiple sources in accordance with department requirements and professional standards. Meet with individual clients to support and monitor progress, consolidate achievement of treatment goals, and identify any additional treatment needs. Meet with clients as directed or needed on emergency basis to identify and evaluate suicidal or assaultive risks, and to assist in resolving crisis and stabilizing behaviors.

**Major Duty #4 Develop Release Plans**

Develop release plans which ensure appropriate and continued treatment interventions and living and working situations. Identify areas of potential risk and propose recommendations to address and control such risks to ensure all possible safety to the community and success to the client. Prepare and submit, as directed or when appropriate, complete, thorough parole summaries, updates and recommendations in accordance with Parole Board direction and department procedures to ensure complete and accurate documentation for presentation to the Parole Board. The goal is to provide the Board with the best possible opportunity to reach rational, appropriate and

## Appendix C

responsible decisions.

### **DOCUMENT B - Performance Comments**

Employee: Ellen Buchanan  
Department: Corrections

Evaluation Period From: 11/22/03 To: 11/22/04

### **SUPERVISOR COMMENTS**

#### Major Duty #1 Manages Caseload

You are very knowledgeable about your caseload and are able to provide current information about any offender assigned to you. You are consistent in setting appropriate time frames for goal achievement. For approximately four months during this rating period your client contacts did not meet the stated biweekly expectation. After our progress review, I noted immediate improvement, and this has not been a problem since. Your reassessments of risks have always been timely and complete.

#### Major Duty #2 Complete Classification and Case Planning

Your classification and case plans are generally complete and accurate. You do need to make certain that your documentation contains all required elements. You were always timely in initial classification and your case plans were usually done within expected timeframes.

#### Major Duty #3 Assess, identify and address offender treatment needs

You submit treatment plans which are thorough and do a good job of addressing offender needs. You appropriately refer offenders to designated service providers. You do an excellent job of motivating offenders to work on their treatment plans. Your crisis intervention skills are exceptional. In at least two incidents this evaluation period you were instrumental in successfully intervening in very high risk situations.

#### Major Duty #4 Develop Release Plans

You have done a good job of coordinating individual release plans with the treatment team, which include appropriate housing, employment and treatment programs. You are still not establishing tentative discharge dates, but are showing improvement.

#### General Comments

You are well respected by the offenders as a no nonsense, but fair caseworker. You have an excellent relationship with your fellow staff members. On several occasions you have helped other caseworkers with difficult cases. You are certainly a team player. It has been a pleasure to work with you this past year and I look forward to another great year ahead.

**PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS FOR NEXT EVALUATION PERIOD**

(Identify any changes or additions to employee's job duties or performance expectations for the next rating period.)

- (1) Participate in developing a plan for a new scheduling program.
- (2) Participate in the task force developing the Community Restitution program.

**REVIEWER COMMENTS**

I agree with Claire's comments and overall rating. You are valued and very responsible caseworker. Thanks for your efforts over the past year.

**APPOINTING AUTHORITY COMMENTS**

Thank you for your long standing commitment to this Department and our mission.

**EMPLOYEE COMMENTS**

## APPENDIX D

### EXAMPLES OF RESULTS STATEMENTS

*Diane, you completed the Wilson project three days before the deadline of March 1. This project was evidence of your ability to manage your time, delegate to your staff in an effective manner, and model the teamwork approach.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*You have met the necessary timelines established for your work responsibilities within the first three months of this year in an effective manner. However, I have noted that since June your timelines on reports have not been adhered to; specifically I received your report two weeks late, thus other time commitments were impaired. It is my expectation that these reports will be on my desk within the timeframes established unless I am notified in advance (when possible) on the need to reset these timelines. I am willing to assist you in any way possible to maintain established timelines.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Timelines on requisition of materials have not been adhered to. Chemicals necessary for the completion of lab testing have not been available to technicians and thus delays in work processes have occurred. To avoid future delays we will meet to review and establish realistic procedures and timelines for all chemical acquisitions that fall within your jurisdiction. Periodic check-ins of these processes will be jointly established to alleviate this performance problem.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Your knowledge of emergency response and non-routine security functioning is bolstered by your years of experience. Your responses to "Use of Force" situations have been appropriate. Documentation for unusual incidents has, for the most part, been complete and accurate. You do need to make certain that your documentation contains all required elements to satisfy legal obligations (i.e., specific conditions which would require force to be used).*

\*\*\*\*\*

*You are knowledgeable about your caseload and are able to provide current information about any resident assigned to you. You are able to supply appropriate information during the sexual treatment meetings and are aware of time frames and submit treatment plans which meet the offenders' needs.*

## APPENDIX E

### INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are used in the Department of Human Resources' formal development programs such as the Supervisor's Development Program (SDP) and the Vermont Public Manager's Program (VPM). The Agency of Natural Resources Leadership and Management Program also incorporates an IDP into its program.

A few State of Vermont departments are creating IDPs with their employees. Other departments are interested in learning more about the process and its value. The Department of Human Resources endorses an IDP process that links the individual employee's goals with the organization's mission and goals.

An IDP is an employee development tool. IDPs are used for the following reasons:

- To ensure that employees are prepared to successfully complete job duties and meet expectations in the current position.
- To prepare employees for new or additional job duties.
- To prepare employees to move to the next level in a career ladder.
- To prepare employees for future vacancies.
- To assist employees in meeting their professional and career development goals.

The primary purpose of the IDP is to fulfill the organization's mission and meet organizational goals now and in the future. Future oriented IDPs play a key role in succession planning, which is a core element of workforce planning.

A secondary purpose of the IDP is to assist employees with their professional or career development. Having more motivated employees is a spin-off benefit of using the IDP for personal and professional development. IDPs can be motivating because they challenge an employee, increase interest in and satisfaction with the job and organization, and, most importantly, IDPs demonstrate a supervisor's interest in the employee's well-being and aspirations.

The IDP's effectiveness depends upon how conscientious the employee is in completing and following through on the IDP and how sincere the supervisor is in supporting the employee's efforts. Communication between the employee and supervisor is **key** in facilitating the IDP process.

IDPs are used in performance management, especially in regard to Phase II, coaching. However, it is important to maintain the distinction between an appraisal or evaluation discussion and creating the IDP. Discussions related to IDPs should be held separately from the performance appraisal discussion since they are used for development, not evaluation. However, the performance evaluation can provide some useful data for the IDP in terms of areas to develop or develop further.

The Department of Human Resources recommends the voluntary use of IDPs. While every employee should be extended the opportunity to complete an IDP and offered assistance, an

## Appendix E

IDP should never be considered mandatory. This would defeat the self-directive nature of the process.

The recommended IDP process offered here provides guidance to supervisors and managers, who wish to implement an IDP process in their sections and divisions. In addition to an overview of the IDP process, the steps involved, and suggested formats, a list of recommended competencies for professional development is provided in this appendix. A sample IDP form can be found at the end of this appendix.

### **Definition**

An IDP is a developmental action plan, a guide, to move employees from where they are to where they would like to be. It is a formal document that is completed jointly by the employee and supervisor. It provides a series of steps and activities designed to acquire competencies to achieve higher levels of performance in the current and/or future position. The employee and supervisor are partners in the development and implementation of the IDP. This document provides a vehicle to ensure that development occurs and is ongoing.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the IDP is to identify the employee's area(s) for development based on individual strengths and job and career-related competencies. IDP activities can help an employee to do the current job better, to achieve the next level in a career ladder, to prepare for future higher-level opportunities, or to attain career goals. Completion of an IDP does not guarantee promotion or an increase in pay grade, but may be a contributing factor leading to either one of those outcomes.

### **Goals**

The overarching goals of an IDP are to keep employees continually learning, to prepare employees for new challenges and opportunities, and to meet current and future organizational needs. The specific goals of an individual's IDP are developed by the employee with input from the supervisor.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Employee**

The employee has the ultimate responsibility for creating and following through on the IDP. The employee's role is to conduct a self-assessment, identify learning priorities and professional goals, identify activities to develop competencies and achieve goals, and to follow-through on completing the IDP activities. The employee is also responsible to request assistance and guidance from the supervisor, as needed.

## Supervisor

The supervisor's role is to assess the employee, provide information and resources, guide, and support the employee in creating and implementing the IDP. The supervisor provides feedback regarding the employee's strengths and areas for development; information about the organization's mission, goals and needs; a reality check regarding the feasibility of the IDP in relation to organizational needs and resources available; and encouragement and support to enable the employee to complete the IDP.

### Steps Involved:

#### 1. Employee Self-Assessment

- In what direction is my organization going and what will the organization need from its employees in the future?
- What are my goals over the next 2-5 years?
- What are my greatest strengths and how can I build on them more effectively?
- Do I have serious weaknesses that make it difficult to do my job or will prevent me from reaching my goals?

#### 2. Employee Identifies Developmental Opportunities

Developmental opportunities should help the employee build on strengths in such a way that he/she can better serve the needs of the organization and reach his/her goals.

Activities should include a mix of training and experiential learning:

- Classroom training
- Shadowing
- Mentoring
- Distance learning
- Project Assignment
- Cross-training
- Outreach efforts

#### 3. Employee and supervisor meet to discuss IDP

- Supervisor offers guidance on organizational direction, employee self-assessment, goals, and activities, as appropriate.
- Supervisor provides guidance on range of training resources available.
- Supervisor and employee ensure that final IDP is realistic in terms of resources, time, and job responsibilities.

#### **4. Employee and supervisor sign IDP**

- Employee makes a commitment to follow through.
- Supervisor ensures support for employee to do so.

Supervisors and managers should make every effort to ensure that employees are given time for the training and developmental opportunities listed on their IDP. Chronic failure to make time for previously agreed upon learning opportunities will breed cynicism and mistrust, completely undermining the IDP's motivational benefits.

After the employee has participated in a course, it is important to follow up and ensure that he/she has an opportunity to apply the new learning on the job to reinforce knowledge and provide practice for skills. Applying learning in the workplace also demonstrates the value of the training experience.

**5. IDP is periodically reviewed and revised as needed.** Reviews can be held as frequently as every quarter, but should occur at least every six months.

#### **Suggested activities:**

##### **Challenging Assignments**

Development always starts with the current position. Challenging assignments that require the employee to stretch abilities and take reasonable risks should be encouraged. Possible activities include committee assignments; special projects; training another employee; giving presentations; research and report writing.

##### **Self-directed Learning**

Reading and research either through books, journal articles, or internet web sites can provide a foundation in a developmental area. Reflecting upon developmental experiences through keeping a journal is another self-directed method. It will be important to find opportunities to apply and test such learning.

##### **Formal Training**

Courses that run for one day to a full semester provide information to build knowledge in developmental areas and may contribute to meeting the minimum qualifications for higher level positions. Tuition Reimbursement covers a portion of tuition for courses taken at accredited institutions, depending upon fund availability.

##### **Coaching and Mentoring**

Individuals who are working in a position or functional area, which is of interest to the employee, can provide reality checks; guidance regarding the best way to pursue occupationally-related goals; feedback on strengths and areas for development; and serve as a sounding board for decision making and creative problem solving.

## Resources

The Cyprian Learning Center of the Department of Human Resource provides supervisory and managerial development programs as well as professional development training and consultation services for employees and supervisors.

## Professional Competencies

A study conducted on the need for a non-management core development program by a Vermont Public Manager consultation team in 1997 identified priority skill areas that needed development. These priorities were identified by supervisors and employees in the professional, technical, security, and office/clerical EEO categories. They are presented here to provide a starting point for employee self-assessment and goal setting. Additionally, departments and agencies will have their own specific competencies they may wish to include.

- Teamwork/Team Building
- Interpersonal Skills/Valuing individual differences
- Conflict management/Negotiation skills
- Personal Power, Self-Esteem, Stress Management
- Time management/Handling Multiple Priorities
- Effective Communication (Oral and Listening)
- Managing Change
- Group Dynamics/Group Decision-Making
- Leadership Skills
- Written Communication Skills
- Customer Service
- How to Succeed/Career Development
- Scheduling and Planning/Project management

## Leadership and Management Competencies

The Agency of Natural Resources offers a leadership and management program and has identified the following competencies for participants in that program. They are offered here as an example of competencies that could complement the professional competencies outlined above.

- Communication Skills
  - Effective writing
  - Public speaking
  - Effective meetings
  - Dealing with media
  - Public participation, including facilitation/recording skills
  - Information management and tools
  - Marketing and outreach
  
- Personal Organizational Skills
  - Time management
  - Project management
  - Delegation
  - Stress management
  
- Organizational Development and Effectiveness
  - Legislative, legal, and rulemaking procedures
  - Managing Change
  - Systems management – workflow, technology
  - Organization and job design
  - Workforce planning
  - Strategic and operational planning
  
- Human Resource Management
  - Supervisory skills, including performance management
  - Contract and policy administration
  - State personnel policies and procedures
  - Workforce diversity
  - Employee development, coaching and mentoring
  
- Negotiation and Mediation Skills
  - Conflict resolution
  - Collaboration
  
- Fiscal Management
  - State budgeting, State contracting, cost accounting systems
  - Administrative procedures, including purchasing, contracts
  - Developing and analyzing fiscal records, budget forms

- Policy and Decision-Making Skills
  - Problem identification and analysis
  - Trend analysis
  - Systems thinking
  
- Leadership Skills
  - Networking
  - Strategic thinking and planning
  - Building effective teams
  - Leadership theories
  - Motivating employees
  - Fostering organizational change
  
- Ethics and values
  - Workplace ethics
  - Ethics in public policy

## Individual Development Plan

Employee \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths** (List three to five strengths you currently use in your position and/or would like to use more)

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**Areas for Development** (Building on your strengths, what areas would you like to develop)

**Specific Skill(s) or Competency (ies):**

**How will development relate to current or future positions:**

**Supervisor's Assessment:**

### Individual Development Plan (continued)

*Potential Obstacles and Resources for Overcoming*

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#### Proposed Action Steps and Estimated Timeline

Action	Resources	Products/Results	Others Involved	By When
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Follow – Up Discussions will be held:

\_\_\_\_\_

Employee \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_