







# Addressing Unacceptable Performance

For NOAA Supervisors

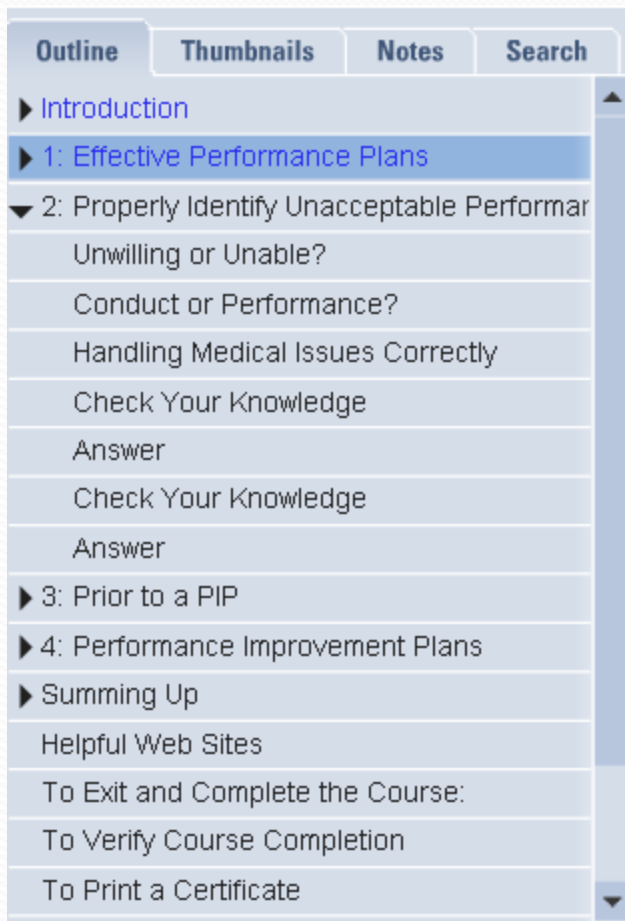


# Navigation

To...	click this button:
temporarily stop	
start	
move to the next slide	
move to the previous slide	
adjust volume/control sound	
control screen size and left navigation	



# Navigation Panel

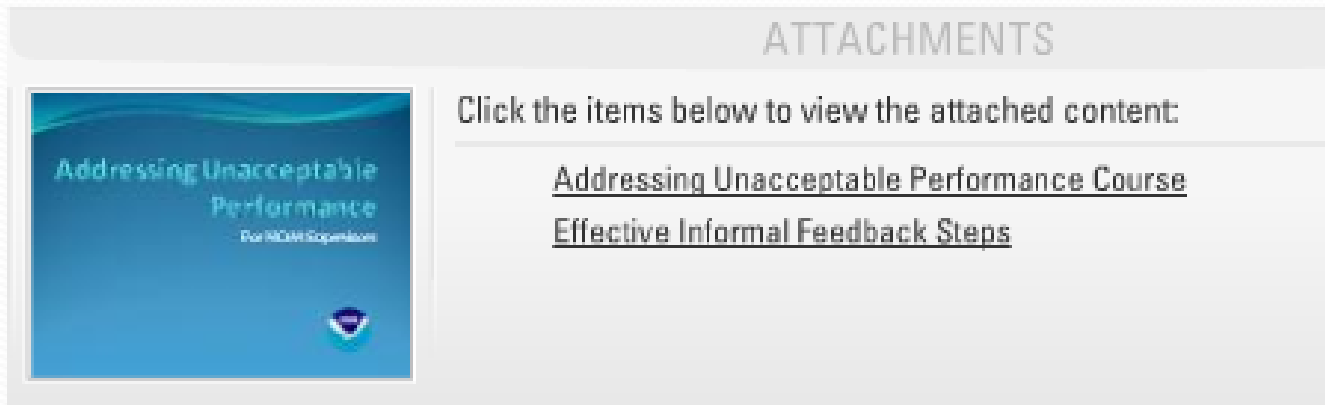


- Use the Navigation panel on the left to move to specific sections or topics.
- Sections can be collapsed or expanded by clicking on the black triangle.



# Attachments


- There are two attachments that you may save or print out:
  - the entire course and
  - a job aid containing the Effective Informal Feedback steps.
- Click the **ATTACHMENTS** button in the upper right hand corner of the screen. Click on the desired file to display.






ATTACHMENTS

Click the items below to view the attached content:

- [Addressing Unacceptable Performance Course](#)
- [Effective Informal Feedback Steps](#)



# To Exit the Course *Before* Completing:

- 1) Close the window by clicking the  in the upper right hand corner.
- 2) Click the round exit button (  ) in the course window.  


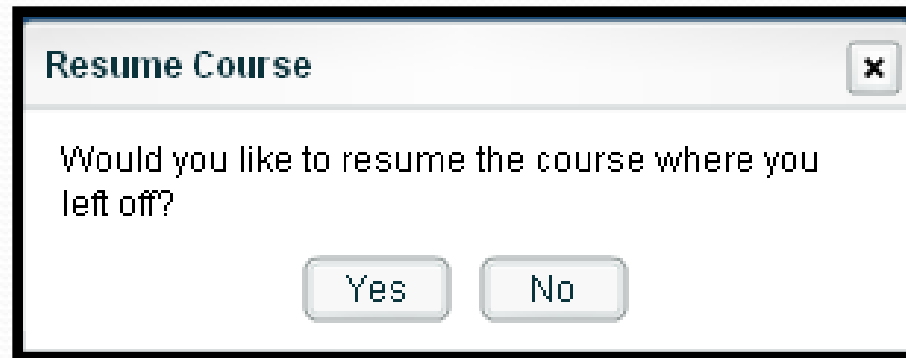
*Your place will be “bookmarked”  
so you can return to the course  
where you left off.*



# To Resume the Course

- 1) To resume the course, click on  and then click on the course link.

The Resume Course screen appears:



- 2) Click Yes.

# Course Value



This course is essential to your professional development. Value your learning and focus on this course by :

- turning off your cell and office phones;
- exiting email and
- placing a “Do Not Disturb” sign on your door or cubicle.

Thank you.



# The Purpose of this Course

As a NOAA Supervisor, you are responsible for ensuring that your employees are performing at the level expected of them, as stated in their Performance Plans.

The purpose of this course is to provide you with the knowledge and skills to deal with unacceptable performance.



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# Course Objectives

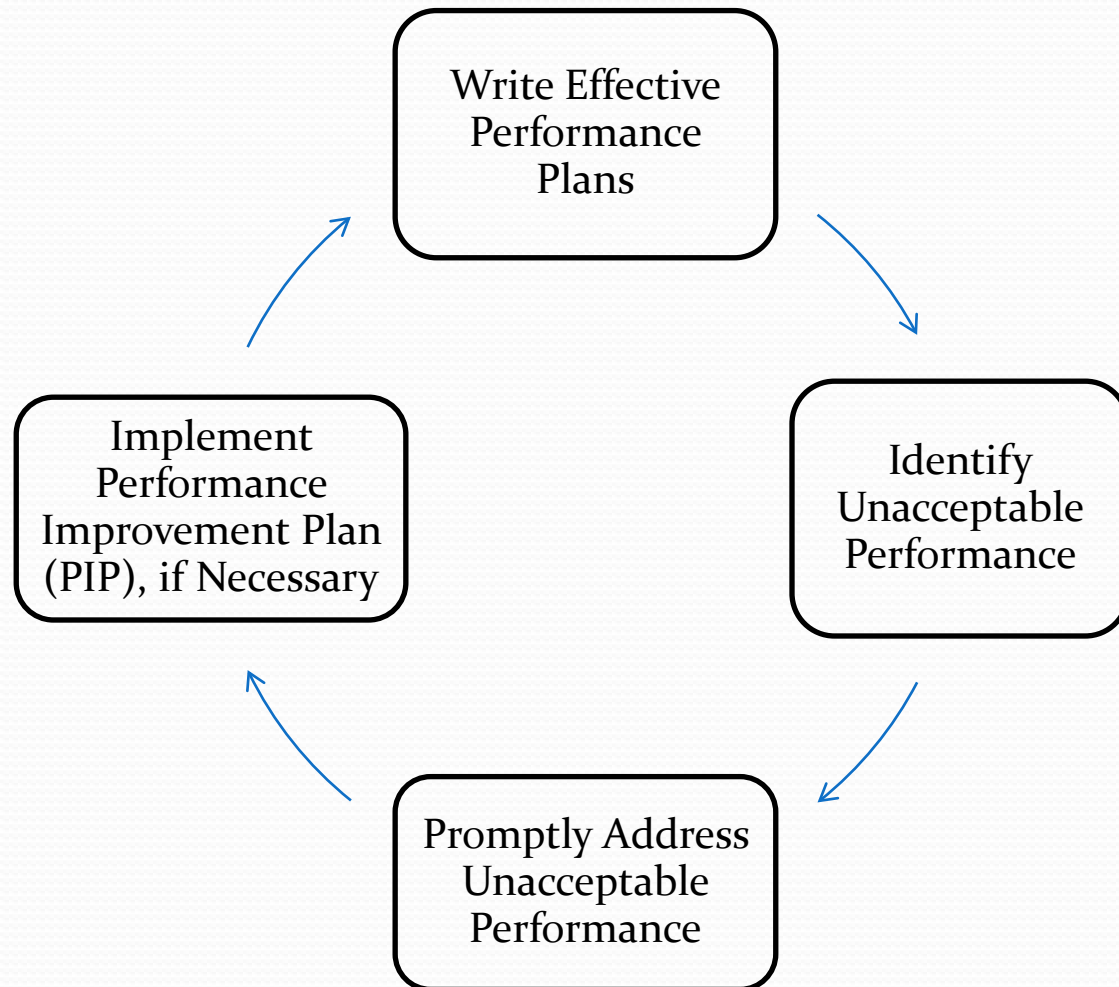
After completing this course, you should be able to:

1. Write effective Performance Plans.
2. Properly identify unacceptable performance.
3. Address unacceptable performance prior to implementing a Performance Improvement Plan (“PIP”).
4. Implement an effective PIP, if necessary.

This course should take approximately 1 hour to complete.




# Unacceptable Performance Management Overview



# 1: Effective Performance Plans

Ensure that your performance plans are effectively written so that they:

- 
- align individual performance with organizational goals
  - contain critical elements and objectives
  - describe results of major activities
  - describe measurable criteria for evaluation



# The Importance of Performance Plans

Well written Performance Plans are important to ensure that...

- NOAA employees understand what is expected of them, and
- The Performance Plan will stand up under third- party review if it is necessary to take a performance-based action, either a downgrade or removal, against an employee.



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# Performance Management Systems

NOAA manages performance under three different performance systems:

- Five-Level Performance Management System;
- Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS) – formerly known as the “Demonstration Project”; and
- Two-Level Performance Management System.

For additional information, see the following web site:

[http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/howto\\_guide/portal\\_pm.html](http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/howto_guide/portal_pm.html)



# Required Performance Reviews

A supervisor is required to meet with employees three times a year under CAPS and two times a year under the Five-Level and Two-Level systems.



**Even though these are minimum requirements, an effective supervisor continually communicates with employees about performance!!!**



# Parts of a Performance Plan

A Performance Plan contains four major sections:

1. Cascaded Organizational Goals
2. Critical Elements and Objectives
3. Results of Major Activities
4. Criteria for Evaluation

# Aligning Performance with Goals

Supervisors need to...

ensure that critical elements of Performance Plans are aligned with cascaded organizational goals.



**This sounds more  
complicated than it is!**





# Cascaded Organizational Goals



- DOC's Organizational Goals



- NOAA's Organizational Goals



- Line Office/Staff Office Organizational Goals and/or SES Goals



- Employee's Performance Plan's Critical Elements



# Critical Element

A critical element must be within the control of the employee and is defined as...

*an individual employee's work assignment, responsibility, or a result to be achieved, that is of such importance that poor performance in that element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is **unacceptable**.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Always use the word “**unacceptable**” to describe poor performance.  
It is the standard set forth in the statute!



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# Criteria for Evaluation

- Each critical element must have associated evaluation criteria.
- Sample evaluation criteria include:
  - quality;
  - quantity;
  - timeliness; and
  - cost effectiveness.



# Criteria for Evaluation, con't

- Criteria for evaluation must be easily measured.  
*Do NOT use “absolute” measures; e.g. stating a numerical or inflexible standard, such as “always” or “never”.*
- Keep criteria focused on positive behaviors.



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# Good vs. Poor Evaluation Criteria

The following contrasts good and poor evaluation criteria:

Good Evaluation Criteria	Poor Evaluation Criteria
Will respond to an average of 25 customer complaints per day over a three-month period.	Will respond to 25 customer complaints a day.
Will answer the phone in a pleasant and professional manner, based on feedback from the customer survey.	Will not yell at the customer.

# Performance Plan Language Examples

## Customer Service Critical Element

- **Objective:**

*“To respond to internal and external customers, stakeholders, and the public.”*

- **Results:**

*“Customer expectations are managed to ensure customer’s understand type and level of service”*

- **Criteria for Evaluation:**

*“Routinely responds to inquiries within 16 business hours or by the established deadline”.*

*For more information on writing performance plans, see the Commerce Learning Center’s courses, “Building Results-Oriented Performance Plans”.*



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# Check Your Knowledge



A good performance plan contains one or more absolute measures.

## True or False?

*Click the Next Slide button (  ) to find out!*



# Answer



**FALSE!!!!**

Performance plans should never contain absolute measures. Every standard should consider an unforeseen circumstance that could impact an employee's performance.

**False**



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# Check Your Knowledge



A critical element is an individual employee's work assignment, responsibility, or a result to be achieved that is of such importance that poor performance in that element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is \_\_\_\_\_.

*Click the Next Slide button (  ) to find out!*



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# Answer



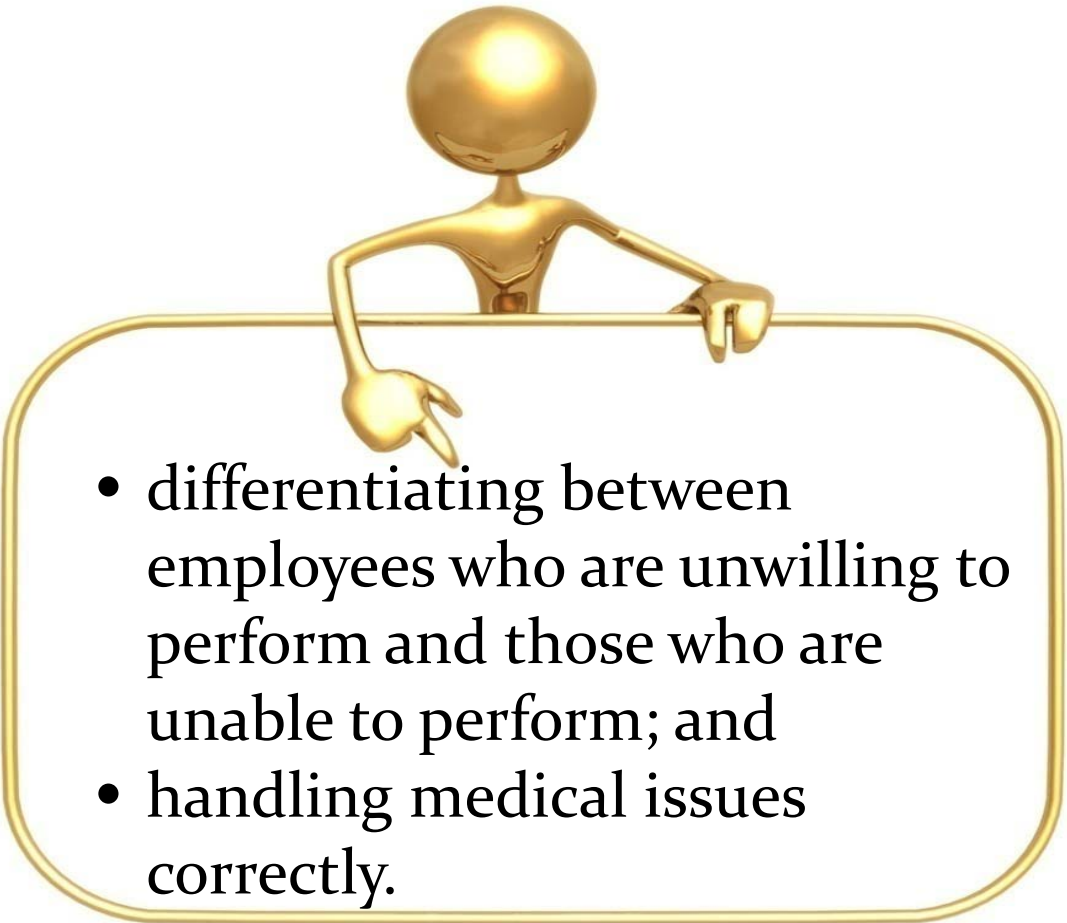
A critical element is an individual employee's work assignment, responsibility, or result to be achieved that is of such importance that poor performance in that element would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is **unacceptable**.



Do you have an employee  
whose performance is  
unacceptable?

## 2: Properly Identify Unacceptable Performance


Properly identify unacceptable performance by:

- 
- differentiating between employees who are unwilling to perform and those who are unable to perform; and
  - handling medical issues correctly.



# Is the Employee Unwilling or Unable?

- Unacceptable performance could be an issue of misconduct (an unwilling employee) or a lack of performance ability (an unable employee).
- Employees who are unwilling to perform have **conduct** issues.
- Employees who are unable to perform have **performance and/or ability** issues.
- Always address conduct issues before performance/ability issues.



Ask your WFMO  
HR Advisor for  
advice if you are  
undecided



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# Conduct or Performance?



Frank talks on the phone to his friends most of the work day. Frank is behind in his assignments. Is he unwilling or unable to complete his assignments?

Once you get Frank off the phone, his work may improve. If his work does not improve, then address his performance – his inability to complete his assignments. Always address conduct first, performance second.



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# Handling Medical Issues Correctly

- When challenged with unacceptable performance, some employees will cite a medical condition or disability as the reason for their difficulty.
- As a supervisor, respond to this issue by contacting your Employee & Labor Relations Specialist.

*An easy rule of thumb is that when performance is complicated by medical issues, the rules become complex, and you should seek the assistance of an expert.*



# Check Your Knowledge



A supervisor should address conduct issues before performance issues.

**True or False?**

*Click the Next Slide button (  ) to find out!*





# Answer



True!!!!

The supervisor should address conduct issues before performance issues.

True



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# Check Your Knowledge



An employee on your team is failing to turn in work on time. When questioned, she explains that she has been depressed since the death of her husband, which occurred almost a year ago. What should you do?

- (a) Tell her not to let her personal life interfere with work.
- (b) Contact your Employee & Labor Relations Specialist for advice.
- (c) Refuse to be distracted by excuses and provide her with a written warning on poor performance.
- (d) All of the above.

*Click the Next Slide button (  ) to find out!*



# Answer



The correct answer is **(b) Contact your Employee & Labor Relations Specialist for advice.**

*Chronic depression is a disability, but you might not know that. Any time an employee provides a medical reason for non-performance, you need to seek expert advice. Telling this employee not to let the loss of her husband interfere with her work gives the employee the impression that you do not care about her. A written warning immediately following disclosure of a disability could be considered a violation of the Rehabilitation Act (Americans with Disabilities Act).*



### 3: Addressing Unacceptable Performance Prior to Implementing a PIP

Prior to implementing a PIP:



- provide Informal Feedback to correct unacceptable performance
- follow suggestions for giving effective feedback
- provide and document Formal Feedback



# Take Immediate Action

Supervisors are **obligated** to act immediately when an employee's performance becomes unacceptable.

*It's the law! 5 USC Section 4302.*



Even though it is easier to ignore unacceptable performance, supervisors are *required* to address performance!



# Failure to Take Immediate Action

Failure to take immediate action with problem employees could mean:

- **Rewarding poor performers:**

*Failing to address an employee's poor performance means they must be rated as performing acceptably at appraisal time.*

- **Damaged office morale:**

*Your other employees will resent the poor performer(s), and resent you for not addressing the problem.*

- **Disciplinary problems:**

*It is not unusual for poor performers to have attendance problems, or to misuse their computer and telephone; these problems should disappear once they are productively engaged.*



Do you take immediate  
action when performance  
is unacceptable?

# Informal Feedback

- Your first step in addressing unacceptable performance is to provide your employee with ***Informal Feedback***.
- Informal Feedback may take several forms (*e.g.*, telephone, private office, e-mail, etc.) and, in order to have the maximum benefit, should be given as soon as you identify unacceptable performance.
- Make sure you explain to the employee exactly how their work is unacceptable. If possible, show them an example.
- Always document, in writing, any conversation you have; save e-mails.



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# Informal Feedback

For informal feedback to be effective, it needs to be communicated clearly so that the employee has no doubt that you are telling them that their performance is unacceptable.



# Preparation Before Informal Feedback

Before providing Informal Feedback, take time to prepare!

- Gather samples of poor work.
- Gather feedback from other sources, if appropriate.
- Write down the points you want to make and keep them with you during the meeting.
- Practice first with a friend or family member if you are nervous.
- Set up a meeting with the employee in a private location.



# Effective Informal Feedback Steps

1. State what has been observed, using facts not emotions.
2. Provide a statement regarding the impact of the action on others, or state the standard for acceptable work under the Performance Plan.
3. Wait for a response (let them talk).
4. Ask for a solution; give suggestions, if needed.
5. Agree on a solution together.
6. Set a follow up date and time.
7. Thank the employee for their time.



Document everything!



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# Formal Feedback

- Before you can move forward with a Performance Improvement Plan, you must provide an employee with *Formal Feedback*.
- Formal feedback is heavily documented – both to make a record, and to convince a doubting employee that you are serious.
- The same preparation and communication tips you learned under “Informal Feedback” are useful here, too.



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# Formal Feedback, con't

## Formal feedback...

- Is always provided to an employee both verbally and in writing.
- Tells the employee the critical element in their Performance Plan under which their work is unacceptable, and why.
- References or attaches specific examples of unacceptable work.
- Could make its way to a third party (so ask your Human Resources Advisor or Employee/Labor Relations Specialist if you need help).
- Should take the form of a counseling memorandum or a documented progress review or appraisal.
- Must be followed by an opportunity for the employee to improve, before you move forward to a PIP (if necessary).



# Check Your Knowledge



As a Supervisor, you are obligated to act immediately when an employee's performance becomes unacceptable.

## True or False?

*Click the Next Slide button (  ) to find out!*



# Answer



True!!!

As a Supervisor, you are obligated to act immediately when an employee's performance becomes unacceptable. It's the law! (5 USC 4302)

**True**



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# Check Your Knowledge



An employee must be provided with an opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance before you move forward with a Performance Improvement Plan.

## True or False?

*Click the Next Slide button (  ) to find out!*





# Answer



## TRUE!!!

Make sure you warn an employee that their performance is unacceptable, document the warning, have specific examples of poor work and provide the employee with an opportunity to improve before you move forward with a Performance Improvement Plan.



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# 4: Performance Improvement Plans

Implement a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) effectively by:



- identifying what elements must be included in a PIP
- following the 6 steps to implement a (PIP)



# Elements of a PIP

Use OPM's excellent website on performance management to assist you in drafting a PIP. See the link at the end of this course.

When efforts fail to improve employee performance, the last resort for a supervisor is to implement a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). A PIP must include:

1. the critical element(s) in which performance is unacceptable;
2. possible aids (coaching, etc.); and
3. a clear and specific statement of what the employee must do to perform at an acceptable level.



# Step 1 of 6: Implementing a PIP

## **Verify Time in Performance Plan:**

Verify that the employee has been working 120 days under an established Performance Plan.



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# Step 2 of 6: Implementing a PIP

## Collect Documentation:

- Ensure you have *written proof* that you have provided the employee with both Informal and Formal Feedback.
- Make sure that you have *documented examples* of poor work which show the employee's unacceptable performance on one or more critical elements defined in their Performance Plan.



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# Step 3 of 6: Implementing a PIP

## Draft the PIP:

Review it with your WFMO HR Advisor. Include appropriate support in the PIP. Appropriate support could include:

- training courses
- mentoring
- coaching
- increased supervisory assistance



# Step 4 of 6: Implementing a PIP

**Provide the employee with a reasonable opportunity to improve:**

- This period may be as short as one month.
- You may terminate the PIP early if the employee clearly shows they cannot succeed.



# Step 5 of 6: Implementing a PIP

## **Assess the Employee's Performance:**

At the end of the PIP period, assess the employee's performance, using your notes and work samples to determine if improvement has been made to an acceptable level, as identified in the Performance Plan.





# Step 6 of 6: Implementing a PIP

## **After the Improvement Period:**

Even if an employee successfully completes the improvement period, you may take a performance-based action against the employee up to one year after the date you placed him on the PIP – if the employee again performs unacceptably.



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# Document and Measure

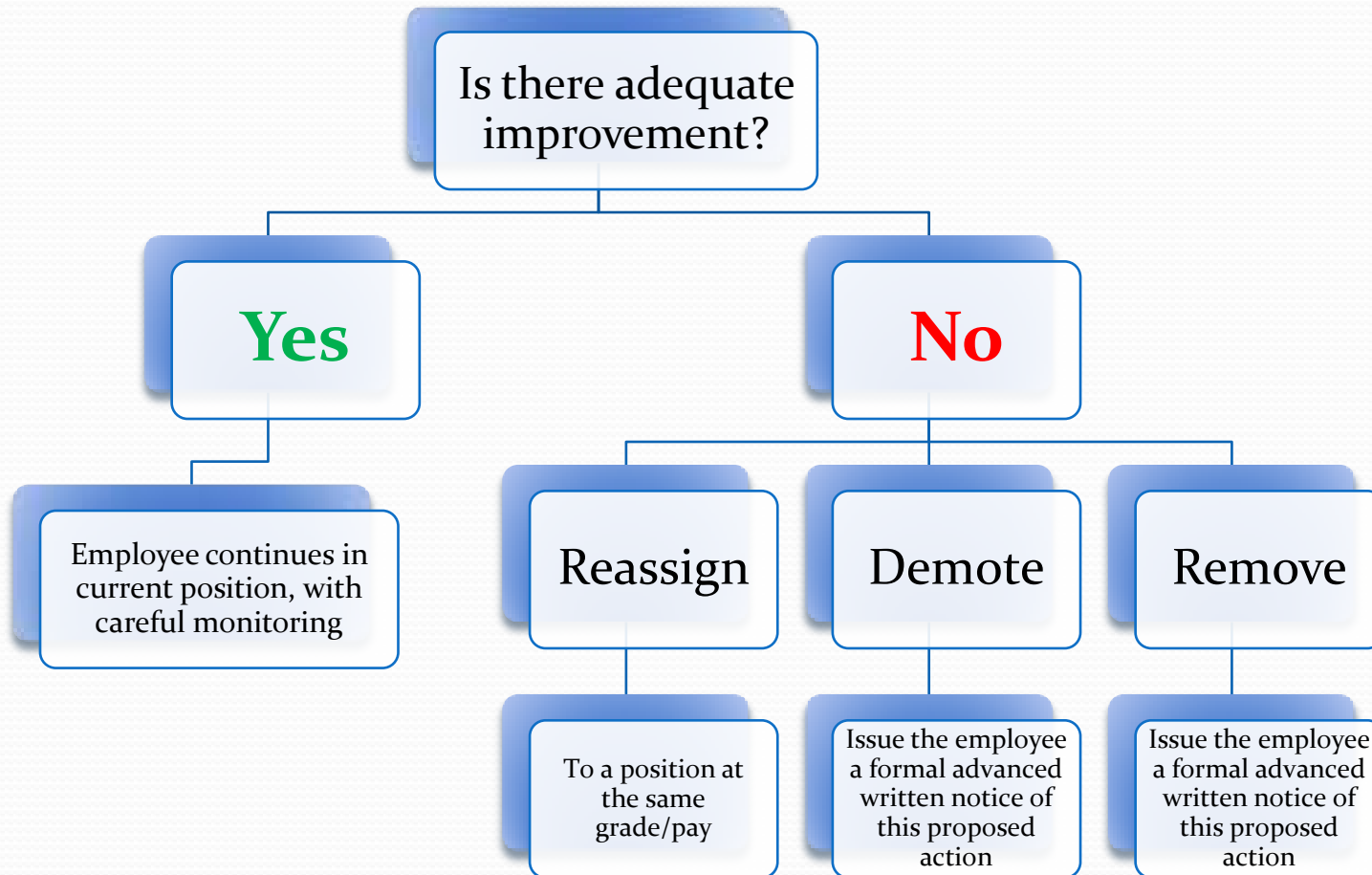
- Documentation and measurement of unsatisfactory performance is extremely important throughout the PIP process!!
- Keep notes that include:
  - work assignments
  - samples of clearly communicated but missed deadlines
  - samples of poor work
  - customer complaints
- Be sure to use dates in your notes. Consider keeping a daily log of an employee's performance during the PIP period.



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# Is There Adequate Improvement?



# Performance-Based Actions May Be Challenged



A performance-based action may be challenged, which could put the Performance Plan and the PIP on trial before a third party.

Common reasons why performance - based actions fail include:

- The employee did not work under the Performance Plan for 120 days;
- The Performance Plan used backwards (negative) standards (e.g. will yell at customers no more than once each week);
- The Performance Plan had absolute measures (e.g. always, never); and
- The PIP was lacking in clarity (unclear outcomes, poorly defined terms, confusing language, etc.).



# Check Your Knowledge



Before putting an employee on a PIP, supervisors should consult with their Workforce Management Office Point of Contact.

## True or False?

*Click the Next Slide button (  ) to find out!*

# Answer



**TRUE!!!!**

Although you are going to write the first draft of the PIP, the process should always involve consultation with the Workforce Management Office.

**True**



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# Check Your Knowledge



Which of the following would be likely challenged as the result of a performance-based action (downgrade or removal)?

1. The critical element(s) in the Performance Plan.
2. Measures of performance included in the Performance Plan.
3. The number of days the employee worked under the Performance Plan.
4. All of the above.

*Click the Next Slide button (  ) to find out!*



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# Answer



**#4, all of the above,** is the correct answer.

Critical elements in the Performance Plan, measures in the Performance Plan, and number of days worked under the Performance Plan are the three most common reasons agencies lose performance-based cases.





# Summing Up

An employee you supervise is turning in work late on a regular basis.



The following is a typical scenario that you would follow.



# Scene 1:



Taking immediate action, you note that the employee's performance plan includes an objective that work be performed in a timely manner.

The employee has been on the performance plan for more than 120 days.

Performance  
Plan

>120 days



## Scene 2:



Following a staff meeting, you wait until everyone else has left, and remind the employee that a particular item is past due.



The report you are working on was due last Friday; please make sure you finish it today.



## Scene 3:



You meet with the employee privately and discuss the missed deadlines, the performance plan's requirement, and the employee's unacceptable performance. You use the feedback steps learned from this course.



You have been late turning in your report for the past 4 weeks. Your performance plan states that you need to complete tasks in a timely manner.



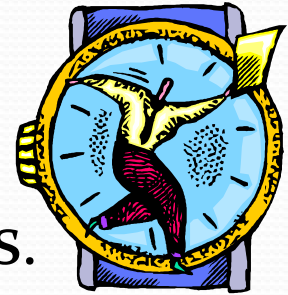
## Scene 4:



As a follow up, you send the employee an email summarizing (and documenting) your informal conversation.



## Scene 5:



The employee continues to miss deadlines.

- You provide the employee with additional feedback - a formal memorandum of counseling, specifically referencing the deadlines that have been missed.
- You attach your message assigning the work and its deadline, and the employee's dated message with the final work product. The employee's dated message is proof that the work product is late.



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## Scene 6:



The employee still continues to miss deadlines; you initiate the PIP process, contacting Workforce Management for assistance and utilizing the information learned from this course.



# PIP



# Helpful Web Sites

NOAA:

[http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/howto\\_guide/portal\\_pm.html](http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/howto_guide/portal_pm.html)

DOC:

[http://hr.commerce.gov/Practitioners/PerformanceManagementandAwards/DEV01\\_006173](http://hr.commerce.gov/Practitioners/PerformanceManagementandAwards/DEV01_006173)

OPM:

<http://www.opm.gov/perform/>



OPM/PIP information:

<https://www.opm.gov/er/poor/sitemap.asp>






# To Exit and Complete the Course:

1. Complete the course by making sure you view all slides.
2. When completed, close the window by clicking the  in the upper right hand corner.
3. Click the round exit button (  ) in the course window.

*Exiting properly ensures that you are given credit for taking the course.*





# To Verify Course Completion

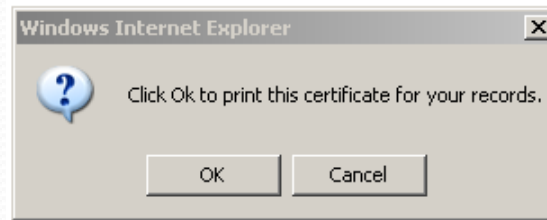
- If you have completed the course and have properly exited, your transcript will reflect completion.
- Click  to view completed courses.



# To Print a Certificate (optional)

1. Click  **MY TRANSCRIPT**
2. Click the  (View certificate) button next to the completed course name.

The following screen appears:



3. Click OK.  
A preview of the certificate appears and then the print dialog box.
4. Select the desired printer, and then click OK.

# Congratulations!

## You have completed this course:

Addressing  
Unacceptable Performance  
For NOAA Supervisors

Created: February, 2009  
Created by: Debra Farmer and Linda Tarlow,  
Workforce Management Office

