

SANTA ANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DAVID VALENTIN · CHIEF OF POLICE

TRAINING BULLETIN

"Education promotes professional and responsive law enforcement"

Performance Improvement Plans

Purpose

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to define and provide instruction concerning how to complete a Performance Improvement Plan.

Introduction

A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is used to correct and improve performance, which is below average or is not meritorious. Individual occurrences of substandard or improper performance should be handled at the supervisory level. A Performance Improvement Plan is not a disciplinary action, though failure to successfully complete the PIP may result in the loss of merit pay or, potentially, termination of employment with the Santa Ana Police Department.

The PIP is a systematic process that is used to work with an employee who is performing below the minimally acceptable level or with an employee previously awarded merit pay who is no longer performing at a meritorious level.

A PIP can be thought of as a written agreement which puts the employee on notice that:

1. Certain performance standards must be met
2. Within certain time deadlines (usually 90 or 180 days), and there are
3. Positive consequences for doing so (employment, merit pay) and
4. Negative consequences for not doing so (demotion, reprimand, loss of merit pay, termination)

I. Definitions

Primary PIP Memorandum-The initiating document which clearly establishes the Department standard, illustrates how that standard is not being met by an employee, and sets forth a plan for raising the employee's performance to the standard.

Follow-up Memorandum-A memorandum prepared at predetermined intervals which documents the actions taken to improve the employee's performance, and a status report on the employee's progress to date.

Final Memorandum-A memorandum prepared at the conclusion of a PIP, which assesses the employee's current performance. This memorandum shall state whether or not the employee successfully completed the PIP.

II. When to Use a Performance Improvement Plan

The purpose of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is to identify, track, and correct specific performance weaknesses. The PIP should be used when:

1. An employee is performing at a level below the “**MEETS JOB STANDARDS**” rating;
And/Or
2. An employee currently receiving merit pay for a rating of “**EXCEEDS JOB STANDARDS**” or higher begins having performance related issues that, if not corrected, will result in an overall “**MEETS JOB STANDARDS**” rating or below on an upcoming evaluation. A PIP in this circumstance is used to raise the employee's performance in the area(s) in question in order for the employee to maintain a meritorious overall rating. **REMEMBER:** Employees who do not *exceed* the minimum standard will not continue to receive merit pay.

It is preferred that in most cases, prior to a supervisor and manager deciding to initiate a PIP, the area(s) of performance in question should have been documented and discussed with the employee. Acceptable documentation would consist of one or more Supervisors' Logs or Memorandums.

If a PIP is initiated based on low rating(s) in a specific area(s) of the annual performance evaluation, the supervisor should clearly identify the performance issue(s) and note in the “Specific Performance Objectives for Next Rating Period” section that the supervisor is requesting either a 90 or 180 day Special Evaluation.

When completing a Special Evaluation, only the areas in which the employee had performance problems are evaluated. The completed and signed annual performance evaluation should then be forwarded to Human Resources.

Examples of performance issues where Performance Improvement Plans have historically been successful are:

1. Attendance / tardiness
2. Report writing weaknesses
3. Follow-up investigations that are deficient or not up to generally accepted standards
4. Attitude that results in specific negative performance traits and/or actions (i.e. complaints, supervisory counseling, etc.)
5. Low levels of productivity
6. Inadequate time management

If performance issues have been sufficiently documented, merit pay may be removed prior to initiating a PIP when prepared in conjunction with an annual performance evaluation.

Supervisors may also allow the merit pay to remain in effect while the PIP is being conducted subject to approval via the Chain of Command.

III. How to Complete a Performance Improvement Plan

A Performance Improvement Plan does not necessarily have to be initiated at the conclusion of a rating period, though most are. If an employee is demonstrating significant performance problems and has not been able to improve through application of training and counseling, a PIP should be initiated. Likewise, if an employee is falling below a meritorious performance level, and training and counseling have not resulted in performance improvement, a PIP should be initiated.

A. PIP Process

1. The supervisor shall collect all prior documentation concerning the employee's performance and determine if sufficient effort has been expended in attempting to correct the employee's performance through counseling and training. If it is apparent that the performance issue is significant, then, with the concurrence of the employee's Commander/Manager, a PIP should be initiated.
2. In a Primary PIP Memorandum to the employee, the supervisor shall detail the specific areas of concern relying on the standards and requirements set forth in the Santa Ana Police Department Performance Evaluation System manual. (Available on the Intranet under Forms, Templates and Resources for Personnel.)
 - a. Each performance issue should be identified and supported by specific examples from previously documented counseling and/or training sessions. For each area, the supervisor shall identify measurable expectations and specify what the employee must do to achieve those expectations.

EXAMPLE: Employee is frequently tardy to Roll Call – counseling ineffective.

Officer Smith was recently verbally admonished to be at work on time. On June 16, 2005, Smith was late a second time and given a log entry. Today, Officer Smith was again late to work. I have counseled Officer Smith to be to work on time, and his inability to do so makes him deficient in "WORK HABITS" under "Attendance," Item #1 "Does the employee come to work on time?" During this PIP, Officer Smith will not arrive late to work unless it is clearly an unavoidable emergency.

- b. For each performance issue noted above, the supervisor shall list corrective measures the employee will take to address the performance issue. These measures may be in the form of training.

EXAMPLE: Officer Smith writes poor reports as identified by frequent re-writes and complaints from investigators.

Officer Smith shall reduce the number of re-writes he is given during the PIP to the Department average of 2 re-writes per month. Smith shall be required to attend a report writing class, which addresses the most common errors identified in his reports.

- c. The supervisor will note in the Primary PIP Memorandum that he/she will meet with the employee weekly or once every two weeks to document and discuss successes and/or areas in need of continued improvement. Each subsequent meeting shall be documented on a Follow-up Memorandum which must be reviewed and initialed by the employee.

EXAMPLE:

Officer Smith and I will meet once every second Friday. During each meeting, we shall review randomly selected reports for content and grammatical accuracy. We will specifically discuss any re-writes received by Officer Smith.

- d. Prior to presenting the employee with the Primary PIP Memorandum, the supervisor should review the document with their Commander/Manager to determine if:

- i. All the performance issues have been properly addressed.
- ii. The remedies noted are sufficiently clear to ensure the employee can understand what is required.
- iii. The remedy is in line with the Santa Ana Police Department Performance Evaluation System manual. If any questions exist at this point the Human Resources Commander should be contacted for assistance.

- e. Once the Primary PIP Memorandum is reviewed by the affected Commander/Manager, the supervisor will contact Human Resources to ensure a Special Evaluation cover sheet outlining the time frame for the PIP (90 or 180 days) is completed.
3. Upon receiving the Special Evaluation cover sheet from Human Resources, the supervisor shall schedule a meeting with the employee and ensure sufficient time is given to address the Primary PIP Memorandum and the requirements and time frame of the PIP. The supervisor will have the employee initial the Primary PIP Memorandum, give him/her a copy, forward a copy to his/her Commander/Manager and send the original to Human Resources.
 4. The Primary PIP Memorandum and Follow-up Memorandums will be maintained in Human Resources. At the conclusion of the 90 or 180 day PIP, the supervisor, noting the progress of the employee and whether or not he/she was successful regarding each performance area, will complete a Final Memorandum. The employee will initial the Final Memorandum and be given a copy. An additional copy shall be forwarded to the affected Commander/Manager and the original shall be sent to Human Resources.
 5. Human Resources will forward a complete copy of the entire PIP package to City Personnel and retain a copy in the employee's personnel file. PIP documentation is considered a performance evaluation – not a disciplinary action – and, therefore, will be retained in the personnel file for the duration of the employee's career.
 6. Employees who are unable to raise their level of performance to the minimum acceptable standard upon the conclusion of the PIP may be required to:
 - a. Surrender their merit pay.
 - b. Surrender their rank.
 - c. Transfer to a different assignment.
 - d. Face disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Summary

A Performance Improvement Plan should be considered a tool to improve an employee's performance in one or more areas. Properly documented, a PIP provides employees a clear understanding of their performance issues, the steps that must be taken to improve or correct their weaknesses, and the consequences of failing to do so. A successfully completed PIP provides benefits for both the organization and the employee in the form of meritorious work and commensurate compensation.

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