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General Information

The Employee Performance Management System (EPMS) is a process that ensures that employees know what is expected of them by having supervisors set and communicate job performance expectations. The relationship between an employee and supervisor is one of the major keys to the Agency's success and to developing an effective workforce. The EPMS can be an effective communication tool that helps build such successful relationships.

There are three phases of performance management: the Planning Stage, On-Going Communication, and the Evaluation Stage.

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All employee performance appraisals will be made in writing by the employee's supervisor (the "Rater") who has direct experience or knowledge of the work being performed. The appraisal will then be reviewed by the next higher level supervisor (the "Reviewer") **prior to** the appraisal being discussed with the employee (unless the Rater is the Agency Head). The Reviewer may attach additional comments to the appraisal, and in the attachment may take exception to the Rater's appraisal. In addition, the Reviewer has the authority to change the appraisal completed by the Rater. If the Reviewer elects to change the rating, the change and associated justification should be noted on the appraisal document.

Whenever an employee's job responsibilities change significantly, the appraisal document should be revised to reflect that change. The final appraisal must bear the signature of the Rater, the Reviewer and the employee, if possible. If any party refuses to sign the appraisal, such notation shall be made on the performance appraisal. If possible, a witness should sign an acknowledgement that the party refused to sign the appraisal.

All performance appraisals shall become a permanent part of the employee's official personnel file. Upon request, DDSN will furnish the employee with a copy of the performance appraisal, copies of all pertinent attachments including the forms completed at the time of the planning stage, and the final appraisal form.

The provisions of this policy address the appraisal process of both probationary and covered employees. Although not mentioned specifically in this policy, employees exempt from coverage under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act shall also be given annual performance appraisals.

TRAINING

Training is encouraged for all employees within DDSN in regard to EPMS. The Budget & Control Board, Office of Human Resources (OHR) has provided an online training device that may be used to assist in this process. <http://www.ohr.sc.gov/OHR/OHR-training-development.phtm>.

LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

As of November 1, 2009, there are **three levels** of performance to rate each job function and objective, and to rate an employee's overall performance.

1. Exceptional: Work that is above the criteria of the job function throughout the rating period.
2. Successful: Work that meets the criteria of the job function.
3. Unsuccessful: Work that fails to meet the criteria of the job function.

If an employee was provided a performance rating between November 2, 2009 through December 2, 2009, using the previously accepted four levels of performance, and if circumstances necessitate the implementation of a Reduction-in-Force in the future that

encompasses employee ratings based upon the previously accepted four levels of performance, the following conversion will apply:

Substantially Exceeds and Exceeds Requirements = "Exceptional"
Meets Requirements = "Successful"
Below Requirements = "Unsuccessful"

"Performance characteristics" shall not be rated by the three levels of performance, but shall be given a rating of pass or fail.

1. Pass: Meets requirements.
2. Fail: Fails to meet requirements.

PLANNING STAGE

Each employee shall have a planning stage conducted at the beginning of each rating period. The employee's job functions (which include job duties and success criteria), objectives, and performance characteristics for the next rating period will be discussed at this time. These items, as included in the planning stage, are described below. The Rater and employee should participate in drafting the planning stage document. The Reviewing Officer and the Rater should discuss the requirements for the coming year, prior to the planning stage. A Rater may incorporate a team activity into the planning stage document. The team performance being evaluated could constitute a job function, an objective, or one criterion for a particular job function or objective. A Rater may also link the employee's training plan to the planning stage document.

Job Functions

The Rater and the employee shall determine the job functions (which include job duties and success criteria) by reviewing the employee's Position Description (PD). If the PD is not up-to-date, or if there is no PD, one must be prepared by the Rater and submitted to Human Resources (HR) for approval.

In those instances where the Rater and employee cannot agree upon the job functions, the Rater's decision is final. The statement on the EPMS form that outlines the employee's job function should include descriptive information about the performance expectations (success criteria) of the Rater. The descriptive statement should specify the expectations of the Rater for the employee to meet performance requirements. Each job function shall be rated in the evaluation stage based on the three levels of performance. It shall be mandatory for all Raters to be evaluated on the timely completion of each employee's performance appraisal.

Objectives

Objectives are optional for all employees. An objective should be included when the employee is assigned a special, non-recurring project or assignment that is not included on the employee's position description. The statement outlining the objective(s) should also include descriptive information about the performance expectations (success criteria) of the Rater. The descriptive

statement should specify the expectations of the Rater for the employee to be successful. Each objective shall be rated in the evaluation stage based on the three levels of performance.

Performance characteristics

The State Human Resources Division (HRD) has provided a list of suggested performance characteristics and their definitions. (Attached) Each performance characteristic shall be defined in the planning stage and rated as “pass” or “fail” in the evaluation stage.

The performance characteristics section shall be used as a communication tool to emphasize those characteristics that are important to success in performing the job functions and objectives included in the planning document. **The performance characteristics section shall not be weighted in the determination of the overall performance rating.**

It is mandatory that all managers and supervisors be rated on the performance characteristic of “Promoting Equal Opportunity.” (Promoting equal opportunity includes such areas as hiring, promotion, or placement; level of personal and organizational commitment to equal opportunity; progress toward achieving a fully integrated and representative work force; and contribution toward minority programs and other social/economic equal opportunity goals.)

ONGOING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

A Rater should continue to provide performance feedback to employees throughout the review period. An unofficial mid-year review is encouraged to facilitate this communication between Raters and employees. In addition, various options are available to the Rater in conducting performance management. A Rater may gather feedback to prepare the appraisal document and/or conduct unofficial appraisals more frequently than required in this policy.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Each new employee that is in probationary status shall be rated *prior* to the completion of a 12-month probationary period. The performance review date marks the beginning of a new review period. If that employee does not receive a performance appraisal prior to the performance review date, the employee will receive a “Successful” rating by default, and will obtain “covered status” as a State employee and permanent status in the class.

A probationary period may not be extended. If an employee is not performing satisfactorily during the probationary period, the employee shall be terminated before becoming a covered employee. Until an employee has completed the probationary period and has earned a “successful” or higher overall rating on his/her evaluation, the employee has no Grievance rights under the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act; and therefore, Raters are not required to follow the “Substandard Performance Process” to recommend termination of a probationary employee. The “successful” rating is the equivalent to the “meets” performance rating referenced in the State Employee Grievance Procedure Act.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

All employees shall be given an annual appraisal no earlier than 90 calendar days prior to the employee's performance review date. An employee on approved leave with or without pay for more than 30 consecutive workdays may have the performance review date advanced up to 90 days after those first 30 workdays. A covered employee who within 30 calendar days of his performance review date receives a "Warning Notice of Substandard Performance" shall have the performance review date advanced up to 90 days.

The performance review date marks the beginning of a new review period. If an employee does not receive an appraisal prior to the performance review date, the employee shall receive a "successful" rating by default. **A covered employee may not be issued an overall "unsuccessful" appraisal at any time during the annual review period without following the "Substandard Performance Process."**

TRIAL PERIODS

The performance of each covered employee who has been demoted, promoted or reclassified shall be appraised prior to the completion of a 6-month trial period in the position. The performance review date marks the beginning of a new review period. If an employee does not receive a performance appraisal prior to the performance review date, the employee will receive a "successful" rating by default, and obtain permanent (covered) status in the new classification. Once an employee has successfully completed a trial period and obtained permanent, covered status in a classification, the employee retains covered status in the classification throughout the employee's continuous service. The six-month trial period may be extended up to 90 calendar days upon written notice to the employee, prior to the end of the six-month trial period. The employee's performance review date must be advanced for the time period such extension is in effect.

The "Substandard Performance Process" is not required to demote or downward-reclassify an employee in trial status to the same class from which she/he was promoted, if the demotion or reclassification occurs within the trial period. The "Substandard Performance Process" is also not required to demote or reclassify downward an employee in trial status to a class in an equal or higher pay band from which she/he was promoted, if the demotion or reclassification occurs within the trial period. The employee in trial status may not grieve such demotion. The employee in trial status may not be terminated or demoted to a class in a lower pay band than that from which promoted for performance reasons without following the "Substandard Performance Process."

SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE PROCESS FOR COVERED EMPLOYEES

A covered employee is entitled to adequate notice of substandard performance, and the opportunity to improve the substandard performance, before receiving an "unsuccessful" rating and being removed from the position. To ensure this occurs, the following procedures must be followed:

1. A Rater shall issue a written “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” prior to issuing an “unsuccessful” rating to a covered employee. If during the performance period an employee is considered “unsuccessful” in any essential job function or objective which significantly impacts performance, the Rater shall provide the employee with a written “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance.” The warning notice shall provide an improvement period of no less than 30 days and no more than 120 days. The warning notice may be issued at any time during the review period. Ordinarily, the warning period may not extend beyond the employee’s review date. However, if the warning notice is issued less than 30 days from the employee’s review date, the performance review date shall be advanced up to 90 days.
2. The Rater and employee should participate in drafting a work improvement plan. The work improvement plan should include a list of specific ways to improve the deficiencies, as well as other appropriate performance-related recommendations. In those instances where the Rater and employee cannot agree upon the content of the work improvement plan, the Rater’s decision shall be final.
3. During the warning period, the employee and the Rater shall have regularly scheduled meetings during which they will discuss the employee’s progress. Documentation is required to verify that these counseling sessions were held. Copies of this documentation will be placed in the employee’s official personnel file and given to the employee upon request.
4. If the employee’s performance is rated “successful” or above on all of the essential job functions/objectives that significantly impact performance as noted in the warning notice by the end of the warning period, employment shall continue. If the employee is rated “unsuccessful” on any of the essential job functions or objectives that significantly impact performance as noted in the warning notice by the end of the warning period, the employee shall be removed from the position immediately (i.e., terminated, reassigned, or demoted).
5. Once a time frame for improving substandard performance has been given, the employee must receive a written appraisal *prior* to the end of the warning period, or the employee will receive a “successful” rating by default.
6. If an employee has been issued two warning notices within a 365-day period and performance drops to a substandard level on any essential job function/objective that significantly impacts performance for a third time within the 365-day period, the employee shall be removed from the position upon the third recurrence of such substandard performance by issuing the “unsuccessful” appraisal. A warning notice is not required on the third occurrence.

WARNING NOTICE OF SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE

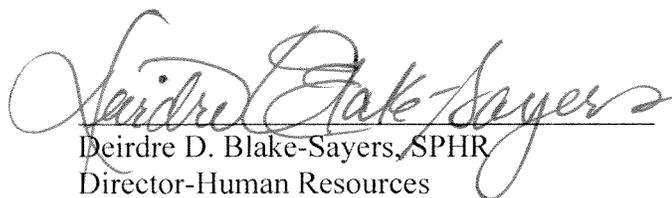
The requirements of a “Warning Notice of Substandard Performance” are as follows:

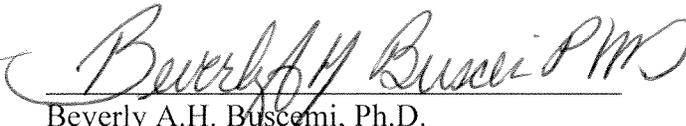
1. The notice must be made in writing, addressed to the employee, labeled as a "Warning Notice of Substandard Performance," and signed by the Rater and the employee (witnessed, if employee will not sign).
2. The notice shall list the job function(s) and/or objective(s) included on the employee's planning document that are considered "unsuccessful," with an explanation of the deficiencies for each job function and/or objective.
3. The notice shall include the time period for improvement and the consequences if no improvement is noted (i.e., terminated, demotion, reassignment).
4. The notice shall include a plan for meetings to discuss employee progress during the warning period.

A copy of the notice shall be given to the employee and placed in the employee's official personnel file.

EPMS FORM

The State Government issued EPMS form shall be used for all employees.


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To access the following attachments, please see the agency website page "Attachments to Directives" under this directive number.

Employee Performance Characteristics
EPMS Form

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