

The Written Warning

1. Complete Disciplinary Documentation Form.
 - a. Collect facts and all relevant previous documentation for your supervisor and Human Resources (HR) Director to review that support a written warning.
 - b. If you did not witness the inappropriate work behavior or work performance, obtain a signed and dated statement from the person reporting the behavior.
 - c. Secure approval from your supervisor and HR Director before acting.
2. Schedule a private meeting, which may include a witness from management.
3. Have all records supporting the Written Warning at the meeting including **the practice, policy, work behavior** issue(s) involved from the UNO Staff Handbook's Guidelines for Disciplinary Actions.
4. Begin by explaining that the meeting concerns a Written Warning.
5. Present the facts that support the Written Warning including previous incidents. Some incidents are severe enough in themselves that a previous incident need not have occurred.
6. Use concrete descriptions of behavior to illustrate inappropriate workplace behavior/policy violations—not generalized titles such as “bad attitude” or “insubordination.” Be specific: *what, when, where, who*, date, time.

Example of concrete description: Yesterday, March 5, 2009 you did not answer a coworkers' phone on the desk next to you when she was assisting a student. This behavior was discussed with you last month because of another such incident on February 15, 2009. Failing to answer the call is inconsistent with our standards of responsiveness to visitors in person or on the phone and is inappropriate for our work team's standards of cooperation.

Example of generalized description: You are receiving this disciplinary notice because you have a consistent bad attitude at work. When people try to relate to you, your attitude is always negative. Your negativity in the workplace isn't helpful to the job.

7. Remember that you are criticizing the behavior, not the employee.

Example criticizing the conduct: You are receiving this notice because you reported to work after 8 a.m., the expected start time, on several occasions. In particular, on January 4, January 8, January 14, and February 1, you reported to work late. On January 20 and February 10, you reported late to work after lunch. This pattern is inconsistent with the expectations of the University and places an unfair burden on your colleagues who must fill in for you when you are not at work on time.

Example criticizing the individual: You are getting this warning because you are consistently unmotivated and uncaring about your obligations to this department. It's clear that you don't care whether you come to work on time because you have been late so many times.

8. Ask the employee for his or her response.
9. Listen. Do not argue.
10. Explain what is expected for the employee to have acceptable work performance or correct work behavior.
11. Decide together what steps the employee can take to correct the issue and record them on the form.

Example: John will hold a meeting with his staff each morning to determine the work scheduled for the day. He also will hold a meeting with his staff at the end of the work day to review completions, incompletes, and unexpected emergencies, extenuating circumstances.

Example: Sarah will proofread all documents for spelling and typographical errors and correct them before submission.

12. Set a time frame to achieve acceptable results.

Example: We will meet after one week to discuss your staff meetings.

Example: We will meet before the end of the week when the next quarter's reports are due.

13. The employee and supervisor sign the Disciplinary Documentation Form. If the employee refuses to sign the form, the supervisor notes the refusal on the form and asks another manager to witness that the supervisor discussed the warning with the employee. The witness initials the note.
14. The employee receives a copy of the Written Warning with the facts, goals, steps for success, and the consequences of failing to correct the work issues. The Written Warning must include the following sentence: "Should the _____ behaviors be repeated, further disciplinary action will occur, up to and including dismissal." The supervisor keeps a copy for the department and sends the **original** signed form and documentation **to the HR** Director for the employee's personnel file.
15. In the employee's **next performance evaluation**, note that the employee received the written warning and note any progress toward improvement if appropriate.
16. The written warning is in effect for 18 months and will be removed at the employee's request after 18 months.

Guidelines:

1. Do not discuss a disciplinary action in front of other employees or in public.
2. Too much detail can work against you. Do not get caught in “he said, then he said, then he said.”
3. Ask yourself, “Would a third party understand from reading the warning that the employee was clearly warned that the behavior strayed from expectations?”
4. Never use the words “never” and “always.”