

MANAGING UNDERPERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

The following guidelines have been provided to help you manage underperformance in your organisation.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE ISSUE

- Start by writing down specific examples of the staff member's behaviour that is causing an issue, and when this behaviour is occurring. Gather any documents that demonstrate the issue (e.g. work examples, complaints or performance statistics).
- Write down why the behaviour is an issue – it may be affecting your organisation, other staff, clients, or the safety of the workplace.
- Write down how the behaviour needs to change.

STEP 2: ASSESS THE ISSUE

- Before you meet with the staff member, think about how serious the issue is and how long it has existed.
- Assess how wide the gap is between what you expect of the staff member and what they're doing.
- Think about the possible cause of the issue – make sure you keep an open mind.

STEP 3: MEET WITH THE STAFF MEMBER

- Discuss the issue with the staff member as soon as possible – ignoring it is likely to make it worse.
- Arrange to meet with the staff member at a time and in a place where you won't be interrupted, overheard or rushed.
- Let the staff member know in advance what the discussion will be about, so they don't feel ambushed.
- Allow the staff member to bring a support person of their choice to the meeting if they want to (a support person may be a co-worker, family member, friend or union representative. Their role is to support the staff member during the meeting, not to speak or advocate for them).
- Clearly describe the issue, using examples, along with how it's affecting the organisation.
- Invite the staff member to respond.
- Explore the issue and possible causes by asking open questions.
- Make sure the staff member understands the change required.
- Think about the impression that your body language gives – face the staff member, adopt an open posture, maintain good eye contact, and try to be relaxed.

STEP 4: JOINTLY DEVISE A SOLUTION

- Explore possible solutions by asking open questions.
- Invite the staff member to suggest solutions.
- Agree on a way to resolve the issue.
- Offer appropriate support (e.g. training or coaching).
- Agree on a timeframe for your staff member to improve their performance and set a date for review.

STEP 5: MONITOR PERFORMANCE

- Make sure you follow through with any training or other support that you offered to the staff member.
- Monitor the staff member's progress and provide ongoing feedback – be very clear.
- Meet with the staff member to review their performance at the end of the agreed timeframe.
- If the staff member's performance has improved, acknowledge that the issue has been resolved and discuss how to maintain the improvements – continue to offer support and encouragement.
- If the staff member's performance hasn't improved, extend or repeat the process, or consider progressing to more formal steps.

STEP 6: KEEP RECORDS

- Keep confidential notes of your discussions with the staff member and the outcome of the process.