

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

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EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

Why Evaluations Are Important

If asked, most managers and supervisors and employees will agree that regular employee performance evaluations are important. Often, they are not done, and worse, they are poorly done.

Performance evaluations are necessary for the following reasons.

- Provide a review of past work performance and create the opportunity to develop new performance goals.
- Establish lines of communication about employee performance.
- Create an opportunity to discuss professional development goals and objectives.
- Document employee performance and provide support for merit increases, promotions, or terminations.
- Document corrective action necessary to improve work performance.
- It is the supervisor's and manager's responsibility to monitor, evaluate and coach employees.
- Civil Service Rules and MOU's state employee performance evaluations will be completed during the probationary period and on an annual basis for permanent status employees. Special performance reports may be conducted as needed.

The Basis for the Evaluation

- Rule 13 of the Civil Service Rules, Memoranda of Understanding, and San Joaquin County Work Rules state that the county and departments, with input from the Human Resources Director, have the authority to establish specific regulations governing the conduct, appearance and performance of employees. These rules and regulations serve as a guide for managers and supervisors in preparing employee evaluations.
- Setting goals, expectations and standards for employees are part of the manager's and supervisor's responsibilities. When an employee is hired, it is important to convey expectations and standards of the work to be performed and the appropriate behavior on the job. In addition, determining short and long-term goals establishes the framework for the employee's performance expectations. Goals should be developed with the employee shortly after hiring. Goals should be specific, job and task related, and relevant to the mission of the department or unit. These goals become a tool for measuring employee performance and writing the performance evaluation.

- Continuous feedback of employee performance is an important aspect of the manager's or supervisor's job. By providing both positive and negative feedback on a regular basis, the manager or supervisor is giving the employee information about work performance and, if needed, allowing appropriate time to make corrections in performance and/or behavior. Regular feedback avoids "blindsiding" the employee at evaluation time with a negative report. Positive feedback is just as important, if not more so, than negative feedback. The manager or supervisor should consider how feedback (negative or positive) is to be conveyed to the employee. Feedback should be presented in a constructive manner when addressing problem areas. A manager should include steps for the employee to make improvements when discussing negative behavior or overall work performance.
- The written performance evaluation is a summary of the significant events or activities during the performance period. Therefore, it is important for the manager to continuously document work performance. Performance evaluations should be considered a "year-round" job and begins at the point of hire. (See Completing the Employee Performance Report section – page 7.)
- After the performance evaluation is completed and reviewed, the manager and employee should establish new goals, expectations and standards for future job performance. New goals, expectations and standards should be based on information documented in the just completed performance evaluation, as well as any professional development activities that are required or desired for the position.

Common Pitfalls in Writing Performance Evaluations

Following are pointers for the evaluator to be aware of when preparing to write the performance evaluation.

- The "halo effect" is the tendency to rate the employee based on the overall impression of the work, but avoiding or ignoring smaller problem areas that need attention. Continuous documentation over the course of the evaluation period can assist the supervisor in writing the evaluation.
- The "pitchfork effect" is the tendency to rate the employee based on a recent event, either positive or negative. Evaluations are for the entire time period indicated and continuous documentation of performance can help the evaluator avoid focusing on a recent event.
- "Stereotyping" is a preconceived perception of the employee. Supervisors need to be aware of their perceptions and biases, and avoid those when preparing a written evaluation.
- "Comparing" is when supervisors tend to compare one employee's performance with another without considering the differences of each

individual. One way to avoid this is to write evaluations for employees at separate times, which will allow the supervisor to focus on the individual rather than a group of employees.

- “Mirroring.” People have a tendency to favor people much like themselves. This tendency carries over into the workplace and during the performance rating period. Supervisors may have difficulty evaluating and appreciating the differences that others bring to the workplace. Supervisors may rate the employee most like themselves higher than those who are different. It is important for the supervisor to consider the individual work performance of each employee and avoid favoritism.
- Managers and supervisors want to avoid being the “bad guy.” They avoid writing negative evaluations because they fear it will reflect badly on themselves as supervisors if an employee is not performing to expectations, or they prefer not to “upset” the employee with negative feedback. The effect of this tendency is that employees will not know where they may need to improve their work performance or behaviors. By providing this information in a constructive, written evaluation, the supervisor is helping the person become a better employee. Of course, identifying problem areas requires identifying solutions, and providing guidance and resources to resolve the problem areas. This is the responsibility of a supervisor.

CIVIL SERVICE RULE 13. EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Section 1. Employee Performance Reports

The performance of each employee in the classified service shall be regularly evaluated by the appointing authority or his designated representative. The reports shall be submitted to the Human Resources Department on forms designated by the Human Resources Director.

Section 2. Frequency of Reports

- a. Permanent Status Employees: Reports shall be prepared and submitted at least once each year.
- b. Probationary Status Employees: Reports be prepared and submitted at the end of the 4th, 7th, and 11th months of the probationary period.
- c. Special Reports: The appointing authority may also submit special reports on any employee at the time.

Section 3. Preparation of Reports

Whenever possible, reports shall be prepared by the immediate supervisor. Each employee shall be given a copy of his Performance Evaluation Report following a discussion of the report with the rater. The employee will sign the report as an indication that it was discussed with him by the rater. Signature of the ratee does not necessarily indicate agreement with the rating. He may choose to discuss the report with a Reviewing Officer designated by the appointing authority.

Section 4. Uses of Reports

Employee Performance Reports shall become a part of the official personnel record of the employee. Employee Performance Reports may be considered along with other pertinent information when a salary step increase or a disciplinary action is being contemplated.

The Employee Performance Reports shall be used for layoff purposes in accordance with Section 17 (a), 3.

In addition, the last available Performance Report must have an overall rating of at least satisfactory if the employee is:

- a. To be granted a Leave of Absence.
- b. To participate in a promotional examination.
- c. To be transferred, transfer-promoted, promoted, reinstated, or restored to an eligible list.

(Entire rule revised 8/25/70)

THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Managers and supervisors who prepare performance evaluations should develop reports that are reasonable, consistent, valid and objective. The following are guidelines for the writing of the Employee Performance Report.

Job Relatedness

The performance evaluation is developed on job related factors only. Job related factors include but are not limited to the following:

- Class specification and/or informal job description.
- Job standards, procedures and regulations.
- Established goals, objectives and expectations.
- Knowledge and abilities to perform the job.
- Job relationships required for successful performance, i.e., supervisors, coworkers, county employees and the public.
- Training received during the performance evaluation period and the application of the training in relation to job performance.

What the employee does on the job:

- Quality of work, including the nature and consequences of errors made during the evaluation period.
- Production rate, if applicable.
- Commendations awarded relative to employee performance.
- Complaints received relative to employee performance.
- Use of job skills and efforts to enhance skills.
- Ability to work with others.
- Attendance, use of sick leave, punctuality.

Questions to consider when preparing to write the performance report:

- Did the employee meet or exceed quantity and quality standards?
- Does the employee have the skills to perform the job? If so, are the skills used effectively?
- Has the employee increased skill level and established value to the organization?
- If corrective action was instituted due to errors and/or complaints that damaged the efficiency of organizational operations, was it effective?
- Has the employee demonstrated job related efficiency through special efforts and capabilities?
- Does the employee follow organizational rules and standards of the county and the department?
- Does the employee utilize supervisory guidance?

Establishing objectivity in written performance evaluations by avoiding vague subjective terminology

- Use specific job related terms and clearly define intent of comments. For example, instead of saying an employee does a good job, specify what is “good.” Rather than saying attendance is poor, specify the number of days absent, sick leave used, patterns of use, and the effect the absences have had on job performance.
- Avoid the use of personal “traits” such as integrity, loyalty, honesty, initiative, etc. Measure employee performance against the job specifications. For example, rather than stating the employee demonstrates initiative, state the employee starts new work without being reminded; improves job skills through training or courses, or; learns other job tasks in the office to enhance agency effectiveness.

COMPLETING THE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Employee Performance Reports are to be completed according to the schedule outlined in Civil Service Rule 13 (see page 4).

Overall Rating

Overall performance is rated as Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory.

Instructions for Completing the Satisfactory Section of the Evaluation Form

Supervisors are encouraged to complete the Satisfactory Sections A, B, and C, as appropriate, using the following guidelines. Each section should be completed in a descriptive manner.

Careful attention must be made when marking a Performance Report “Satisfactory” if performance problems exist. This action would not be consistent with Human Resource policy and could result in substantial difficulty if dismissal is later recommended. If a supervisor or manager has performance related concerns, a consultation with Human Resources is in order.

Section A – Special Recognition:

In addition to general comments, the Special Recognition section highlights work areas where an employee is performing well. Use specific examples of the work and/or activities that deserve such recognition. Through the performance evaluation, supervisors should convey to the employee the positive contributions made in the position and the organization.

This section is also used to note exceptional performance and the rater shall specify the work or activity in detail.

Section B – Improvement Needed:

The Improvement Needed section describes areas where the employee can improve their work performance OR describes areas of employee performance that are not at the minimum performance standards for that classification.

Some level of work performance improvement arguably can be identified for each employee. It is the supervisor’s responsibility as coach to identify areas for improvement, provide opportunities to obtain training or education, and assist with resources to achieve improvement in work performance. The supervisor may wish to explore with the employee suggestions in how to achieve work performance improvement.

If this section is used to indicate a more serious performance problem, it is critical that the evaluator specifically and objectively document the nature, scope and consequence of the employee's performance and how it was detrimental to organizational operations. Actions or steps to be taken by the employee to improve work performance must be identified in the document.

Section C – Plans for Employee Development:

This section is used to establish plans for employee development. If there were serious performance problems described in Section B, then the evaluator must write a development plan for correction of the performance issues.

Other examples for use of this section include:

- Development and enhancement of the employee's job related skills.
- Employee career advancement.
- Employee's organizational skills.
- Long and short-term employee job goals and methods of achievement.
- Broader utilization of the employee within their class specification.

Instructions for Completing the Unsatisfactory Performance Report

Employee performance is considered Unsatisfactory when performance does not meet minimum performance expectations of the appointing authority (for example: rules, minimum qualifications, attendance).

Any regular or special evaluation with a rating of "unsatisfactory" shall include an employee development plan. Except in cases of termination, release from probation, or leave of absence, employees who receive an unsatisfactory performance evaluation must receive a follow-up evaluation within 90 calendar days from the date of the final review of the initial unsatisfactory evaluation.

An employee development plan will outline specific steps to be taken by the employee to correct the job performance. These written steps must be detailed and written in a manner that will ensure the employee understands what must be done to correct the performance. This documentation is a requirement and must be submitted with the performance evaluation.

Periods of unsatisfactory employment are excluded from seniority accumulation for layoff purposes or credit for promotional examinations. Therefore, the 90-day follow-up meeting with the employee to review job performance is mandatory.

SUPERVISOR AND EMPLOYEE MEETING TO DISCUSS PERFORMANCE REPORT

The manager or supervisor responsible for completing the evaluation will prepare the performance report, schedule an appointment with the employee to discuss the report, and obtain signatures. Signatures are not to be obtained until a review of the evaluation's content has occurred. Employees reserve the right to submit written comments regarding any evaluation and have those comments filed with the formal evaluation in the Human Resources Division personnel files.

When the manager or supervisor schedules the performance review meeting with the employee to review the content of the evaluation form, adequate meeting time (with privacy and without interruptions) should be planned for reviewing the report and to permit the employee to respond to the content.

At the meeting, the supervisor will go over each section of the evaluation form, explaining the content described within the form in an effort to increase understanding between the supervisor and the employee regarding job performance. In the event of a negative evaluation, the supervisor should allow the employee to state his or her side of a situation by remaining objective and listening carefully to the employee's statements to determine validity. An evaluation is not final until the review has been completed and signatures obtained. Therefore, the rater has an opportunity to make revisions to the form if deemed appropriate.

If the evaluation is rated Satisfactory, it is strongly recommended that the evaluation meeting between the supervisor and employee include the development of goals and objectives for the upcoming performance period.

Should an employee refuse to sign the performance report, the supervisor must document that fact on the evaluation and submit the report to Human Resources.

Employees are granted the opportunity to discuss the performance report with the appointing authority or designee within a reasonable timeframe from the date of the original appointment with the rating supervisor. An appointment with the review officer should be scheduled within a reasonable period of time. Following the meeting with the appointing authority, the performance evaluation will stand as recommended.

DOCUMENTATION RECORD KEEPING

The supervisor should retain a copy of the performance report and give a copy to the employee. The original report and any attachments are to be forwarded to the Human Resources Division for filing in the personnel file within the designated time period.