

Section Number: 30-5.1

Effective Date: January 1, 2012

Subject: Letter of Expectation, Letter of Instruction, and Performance Improvement Plans

Purpose: To provide guidance to supervisors on writing letters of expectation, letter of instruction, and performance improvement plans, and meeting with employees to discuss expectations and improvement plans.

LETTER OF EXPECTATION INITIAL MEETING GUIDE

Step 1:

- Discuss your concerns about the employee's performance with your Site Manager or Regional Manager to determine the appropriate action: continued coaching, LOI, LOE, or PIP.
- Review all areas of the employees performance
- Identify specific areas needing improvement
- Develop a draft Letter of Expectation (LOE) addressing all areas needing improvement
- Send draft LOE, in memo format to your Site Manager/Regional Manager for review
- Once approved by your Site Manager/Regional Manager forward the LOE to Management Services for review and approval. Link to DHSS HR contacts: <http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/fileadmin/HSS/hssContacts.pdf>
- Once approved by Management Services, schedule a meeting with the employee

Step 2:

- Ask the employee how things are going
 - Provide 5-10 minutes for employee to talk
 - Listen, Listen, Listen
 - This is the employee's opportunity to talk from their perspective; be careful not to debate with them during this time. Listen and take notes
 - Take notes of areas you will need to follow-up (areas they feel they have improved, areas they are still struggling; things they've tried to improve, issues or concerns that need to be addressed)
- Utilize the draft LOE as a tool and guide as you go through your discussion (not in memo format yet – just a list of areas needing improvement)
- Discuss each area with the employee; identifying what will be measured to determine improvement

- At this point, it is important the employee is in agreement with the areas that they need to improve. If not – help them to understand why.
- Add additional items for improvement that the employee identifies.
- Use caution when adding additional supports that you will provide. You will need to follow through with these supports as part of your commitment.
- Inform the employee at the end of the meeting that you will follow up with a written Letter of Expectations from today's meeting to memorialize the discussion.

Step 3:

- Finalize the LOE; put in memo format. The first paragraph should start with...Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on 00/00/00. Based on our discussion at the meeting I have developed a Letter of Expectation....
- If significant changes were made to the LOE after meeting with the employee; submit the revised LOE to your Site Manager/Regional Manager for approval. Additional approval may be needed by Management Services; depending on the significance of the changes. Your Site Manager/Regional Manager can make that determination.
- Schedule a follow up meeting with the employee to present the finalized LOE. It should be short in duration and to answer any questions the employee may have.
- This meeting should be scheduled within 1-5 days of your initial meeting.

Step 4:

- Monitor all areas the employee's performance on the LOE on a regular basis. Set yourself reminders. It is critical we monitor during this time.
- As issues come up – address them with the employee immediately. Do not wait until your next LOE meeting.
- Document in your supervisory file each time you follow-up with the employee.
- Be sure to address the areas you see improvement, in addition to the issues.
- Immediate positive reinforcement for things done well is critical in this process; make sure you do it.

Step 5:

- Usually an LOE does not have a specific timeframe for completion. The process is entirely dependent on the employee's performance.
- If the employee continues to show improvement; the LOE process will continue until they reach acceptable performance and sustain it.
- If the employee does not show adequate improvement; after we have ensured we have done our part to support the employee; we need to consider progressive discipline as an option.

- Before removing someone from an LOE, updating the LOE, or moving into progressive discipline Supervisors must discuss with the Site Manager/Regional Manager the details of the employee's performance.
- The Site Manager/Regional Manager and Supervisor will determine the next steps.
- Management Services will be consulted and included in the decision if progressive discipline is considered.

LETTER OF EXPECTATION FOLLOW-UP MEETING GUIDE

Step 1:

- Ask the employee how things are going
 - Provide 5-10 minutes for employee to talk.
 - Listen, Listen, Listen
 - This is the employee's opportunity to talk from their perspective; be careful not to debate with them during this time. Listen and take notes.
 - Take notes of areas you will need to follow-up (areas they feel they have improved, areas they are still struggling; things they've tried to improve, issues or concerns that need to be addressed)

Step 2:

- Discuss with the employee the areas of improvement you have identified; try to find common agreement on the areas of improvement.
- Did the employee feel they improved in the same area as you saw improvement?
- If so, acknowledge this. Celebrate the successes – tell the employee you are pleased with the improvement in the specific area; if additional improvement is still needed discuss what needs to be done for further improvement.
- How many cases processed correctly (clerical - how many correct registrations or correct appointments scheduled, etc.)

Step 3:

- Review with the employee specific items in LOE; areas of improvement and areas still needing improvement and why.
- Do not spend a lot of time going over the details of each specific case (issue) that was incorrect. Identify trends that need to be addressed – for example: 12 cases were processed without complete canos or without notices sent; 5 case errors related to shelter deductions, etc... You can provide the employee of a copy of the detailed information for their review after the meeting.
- Discuss an overview of the employee's performance in each item outlined in the LOE.
 - Give praise as improvement is noted
 - Areas identified as still needing improvement; ask the employee what they will be doing to improve in this area. Write down what they say.

- Does the employee need to do additional things to improve in this area? If so, discuss with the employee the additional things that will need to be done.

Step 4:

- Recap meeting; briefly discussing the areas needing improvement; and specifically what the employee agreed to do to improve performance and any additional supports that will be provided by the Supervisor.
- Ask the employee if they have any questions or concerns
- Determine next meeting date and time; or next steps.

Step 5:

- Document the meeting discussion, decisions, and agreements.
- Provide a copy of the documentation of this meeting to your employee
- Keep the original copy in your supervisory file.
- Keep your Site Manager/Regional Manager informed.

GUIDE FOR LETTER OF INSTRUCTION

Letter of Instruction (LOI) is utilized by Supervisors for addressing a specific employee behavior or a specific performance area. Supervisors will discuss specific situations with their Site Manager or Regional Manager to determine if a LOI is the appropriate next step.

It is critical to address specific employee behavior concerns immediately; both verbally and when necessary with a prompt letter of instruction.

1. Once it is determined an LOI is needed the Supervisor will make contact with Management Services and confirm the need for an LOI.
2. The Supervisor is responsible to develop the LOI. Management Services staff can assist by providing examples of LOIs and assist with the specific wording as needed.
3. Once the Supervisor drafts the LOI it will be sent to the Site Manager or Regional Manager for review before submitting to Management Services for final approval.
4. Once final approval is received from Management Services staff the LOI will be presented to the employee by the Supervisor.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN INITIAL MEETING GUIDE

Step 1:

- Discuss concerns you have about the employee's performance with your Site Manager or Regional Manager; determine next steps: verbal coaching, LOI, LOE, or PIP.
- Review all areas of the employees performance
- Identify all areas needing improvement
- Develop a draft Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) addressing all areas needing improvement
- Send draft PIP, in memo format to your Site Manager/Regional Manager for review
- Once approved by your Site Manager/Regional Manager forward the PIP to Management Services for review and approval. Link to DHSS HR contacts: <http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/fileadmin/HSS/hssContacts.pdf>
- Once approved by Management Services, schedule a meeting with the employee

Step 2:

- Ask the employee how things are going
 - Provide 5-10 minutes for employee to talk
 - Listen, Listen, Listen
 - This is the employee's opportunity to talk from their perspective; be careful not to debate with them during this time. Listen and take notes
 - Take notes of areas you will need to follow-up (areas they feel they have improved, areas they are still struggling; things they've tried to improve, issues or concerns that need to be addressed)
- Utilize the draft PIP as a tool and guide as you; go through your discussion (not in memo format yet – just a list of areas needing improvement)
- Discuss each area with the employee; identifying what will be measured to determine improvement
- At this point, it is important the employee is in agreement with the areas that they need to improve. If not – help them to understand why improvement is needed.
- Add additional items for improvement that the employee identifies.
- Use caution when adding additional supports that you will provide. You will need to follow through with these supports as part of your commitment.
- Inform the employee at the end of the meeting that you will follow up with a written performance improvement plan from today's meeting to ensure clear expectations and understanding.

Step 3:

- Finalize the LOEPIP; put in memo format. The first paragraph should start with... Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on 00/00/00. Based on our discussion at the meeting I have developed a Performance Improvement Plan....
- If significant changes were made to the PIP after meeting with the employee; submit the revised PIP to your Site Manager/Regional Manager for approval. Additional approval may be needed by Management Services; depending on the significance of the changes. Your Site Manager/Regional Manager can make that determination.
- Schedule a follow up meeting with the employee to present the finalized PIP. It should be short in duration and to answer any questions the employee may have.
- This meeting should be scheduled within 1-5 days of your initial meeting.

Step 4:

- Monitor all areas the employee's performance on the PIP on a regular basis. Set yourself reminders. It is critical we monitor during this time.
- As issues come up – address them with the employee immediately. Do not wait until your next meeting.
- Document in your supervisory file each time you follow-up with the employee.
- Be sure to address the areas you see improvement, in addition to the issues.
- Immediate positive reinforcement for things done well is critical in this process; make sure you do it.

Step 5:

- A PIP may have a specific timeframe for completion. The process is entirely dependent on the employee's performance.
- If the employee continues to show adequate improvement; the PIP process will continue until they reach acceptable performance and sustain it.
- If the employee does not show adequate improvement; after we have ensured we have done our part to support the employee; we need to consider progressive discipline as the next step.
- Before removing someone from a PIP, updating the PIP, or moving into progressive discipline Supervisors must discuss with the Site Manager/Regional Manager the details of the employee's performance.
- The Site Manager/Regional Manager and Supervisor will determine the next steps.
- Management Services will be consulted and included in the decision if progressive discipline is considered.

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- If so, acknowledge this. Celebrate the successes – tell the employee you are pleased with the improvement in the specific area; if additional improvement is still needed discuss what needs to be done for further improvement.
 - How many cases processed correctly, did specific behaviors improve, clerical how many correct registrations, or correct appointments scheduled, etc.

Step 3:

- Review with the employee specific items in the PIP; areas of improvement and areas still needing improvement and why.
- Do not spend a lot of time going over the details of each specific case (issue) that was incorrect. Identify trends that need to be addressed – for example: 12 cases were processed without complete canos or without notices sent; 5 case errors related to shelter deductions, 5 client complaints received, 5 registration errors, etc... You can provide the employee a copy of the detailed information for their review after the meeting, if available.
- Discuss an overview of the employee's performance in each item outlined in the PIP.
 - Give praise as improvement is noted
 - Areas identified as still needing improvement; ask the employee what they will be doing to improve in this area. Write down what they say.
 - Does the employee need to do additional things to improve in this area? If so, discuss with the employee the additional things that will need to be done.

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