

Progressive Discipline Policy

Document ID: HR-EMP-020 **Effective Date:** January 1, 2024 **Last Updated:** January 2024 **Owner:** People Operations & Legal **Applies To:** All Employees

Purpose

This policy establishes a fair, consistent approach to addressing workplace conduct and performance issues while giving employees opportunity to improve.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees. It does not apply to: - Performance management (see PIP Process) - Termination during probationary period - At-will employment relationship

Progressive Discipline Philosophy

NovaTech believes in: - **Fairness:** Consistent treatment across situations - **Transparency:** Clear expectations and feedback - **Opportunity:** Chance to correct behavior - **Documentation:** Written record of issues and actions - **Proportionality:** Response matches severity

Progressive discipline is a guideline, not a requirement. Serious misconduct may warrant immediate termination.

Discipline Steps

Step 1: Verbal Counseling

When Used: - First occurrence of minor issue - Early performance concerns - Minor policy violations

Process: 1. Manager meets with employee privately 2. Clearly explains the concern 3. Discusses expectations 4. Employee has opportunity to respond 5. Manager documents conversation (kept in manager notes)

Timeline: Behavior correction expected within 30 days

Step 2: Written Warning

When Used: - Repeated issues after verbal counseling - More serious violations
- Issues requiring documented notice

Process: 1. Manager prepares written warning with HR 2. Meeting with employee to review 3. Specific expectations outlined 4. Employee acknowledges receipt 5. Copy placed in personnel file

Timeline: Specified improvement period (typically 30-60 days)

Step 3: Final Written Warning

When Used: - Continued issues after written warning - Serious violations - Issues nearing termination threshold

Process: 1. Manager and HR prepare final warning 2. Meeting with employee (HR may attend) 3. Clear statement this is final warning 4. Specific consequences stated (termination) 5. Employee acknowledges receipt 6. Copy placed in personnel file

Timeline: Specified improvement period (typically 30 days)

Step 4: Termination

When Used: - Failure to improve after final warning - Serious misconduct (may skip prior steps) - Continued or repeated violations

Process: 1. HR and manager review history 2. Legal review if warranted 3. Termination decision made 4. Separation meeting conducted 5. Final paperwork completed

Immediate Termination

Certain conduct may result in immediate termination without progressive steps:

Examples include: - Violence or threats of violence - Theft or fraud - Gross insubordination - Harassment or discrimination - Breach of confidentiality -

Falsification of records - Illegal drug use at work - Serious safety violations - Unauthorized disclosure of trade secrets

This list is not exhaustive. Management reserves discretion.

Documentation Requirements

Verbal Counseling

- Manager's personal notes
- Date, issue discussed, expectations set
- Not in official personnel file

Written Warnings

Document must include: - Date of meeting - Description of issue - Prior discussions referenced - Specific expectations - Consequences of continued issues - Employee acknowledgment

Investigation Notes

For conduct issues: - Complaint or report details - Witness statements - Evidence reviewed - Findings - Decision rationale

Employee Rights

During Discipline Process

Employees may: - Hear specific concerns - Respond to allegations - Provide their perspective - Request clarification - Have time to respond to written warnings

Appeal Process

Employees may appeal discipline by: 1. Submitting written appeal to HR within 5 business days 2. HR reviews with appropriate leadership 3. Decision communicated within 10 business days 4. VP or higher makes final appeal decision

Non-Retaliation

Employees will not face retaliation for: - Reporting concerns in good faith - Participating in investigations - Exercising appeal rights

Manager Responsibilities

Before Discipline

- Document concerns as they arise
- Address issues promptly
- Consult HR before formal action
- Ensure consistent treatment

During Discipline

- Be specific about concerns
- Listen to employee perspective
- Explain expectations clearly
- Follow the process
- Document appropriately

After Discipline

- Monitor progress
 - Provide feedback
 - Recognize improvement
 - Follow through on consequences
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HR Responsibilities

- Guide managers through process
 - Ensure consistency and fairness
 - Review documentation
 - Advise on appropriate action
 - Maintain personnel files
 - Handle appeals
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Factors in Discipline Decisions

Considerations include: - Severity of the issue - Employee's prior record - Length of employment - Whether issue was intentional - Impact on others/operations - How similar situations were handled - Employee's response and willingness to improve

Special Circumstances

Probationary Employees

New employees within first 90 days may be terminated without progressive discipline if not meeting expectations.

Managers and Leaders

Higher standards may apply. Same or accelerated discipline process.

Remote Employees

Same policy applies. Documentation may be electronic. Meetings may be via video.

Separation from Employment

Voluntary Resignation

- Two weeks notice requested
- Exit interview offered
- Final pay per state law

Involuntary Termination

- HR conducts separation meeting
- Final pay per state law
- Benefits continuation information
- Return of company property

Documentation Retention

Discipline records retained per data retention policy: - Personnel file: Duration of employment + 7 years - Investigation notes: 7 years from closure

Examples

Minor Issue → Verbal Counseling

Situation: Employee consistently 10-15 minutes late **Action:** Verbal counseling about attendance expectations **Outcome:** Behavior corrects; no further action

Repeated Issue → Written Warning

Situation: Employee continues late arrivals after verbal counseling **Action:** Written warning with 30-day improvement period **Outcome:** Document in personnel file

Serious Issue → Final Warning

Situation: Employee violates expense policy (submits personal expenses) **Action:** Final written warning given severity, though first offense **Outcome:** Re-payment required, further issues = termination

Gross Misconduct → Immediate Termination

Situation: Employee accesses confidential data without authorization **Action:** Immediate termination **Outcome:** No progressive steps due to severity

Questions

For questions about this policy: - HR: hr@novatech.com - Employee Relations: employee-relations@novatech.com - Slack: [#ask-hr](#)

Related Documents: Code of Conduct (HR-EMP-001), Performance Improvement Plan (HR-DEV-010), Termination Process (HR-OFF-001)