



# Basic Employee Relations Course

## Introduction

Arguably, two of the most important words in performance management and conduct issues are probationary period. This section is added as a separate block of instruction to add emphasis to the value of using the probationary period when deciding whether or not to retain a new employee.

For this lesson we are going to review the overall concept of probationary periods. We will examine the various types of probationary periods and the opportunities that can be missed when supervisors (and even ER Specialists) fail to act - and how we can rectify this situation in the future.

The concept of performance management we use today is the direct result of the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) of 1978. The CSRA required a stronger link between performance and pay and empowered the supervisor to take personnel actions on the basis of performance.

**Remember! The responsibility of Employee Relations Specialists is to assist management and take the lead in the probationary oversight and review process.**

The quality control review process is management's responsibility; however, we need to assist them to ensure the process is smooth and meets the overall objectives of the performance management program.

Employees who receive a career or career-conditional appointment, and who have not previously completed probation serve a one-year probationary period. This probation extends the merit system competitive examining process for initial entry into federal civilian service. During probation, supervisors evaluate the new employee for qualities and characteristics essential to effective performance, but which pre-employment testing and examination methods do not adequately measure. An employee who does not satisfactorily complete the probation must be assigned to another position or separated.

The CSRA also required probationary periods for newly appointed or assigned supervisors and managers. This supervisory probationary period should be a time when new supervisors get extra help from their supervisors as they make the change from primarily using their technical skills to helping those they now supervise improve their skills.

During this period, new supervisors learn the human resources management and administration skills they need to be successful. Those who cannot successfully make the transition should be returned to their former positions. This is a different type of probationary period from the initial probationary period that all newly hired employees must complete.

Keep in mind that all employees have a public trust to uphold, so high-quality and productive employees should be the norm.