



Basic Employee Relations Course

Discipline and Adverse Actions

Not all disciplinary actions are adverse actions. Although most adverse actions are disciplinary, not all adverse actions fall in this category. Your job is to help supervisors identify the nature of the situation they face and to guide them along the proper path.

It is important for you to understand the following terms:

- **Disciplinary action** is a broad term to mean an action taken by a supervisor to correct an employee's delinquency or misconduct. Discipline includes formal and informal actions, as well as both adverse and non-adverse actions.
- **Adverse action** is a suspension, reduction in grade or pay, or a furlough for less than 30 days, and removal taken against employees covered by the adverse action regulations at 5 CFR Part 752. An adverse action may be disciplinary or non-disciplinary.

Some examples of **disciplinary actions** are:

- **Oral or Written Counseling:** This action is informal and the least severe response to misconduct. Oral counseling is disciplinary but not an adverse action. A meeting with the employee to provide oral counseling may open with a statement to the effect, "The purpose of this meeting is to discuss my concerns with your behavior regarding this situation and to clarify my expectations." The supervisor may choose to follow the meeting with a written recap of the discussion. Written counseling also can take the form of an e-mail or a counseling memo instead of a meeting with the employee.
- **Letter of Reprimand:** A supervisor uses this formal action to correct significant misconduct or delinquency and repeated lesser offenses. It is a serious disciplinary action that should be adequate for many disciplinary situations requiring an action more severe than an oral admonishment.
- **Suspension:** With this formal action, a supervisor places an employee in a nonpay and nonduty status for one or more days.
- **Reduction in Grade:** This formal action occurs when a supervisor decides that a reduction in grade (demotion) is appropriate.
- **Removal:** A supervisor uses this formal action as the most severe discipline for misconduct.

An example of **non-disciplinary adverse action** is: medical inability to perform the duties of the job and a furlough of less than 30 days. (Furloughs are beyond the scope of this training.)

Maintaining discipline usually is not a problem within a work environment where supervisors establish, clearly communicate, and consistently enforce the rules and standards of conduct.