HRDG 4752 - Disciplinary or Alternative Actions - Section E

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Subchapter 4752 - Disciplinary or Alternative Action
Section E - How to Document Properly

- Documentation is Critical
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Documentation Is Critical

Sometimes corrective or disciplinary actions cannot be taken because there is insufficient documentation, or because the documentation, improperly done, does not support taking an appropriate action. **It is critical to document properly.** Also, it is crucial to document any employee counseling session while it is fresh in your mind.

It is important to give an employee an opportunity to explain, and to document the employee's explanation. Supervisors should not merely document employee's misconduct or misdeeds without counseling the employee about the need to correct the behavior. This mere documentation has little value in most cases.

Checklist for Documenting Properly

The following is a checklist of items a supervisor should remember when documenting:

ITEMS TO REMEMBER	PLACE "X"
Identify everyone present or involved in a situation by full name and title	
Address the questions of who, what, when, where, and why (include date, time, exact location, and other pertinent details)	
Document specifics such as: "John Doe, Contract Negotiator, reported to work at 10 a.m. on March 1, 1991, and did not call me prior to this time. His tour of duty is from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. I witnessed John entering the building at 10 a.m....	
Document specific observable behavior such as "he staggered or swayed in walking, slurred when speaking, and smelled of alcohol	
Document exact quotations, if possible, and use quotation marks when quoting precisely what was said	
Document how the incident interfered with, delayed, or disrupted the efficiency of the work production, or affected the operations of the work unit or organization	
Document if witnesses were present to an incident and obtain a statement from them	
Cite specifically how the employee should have known of the violated conduct and responsibility regulations (i.e., prior written notices, verbal instructions, previous disciplinary action, training, bulletin board items, etc.)	
Document what the employee stated or alleged as an explanation, and state your analysis of why you believed or did not believe the employee	
State if the employee had any prior incidents of misconduct and provide all supporting documentation	
State any extenuating circumstances which may be	

What to do With Your Documentation?

After meeting with an employee and preparing a summary of your conversation with the employee, it is recommended that you:

- Give the employee a copy of your finalized documentation which summarizes your discussion, and states any terms agreed to;
- Ask employee in this finalized documentation there is anything that he/she considers inaccurate in the documentation;
- Have the employee certify on your copy of the documentation that he/she received it and the date it was received. If the employee refuses to certify receipt and alleges it is inaccurate, document this on the supervisor's copy along with the supervisor's opinion;
- Send a copy of the documentation to your servicing Employee Relations Specialist (ERS), and attach to it any supporting material such as copies of the Time and Attendance reports, travel vouchers, organizational charts, maps, witness statements, etc.; and
- Ask your servicing ERS for further guidance.

Maintaining Employee Administrative Files

Supervisors may maintain administrative files on employee which contain information to be used as memory joggers. The files can contain cautionary, documentation of counseling sessions, letters of reprimand, leave restriction letters, letters of appreciation, awards, training taken, copies of work assignments, or other information which serve as reminders to the supervisor.

Documentation in supervisory files should not contain private information of which an employee is unaware because a supervisor may be required to furnish an employee a copy of the information in the supervisory file if the employee makes a request under the "Freedom of Information Act." In most cases, the information must be provided unless it is part of an official ongoing investigation.

Documentation or supervisory notes which is a part of a regularly maintained system of records (i.e., an employee's administrative file), should be destroyed after approximately 1 year, or whenever further misconduct incidents have not occurred and it is not anticipated that further incidents of misconduct will occur.

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