**PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PROCESS**

Meaningful performance assessments require both the supervisor and the employee's valuation of the employee's performance.

**The Supervisor**

The employee's immediate supervisor is responsible for timely completion of the official evaluation report. In cases where the immediate supervisor does not have ample opportunities to judge the employee's performance, the lead worker (or others in a position to observe performance) should be consulted in completing the evaluation. A draft form should be completed initially in pencil, and after discussion with the employee and the reviewer (if needed), the final evaluation will be typed or written neatly in ink.

**Common Errors to Avoid in Evaluating an Employee**

No matter how well designed, a performance appraisal program can fail if the supervisors doing the appraisal are not adequately trained and informed. The following guidelines describe some frequent errors to avoid.

* Avoid rating most employees at the high end of the scale. Experience shows that "excellent" and "very good" ratings are used more frequently than competent or adequate. This is too often a reflection of supervisor's lack of confidence in the supervisor's own ability than the employee's performance. A rating of "competent" or "adequate" is not adverse and can generate suggestions for improvement needed to merit a higher rating. Descriptions of excellence should be reserved for those whose performance is truly superior.
* Avoid the "Halo Effect." Raters tend to rate an individual consistently high, average, or low on all factors based on an overall impression. A dependable, conscientious employee does not necessarily produce high-quality work. Consider each factor separately and indicate strong and weak points. Don't hesitate to use the entire scale in your ratings. If the evaluations are to provide meaningful information, they must take advantage of the entire scale.
* Avoid labels. Describe exact behavior. For example, telling an employee of a "bad attitude" does not offer an alternative for improvement or provide the employee with understandable examples of the behavior.
* Avoid not using a standard evaluation form. Use the same approved form for all employees evaluated by the District for better consistency and fairness.

**Briefly Review General Background Information**

The more you know about an employee, the easier it is for you to understand and discuss work performance and behavior. Some time prior to the appraisal discussion, you should review the employee's past history, work experience, education, and previous performance appraisals.

**Arrange for the Interview**

Set a time and place for the discussion and avoid postponement. Arrange for appropriate privacy and time for the discussion. It is important to prevent interruption if at all possible. A private office or conference room creates a setting in which you and the employee can communicate effectively.

**The Employee Self-Evaluation**

The employee shall complete the form for self-evaluation prior to formally discussing past performance with the supervisor. Employees should be notified in writing in advance that an interview is planned. Employees will actively participate in the performance review interview and will be given advance notice of the review date.

**Department or Division Review**

Individual divisions or departments may review the evaluations. Each should establish procedures and standards for review. The reviewer should normally be the evaluator's immediate supervisor. Only one person within that department or division should be the reviewer. The reviewer may want to review the performance evaluation completed by each evaluator under his/her responsibility before the evaluation is discussed with the employee. The reviewer should consider each evaluator's fairness, objectivity, thoroughness, and consistency in evaluating employees under the reviewer's supervision. In some circumstances to assure consistency, the reviewer should compare one supervisor's evaluations with another's, particularly within the same classification and work assignments.

**Conduct the Interview**

Approach evaluations as a helper, not a judge. Too often performance appraisal discussions are viewed as a time when the supervisor is the "judge". This is a difficult role which often prevents positive discussion. This is a time when you and the employee can look at job performance and find and discuss ways to improve it.

"Rating" performance involves judgments. However, in the discussion you should focus on specific ways to improve performance, in the role of a helpful teacher.

**Structure and Format of the Evaluation**

The interview should have some structure to it, varying with individual circumstances.

* Create a relaxed climate by indicating overall satisfaction and honest appreciation of job performance.
* Outline the purpose and objectives of the review. Explain the benefits of positive two-way communications about performance - a clear idea of how the employee is doing and potential steps to improve performance.
* Follow a comfortable sequence during the discussion, for example:
  + Past performance - on each relevant job performance factor;
  + Major strong points and weak points needing greater effort;
  + Specify developmental steps to be taken to improve performance; and
  + Goals and the role of the District.
* Encourage the employee to participate. The more an employee discusses performance, the better the review. Listen and gather information. Active listening is very important.
  + Use open-ended questions (who, what, when, why, and how) which encourage discussion rather than simple "yes/no" responses;
  + Tell the employee you are receiving information, not judging; and
  + Use restatement or reflection. This is a clarification process and feeds back what you are hearing to the employee.
* Discuss areas of good performance first. This is easier if you have required the employee to appraise performance as preparation for the review.
* Focus on areas of performance the employee identifies as not fully satisfactory. Determine what corrective action should be taken, and by whom. Collaborate on the action steps. Do you agree on areas of strengths and weaknesses? The more the employee participates in the plans for improvement, the greater will be the commitment to those plans. Offer usable criticism tactfully and constructively in the context of a discussion of strengths.
* Use specific and realistic improvement targets. Don't try to eliminate all areas of weakness in one session. Concentrate on the most important ones. A development plan with two or three steps is often accomplished. One with eight or nine may cause the employee to give up.
* Discuss personal goals and interests.
* Close the discussion by summarizing what has been covered and reviewing the specific steps to be taken by supervisors and the employee. If appropriate, set a follow-up date to discuss progress towards performance improvement.

**Follow-Up**

During the review, specific steps to improve performance were identified. If action needs to be taken by you, take it. If specific training has been recommended, it is important that it be undertaken. If parts of the job description have become obsolete, it should be rewritten.