

# the ADVISOR

RESOURCES FOR SUPERVISORS, MANAGERS, AND HUMAN RESOURCES PERSONNEL

## Managing Through COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to rapid changes in how companies do business. Whether your organization is still largely working remotely or is back onsite, it is likely that your team is adapting to many changes in procedures and protocols. Some of the uncertainties that you may be dealing with include:

- ▶ Fluctuating virus rates that could result in renewed restrictions or shutdowns
- ▶ Parents not knowing what their children's school schedules may be or how that will impact their ability to return to working onsite
- ▶ Employees struggling with financial concerns due to reduced work hours

- ▶ Trying to accommodate employees who are at high risk of COVID-19 complications due to health conditions and who are concerned about being exposed to the virus in the workplace
- ▶ Pressure to get back "up to speed" or to find new ways to meet deadlines or deliver needed services to customers

Trying to find a balance through all of these competing priorities is a challenge, and there may not be any one right answer. When guiding your team forward, keep these tips in mind:

- ▶ **Stay current on procedures.** COVID-19 may require your team to behave differently. It's important that you understand what is required of your team so you can both train effectively and help them work through any complications that may arise.
- ▶ **Provide frequent updates.** Changes in procedures, uncertainty about work locations or schedules, and health concerns may create added stress for your team. Frequent updates will steady nerves and stop gossip in its tracks.

### Inside:

- ▶ Improper Procedure
- ▶ Management Consultation





- ▶ **Determine reasonable deadlines.** Working from home, staff changes, and new procedures may mean you need to adjust the expected timelines for accomplishing necessary tasks. Talk to your team about a reasonable turnaround based on what any new procedures require. Keep in mind that, over time, your team will likely find ways to more efficiently meet targets.
- ▶ **Avoid playing favorites.** We've been in uncertain circumstances for several months, and it's possible that during the transition you've been cutting your team some slack. Over time, however, this may begin to create morale issues, especially if there is a

perception that some people are receiving preferential treatment. Make sure you are evaluating performance fairly and according to company policy.

- ▶ **Ask employees to stay home if they are sick.** Now more than ever, it's important for people to self-isolate if they are sick. Familiarize yourself with your company's policy on what should occur if an employee has been exposed to or has contracted COVID-19.
- ▶ **Protect privacy.** Many people are coping with difficult circumstances due to the pandemic and its economic fallout. Remember to protect your team's privacy related to an exposure to COVID-19, the

death of a family member, or a challenging financial situation.

- ▶ **Keep your team together.** Whether you're working remotely or in the office, your team may feel isolated from each other. Zoom lunches, socially-distanced pizza parties, and other activities that safely promote camaraderie are a good way to improve morale and help your team maintain personal connections.
- ▶ **Set an example.** During these challenging times, many people are looking for leadership. Your behavior sets an important example. If you buy in to new policies and procedures, your team will be more likely to do so as well. Maintaining healthy habits and talking about the importance of a good work/life balance is helpful, too.
- ▶ **Seek support.** The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can help you work through challenges with your team. It's also available to help you manage your own stress related to personal or workplace issues. Call 24/7/365.



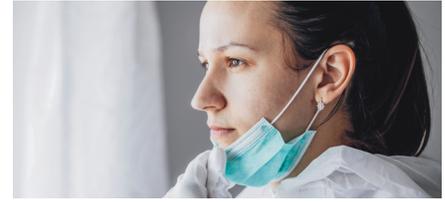
# How Do I Say That? Improper Procedure

Is one of your direct reports balking at following workplace rules? Here is how to address this performance issue:

- 1. Document the behavior.** Write down what you have observed or any statements that have been made directly to you. If you learned about the behavior from one of your direct reports, document what they have said. If possible, see if you can observe the behavior yourself.
- 2. Consult with Human Resources.** Review your documentation with HR and discuss next steps. The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can

also offer insights and assistance.

- 3. Schedule a private meeting.** Explain why not following the procedure is a concern. Reiterate that the employee is expected to follow company policy and meet performance standards.  
**Sample language:** "I noticed this week that you have been (state infraction). Not following procedure puts you and others at risk."
- 4. Ask the employee for his or her perspective on the situation.** If the employee reveals that he or she was unaware of



or misunderstood the procedure, review proper protocols.

**Sample language:** "Let's review the correct way to handle this situation."

- 5. Identify impediments to following correct procedure.** This is a good time to ask about reasons why the procedure isn't being followed. Is it slowing down productivity? Is the procedure in conflict with another one that is deemed a higher priority?  
**Sample language:** "You mentioned that you didn't follow procedure because it conflicted with another policy. Please tell me what's happening so I can look at ways to reconcile the conflict."

- 6. Make a referral to LifeMatters.** Remind the employee that LifeMatters is available to assist with improving workplace performance. If a performance referral is not necessary, simply remind the employee that LifeMatters is available.

**Sample language:** "LifeMatters can help you address any concerns that may be interfering with your ability to focus on work. I strongly urge you to call."





**7. Talk to HR and, if appropriate, your manager.** Consult with HR and confirm next steps should the employee's performance not improve. This may also be a good time to talk to management about suggested improvements that would make it easier to meet team goals. Speak to HR before taking any disciplinary action.

**8. Follow up.** Schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss the employee's progress and review any procedural adjustments that may have been made. If the employee continues to disregard

procedure, even after retraining or other changes to address concerns, contact HR to determine next steps.

**Sample language:** "I wanted to check in on how you're doing with the new system. Do you have additional concerns?"

The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service is available to help you manage the impact of new procedures on your team. It can also offer emotional support and practical assistance with extra stresses related to working during COVID-19. Call 24/7/365.

## Management Consultation

LifeMatters is available to help with:

- ▶ Confronting an employee about performance issues
- ▶ An employee's personal problem
- ▶ Suspected drug or alcohol use on the job
- ▶ Interpersonal conflicts between team members
- ▶ Establishing clear, attainable expectations for performance
- ▶ Addressing crisis situations, such as a violent incident, the death of an employee, or a natural disaster
- ▶ Your own personal concerns
- ▶ Any other work-related issue

LifeMatters offers professional management consultation when you need it, as often as you need it. Call anytime.

Call the **LifeMatters®** by Empathia Management Consultation Service toll-free anytime. **1-800-367-7474**

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Call collect to **262-574-2509** if outside of North America

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