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Resources for Nursing Home Professionals

Manager's Guide to Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals play an important role in motivating staff to reach a higher level of performance, figuring out merit pay increases, promoting employees, and agreeing on training opportunities to develop new skills. Performance evaluations also help supervisors to understand their employee's goals and create a positive relationship built on trust, which in turn improves the quality of care. This Fast Fact provides managers with best practices on how to carry out performance appraisals.

Creating a Positive Environment for Appraisals

- **Demonstrate the Importance of Appraisals.** For many employees, the appraisals process is an opportunity to hear how pleased their supervisor is with their overall performance, a step to promotions and/or salary increases. Do not minimize the importance of the appraisal process. Employees are your most important resource and they should feel valued and respected during the review.
- **Be Aware of Bias.** Supervisors may inject bias into their reviews, especially if a rating system is used. Remind supervisors to be fair and discourage any bias or favoritism. If a rating system is used, establish clear criteria that are shared with all employees. Collect and look at data such as: absences, times they appear on audits, verbal and written warnings.
- **Act as Coach, Not Judge.** Performance appraisals should be seen as an opportunity to coach employees and build their self-esteem. Become a coach and discuss their career path and other developmental opportunities. This produces a positive relationship built on trust, as well as greater productivity. Although appraisals should be positive, problems that exist should be addressed; however, a supervisor should never bring up a concern for the first time in a performance appraisal meeting.

Planning the Performance Appraisal

- **Organize Data, Thoughts, and Documents.** Complete the current evaluation before you look at the last year's review. Write down any extra work or major accomplishments. Recall any adverse events that were discussed previously with the employee. Review objectives to determine if they were accomplished. Get feedback from peers, direct reporting staff, other managers, and customers. Include information from the entire evaluation period, not just what you can recall from the past few months.
- **Employee Self-Evaluation.** Advise the employee about the upcoming scheduled performance review. Provide them with a blank copy of the same review form and ask them to review themselves. If there are other forms, notify them what to fill out and what to bring to the meeting. Remind them that the goal is to exchange feedback and to agree to an action plan.
- **Complete Appraisals On Time.** Do not allow performance appraisals to become weeks or months overdue. Develop systems to remind all supervisors about due dates. For example, at the morning stand-up meeting, the business office manager reminds the department head of an upcoming performance review and the business office manager follows-up with the manager the day after the evaluation is due and everyday thereafter until it is complete.
- **Choose a Convenient Time and Location.** Plan at least one hour for the meeting, preferably in a conference room and not the supervisor's office. Ensure that there are no distractions or interruptions.

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During the Performance Appraisal Meeting

- **Obtain the Employee's Comments First.** Allow employees to share their performance review of themselves first, so they will not simply be responding to the supervisor's comments. The objective is to obtain information about how employees see their performance and promote self-discovery. Take this time to learn what motivates them. For example, ask "What do you like the most about your job?" "What hobbies or talents are you developing on your free time that you would like to use here?" Then, act on their answers.
- **Emphasize Future Goals.** Performance appraisals are usually concerned with how an employee has performed since the last review. However, appraisals also should be used to set future goals.
- **Develop Action Plans.** The goal of the appraisal is to complete an action plan within a set timeline. Focusing on the action plan is important because it focuses on the future, builds on strengths, and addresses weaknesses of the employee. The action plan should state what both the employee and the manager will do to help achieve the goals. Review plans regularly by meeting every few months.
- **Emphasize Training and Professional Development:** Part of an action plan should emphasize training and learning opportunities so employees can continue to expand their knowledge and skills.

Providing Ongoing Appropriate Feedback

- **Use the ABCs of Feedback.** Be prepared with effective and consistent feedback using the ABCs of feedback: actionable, balanced, and constructive. Actionable feedback addresses what an employee can do immediately. Balanced feedback means having both negative and positive feedback. Constructive feedback provides positive ways to address goals and issues.

References

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- **Give Immediate Feedback.** Supervisors should give positive feedback and criticism to staff as events happen and not wait for the performance appraisal. The employee should not be surprised by anything during the appraisal.

Managing Disagreements in the Review

- **Clarify and Resolve Disagreements.** If any disagreements arise, the supervisor should calmly help the employee verbalize feelings and deal with emotions. Summarize where both agree then describe the differences. Reach an agreement that may involve concessions from both sides. Supervisors who provide clear expectations and continuous feedback to staff can minimize surprised reactions and disagreements during the annual performance appraisal.

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