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<u>Employee Disciplinary Action – Steps You Can Take To Protect Yourself and Your Nonprofit Organization</u>

Disciplining employees can be time consuming, difficult, and challenging. However, if you want the disciplinary action process to go as smoothly as possible, it is important to develop clear policies and procedures that will result in a strong disciplinary action program. By having a solid program in place, it will help to protect you and your organization. Below are some steps you can take to develop and implement an exemplary disciplinary action program.

1. Although some states can terminate an employee "at will," (with or without a reason), it is still important to have clear and concise disciplinary policies and procedures in place. Instead of reinventing the wheel, ask colleagues from other organizations or companies for a copy of their disciplinary policies and procedures. If you find procedures that you would like to replicate, request permission from the organization to do so, so that you comply with any copywriting requirements, if applicable.

2. Establish a Disciplinary Action Review Committee. This Committee should be comprised of board members. Its responsibility would be to oversee policy and procedure development and revisions, review disciplinary action complaints and appeals, and resolve disciplinary action cases, if they are not resolved at a lower level.

3. The disciplinary action policy should explain the overall program, that it is designed to protect the employee and employer, and what types of behaviors will result in disciplinary action. Procedures should itemize the steps involved in a disciplinary action process, starting with warning the employee of the violation to resolving a disciplinary action review case.

4. Ensure that upon hire, new employees read all of the organization's policies and procedures (regular and personnel). To verify this, have them sign and date a form stating that they read and understand all policies and procedures.

5. Your procedures should contain verbal and written warnings to the employee. When an employee violates a policy or procedure, talk to him first to ensure he is aware of and understands the violation. Often, an employee may have forgotten about a particular policy or procedure. If this is the case, explain the procedure in detail and show him where to find it in the policy and procedures manual. Then, reiterate the offense committed and what needs to be done to correct the situation. It is important to document

verbal warnings, including what the violation was, the date it was committed, and what was discussed to resolve the situation. This documentation should be filed in the employee's personnel file.

6. If the employee violates the policy or procedure again, issue a written warning. As with the verbal warning, documentation should include what the violation was, the date it was committed, and what was discussed to rectify the situation. In addition, documentation should include that this is the second offense, and that the employee could be terminated should a third violation occur. Provide a copy of the written warning to the employee, and retain the original warning in his personnel file.

7. There are times when a verbal or written warning may be issued, but the employee feels that the warning is unwarranted. It is possible that the employee's supervisor may not like him and is trying to make it difficult for him to remain at the organization. The organization should have a system in place to handle grievances and appeals. If the supervisor and employee disagree on a disciplinary warning, they should be able to take the issue to a higher level, which is generally the Executive Director. However, if the Executive Director is the one who issued the warning, then the issue should go to the Disciplinary Action Review Committee. The Committee would review the warning and grievance from an objective standpoint, and render a final decision to resolve the situation.

In any nonprofit organization, the list of possible disciplinary action scenarios is many and varied. The important point to remember is to develop clear and concise policies and procedures, which provide sufficient detail, to tackle and resolve employee disciplinary action issues, complaints, grievances, and appeals. This exercise will help protect both the employee and employer.

If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website (http://www.createitcoaching.org), Nonprofit Professionals blog (http://www.createitcoaching.com), or Empowerment blog (http://www.createitcoaching.net) and sign up for her free nonprofit or life coaching newsletter.