



Sample Opportunity Notice: Example 1

This sample notice is provided as a guide for supervisors but is not to be considered a model or even a suggested version for final use. The names used in this sample are fictional. Actual notices will include more specific information about the performance deficiencies and must include any additional statements or referrals required by agency policy or collective bargaining agreements that may exist. Supervisors should contact their human resources offices for technical assistance and review of actual notices.

**SUBJECT: NOTIFICATION OF UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE/
OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE**

**FROM: TUAN LEUNG
CHIEF, ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE DIVISION**

**TO: ANGIE SMITH
ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN**

This notice is written confirmation that I am providing you with an opportunity to improve your performance to the Minimally Successful level. I have determined that your performance is unacceptable in two critical elements of your position, and therefore, a performance improvement plan (PIP) is required under Article 10 of our Collective Bargaining Agreement. The PIP outlines activities that you must complete to attain a Minimally Successful rating on the two critical elements in which your performance has fallen to an unacceptable level. If you have any concerns about the PIP or you require additional guidance in following it, please let me know as soon as questions arise.

The PIP becomes effective today and will continue for 60 calendar days from today. It is important to perform well under the standards set out in your performance plan, which was provided to you on _____. A copy of the elements and standards for your job is attached. By the end of the opportunity period, you must have brought your performance up to at least the Minimally Successful level on the elements in which you are currently unacceptable in order to avoid a reduction in grade, removal, or reassignment. This PIP is to assist you in reaching that objective.

[This sample uses a performance system with a level 2 (Minimally Successful) requirement. Be sure to review your agency's system to determine the level of performance that an employee must reach to stay in the job.]

During the period of the PIP, you are to report directly to me for problems relating to your performance. Given the nature of my duties, I realize there are times when I may not be available for several hours at a time during the day. During these times, you should report any problems or address your questions to Ron Santilli. Beginning this Tuesday at 9:00 and every Tuesday morning throughout the PIP, you and I will meet at least once a week to discuss the quality of your work. Although I don't foresee any long-term absences on my part, if I am gone for a full week, Ron will act on my behalf and meet with you to review your performance.

The deficiencies in your performance have centered on two critical elements: Coding of Accounts Payable Documents and Performance of Scheduled Reconciliations. During your first year in this job, you received all of the formal training associated with these elements that is normally provided to accounting technicians in this branch. However, you have been unable to apply this training and demonstrate the necessary skills in these elements. Your most recent annual performance rating of Fully Successful was given despite the fact that these performance discrepancies existed to some degree even during your first year. I made that decision on the basis that some of those performance problems reflected the fact that you were still in the learning curve on your assignments. These problems were communicated to you during the annual performance review. However, in the 6 months since that rating was given, your work performance has declined and, despite the fact that I have routinely pointed out your errors, you have not been able to perform acceptably in some of the key areas of your position.

In the critical element of "Performance of Scheduled Reconciliations" your performance plan states that the Minimally Successful level of performance is:

Routinely reconciles accounting transactions affecting the employee's assigned work, including obligations, accruals, and payments, in an accurate manner. These transactions are reconciled accurately to the accounts payable open document listing in a timely manner.

Currently, your performance on this critical element is at an unacceptable level due to the number of errors I have found in your work because you continually post transactions in the wrong category and then extensive work is needed to determine why your records are not reconciled. Over the past month, I frequently had to point out to you mistakes that occurred

Addressing and Resolving Poor Performance

Step Two-Providing an Opportunity to Improve

Writing the Opportunity Period Notice

because accounting documents were not entered in the appropriate categories in the system. Further, I found that 25 errors occurred where your worksheets did not balance with the open document listing. Although your performance standard does not include numerical requirements, 25 errors in one month does not meet the requirement for routinely accurate work. This type of performance is representative of the performance deficiencies you have been exhibiting over the past several months.

[At this point an actual notice would include a more detailed assessment of the mistakes in the employee's work.]

During this opportunity period, you must improve your performance to at least the Minimally Successful level in order to continue in your position. In particular, you must conduct your reconciliation work with an error rate of no more than 10% per week, in accordance with the requirement for accuracy listed in your standard. You must also reconcile your worksheets with the accounts payable open document listing with an error rate of no more than 10% per week. Each of these two functions within this standard are equally important and failure to perform adequately on either one will result in an overall finding of unacceptable on the standard as a whole.

To assist you in this area, I would like to spend some time during our first weekly meeting next Tuesday to review the reconciliation process and go over with you the thought process that is needed when deciding where certain transactions should go in the system. Please bring with you your reference material from the training class and we will adapt the generic checklist provided in that book to include our internal requirements as well. You can then use that amended checklist as a reference point in the future.

[Specific examples of various forms of assistance should be included here.]

In the critical element, "Coding of Accounts Payable Documents," your performance plan states that the Minimally Successful level of performance is:

Routinely codes appropriate accounting data from original documentation onto the Document History Record (DHR) in an accurate and timely manner. These data include such entries as the schedule number, cross reference, transaction code, document number, management code, money amount, and vendor name/order number.

Addressing and Resolving Poor Performance
Step Two-Providing an Opportunity to Improve
Writing the Opportunity Period Notice

Your performance in this element is unacceptable based on both your problems with accurate coding and your lack of timeliness. Although some level of error is anticipated given the large number of data items that must be coded by the technicians in the Branch, the constant number of corrections that you must make on your work is not acceptable. With each of my counseling memos to you, I have attached copies of DHR error reports that reflect the repetitive nature of your errors. Further, as reflected in the “overdue corrections” column of these reports, you often take up to 10 working days to make the correction and return the work for input into the automated system. This creates the potential for an even greater negative impact because any reports generated from those data prior to the correction contain the erroneous information and are also incorrect.

[At this point an actual notice would include a more detailed assessment of the mistakes in the employee’s work.]

In order to achieve Minimally Successful performance in this critical element, you will need to reduce your number of errors to no more than 20 coding errors on any biweekly error report. I arrived at the figure of 20 errors based on the fact that the number of data items coded in a 2-week period is typically 300. Here, errors will be defined as coding mistakes in situations where you received all the correct information on the original documentation. Errors that resulted because you were given incorrect information or because the data were changed after they were originally coded will not count against your standard. 95% of the time, corrections to the DHR error report will be made within 5 working days of receipt of the report. Both accuracy and timeliness are equally important in the performance of this critical element, and failure to meet the requirements of either will result in an overall finding of unacceptable on the standard as a whole.

To assist you in improving in this aspect of your job, I have asked Ron Santilli to create a “cheat sheet” of commonly used codes for a variety of entries. I have also pulled up your coding sheets for each of the errors shown on the latest DHR error report. During our first weekly meeting, we will go over each of the mistakes and perhaps I can determine a pattern that may show why you are not selecting the correct codes. Also, each week, bring three or four of your current assignments to the meeting and we will go through the coding together.

I believe that if you use these written tools and our weekly meetings to develop and hone your accounting skills, you will be able to bring your performance to an acceptable level. You must meet and maintain the Minimally Successful level of performance on both the critical elements listed above for 1 year from the beginning of the opportunity period. Failure to achieve

Addressing and Resolving Poor Performance

Step Two-Providing an Opportunity to Improve

Writing the Opportunity Period Notice

acceptable performance on these critical elements during the opportunity period, or to maintain it during the remainder of the 1 year, may result in removal or reduction in grade without any further opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance.

If you have any questions about this PIP or require additional guidance on implementing the provisions of it, please let me know as soon as questions arise. Keep in mind that it is important to refer to this plan throughout the PIP period.

[It is essential that you contact your human resources office to determine what additional information should be included in an actual notice. Agency policies and collective bargaining agreements sometimes provide that specific notice or referrals are given to employees.]

If you are dealing with a personal matter that may be impeding your ability to perform your duties at an acceptable level, please know that you may seek assistance through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This is a voluntary and confidential program, and you may reach a counselor by calling 1-800-555-1212 to schedule an appointment.

Please sign a copy of this memorandum, which serves only to acknowledge your receipt of this notice.

Receipt Acknowledged

Signature

Date