

## Things to consider when completing a “DOA Employee Counseling Form”:

- This is a vehicle designed to assist supervisors/managers in correcting behavior (conduct or job performance) and initiate a mutual positive dialogue to work together to achieve a successful outcome.
- HR recommends at least two forms/counseling sessions are completed before proceeding to issuing a formal written warning, unless the offense warrants more serious disciplinary action as defined in the State Personnel Manual Policies and Procedures.
- “Description of Cause” should be presented in descriptive format. State factual events in sequential order, typically from past dates to present, particularly if you need to show a pattern of behavior. Avoid gaps in the timeline, but clearly explain any gaps if they exist.
- As one of the primary purposes of this process is to invite and encourage dialogue and subsequent positive changes in behavior, avoid any inflammatory or accusatory language. State just the facts, with appropriate dates, actions taken, etc.
- Use first-person voice and the employee’s name, since you will be presenting this information directly to the employee.
- Given the intent of this “counseling” is to help the employee modify inappropriate behavior or inadequate job performance, ensure that any discrepancies in conduct and job performance are clearly described, using specific examples.
- Clearly define the requirements (i.e., specific behaviors and actions you expect from the employee) to correct the nonconformance, as well as provide a schedule or timeframe in which he/she is expected to respond. Most offenses typically are expected to be corrected immediately, in which case, HR suggests including a date in which a follow-up evaluation will be conducted to ensure employee is complying to changes, and to provide positive feedback and support accordingly.
- Separate the nonconforming incidences (conduct and behavior); for example, after addressing a specific problem, do not include verbiage such as “and there are other instances of similar behavior.” Fully describe each nonconformance, showing them as separate behaviors to be corrected, or to illustrate a pattern of behavior that needs to be corrected.
- In the first use of the counseling form, HR recommends that you do not attach supporting documentation (e.g., emails, correspondence, etc.). Instead, relevant information such as actual events and dates should be well described on the form. Again, the primary purpose at this stage is to encourage open dialogue and maximize the potential for an optimal outcome. Accurate and valid documentation should exist, however, that supports the purpose of the counseling and is available for further disciplinary action, if needed.
- Include any relevant information that will help the employee to be clear about your expectations. For example, if the offense is tardiness or abuse of lunch periods, include the specific times of the work schedule you and the employee have agreed upon.
- Finally, after consulting with the employee, sign the form, ask the employee to sign to acknowledge your discussion, and then give him/her a copy. If the employee refuses to sign, simply ask your manager to acknowledge you held the consultation by initialing the form.