Progressive Discipline Policy

Replace every [Placeholder]. Remove the at-will language for employees outside the US or under contracts that require cause. Where a collective bargaining agreement applies, its disciplinary terms take precedence for covered employees.

1. PURPOSE

[Company Name] wants every employee to know what is expected of them and to have a fair chance to correct problems. This policy describes the corrective steps the company normally uses when an employee's conduct, attendance or performance does not meet its standards. The aim is improvement. Discipline is applied consistently, based on facts, and in proportion to the issue.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees of [Company Name] in [locations / all locations], except where a collective bargaining agreement or written employment contract sets different terms. Performance concerns during the introductory period of [90] days may be handled through the probation review process instead. Attendance is handled under the [Attendance Policy], which uses the steps in this policy unless it states otherwise.

3. AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT

[US only] Employment with [Company Name] is at will. Either the employee or the company may end the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice. This policy is a guideline for managers. It does not create a contract or a promise that any particular step will be followed in every case, and the company may use any step it considers appropriate, including immediate termination, depending on the circumstances.

4. THE CORRECTIVE STEPS

The company normally follows these steps for the same or a related issue:

1. **Coaching.** An informal conversation between the manager and employee to clarify expectations. The manager keeps a brief note. Coaching is not a disciplinary action.
2. **Verbal warning.** A formal conversation in which the manager tells the employee the issue must improve and that further issues will lead to a written warning. The manager documents the warning and sends the record to HR.
3. **Written warning.** A written document that describes the issue, previous steps, the required improvement, a review date and the consequences of further issues. The employee is asked to sign to confirm receipt.
4. **Final written warning.** A last formal warning stating that any further issue may result in termination. HR must review before it is issued. In some cases, a final warning may be combined with an unpaid suspension of up to [X] days, subject to wage and hour law.
5. **Termination.** If the issue continues after a final written warning, employment may be terminated. Termination decisions require approval from [HR and the department head].

5. PERFORMANCE CONCERNS

Where the issue is job performance rather than conduct, the manager may use a performance improvement plan (PIP) of [30 to 90] days in place of, or alongside, a written warning. A PIP sets out specific goals, support and check-in dates. Failure to meet the PIP goals may lead to a final written warning or termination.

6. SERIOUS MISCONDUCT

Some conduct is serious enough that the company may skip steps or terminate employment immediately. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Violence, threats of violence or possession of weapons at work
- Theft, fraud or falsification of time, expense or company records
- Harassment, discrimination or retaliation, confirmed by investigation
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Serious safety violations that put people at risk
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential customer or company information
- [Number] consecutive shifts of no call, no show

When serious misconduct is alleged, the company may place the employee on suspension pending investigation while the facts are reviewed. [Suspension pending investigation is paid / is paid for exempt employees and unpaid for non-exempt employees, with back pay if the allegation is not substantiated.]

7. HOW LONG STEPS REMAIN ACTIVE

Verbal warnings remain active for [6] months, written warnings for [12] months and final written warnings for [12] months from the date issued. If no further issue of the same or a related kind occurs during the active period, the next issue will usually restart at an earlier step. All records stay in the personnel file.

8. FAIR PROCESS

Before any formal step, the manager will:

- Gather facts, records and, where relevant, witness statements
- Give the employee a chance to explain
- Consider the employee's history, length of service and any mitigating circumstances
- Check with HR that the action is consistent with how similar cases have been handled
- Make sure no absence or conduct protected by law (such as approved leave, an accommodation, or a good-faith complaint) is treated as a policy violation

Employees may add written comments to any disciplinary document, and these will be kept with it.

9. APPEALS

An employee who believes a written warning, final warning, suspension or termination was unfair may appeal in writing to [HR / next-level manager] within [5] working days. The appeal will be reviewed by someone not involved in the original decision, and the employee will receive a written response within [10] working days. Filing an appeal does not delay the action unless HR decides otherwise.

10. NON-RETALIATION AND QUESTIONS

The company will not take disciplinary action against any employee for reporting a concern in good faith, taking part in an investigation, or exercising rights protected by law. Questions about this policy should go to [HR Contact / HR Email].

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

☐ I have received and read the Progressive Discipline Policy

Employee name

Employee signature

Date

Date